

Institution: ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
Unit of Assessment: D.30 History
Title of case study: The ethical imperatives of ‘Public History’
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study describes how the research of Justin Champion (Professor of the History of Early Modern Ideas) into political and religious freedom in the seventeenth century and the public responsibilities of Enlightenment intellectuals has had a ground-breaking impact on the ethics of public engagement in today’s historical profession. The process of making his research findings comprehensible to a broader public has led directly to the development of ideas, theories and activities centred on ‘Public History’, and has included important interventions in matters of public historical import which have affected practitioner understanding. The case study presents the structural and individual activities which have shaped this impact.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Champion has been based at Royal Holloway since 1990. He has specific research interests in the meaning and nature of Enlightenment together with that of the development of the historical discipline. Both of these components have combined in an ethical imperative to communicate and intervene where an understanding of the past can inform and shape contemporary concerns.</p> <p>Champion’s 1999 study <i>John Toland’s Nazarenus 1718</i> explored the disciplinary origins of modern historical erudition in the context of confessional disputation. Adapting Classical and Renaissance ambitions to the practices of erudition and source criticism, Champion argued that historical erudition was focused on present-centred objectives. Those who wrote about the past were more than scholars, but had duties to communicate with a wide public. It was reflecting on these practices, but also the intimate connection with the rival claims of religious orthodoxy and dissent in the period, that laid the foundations for arguments about the public responsibilities of contemporary historians. His subsequent 2003 monograph <i>Republican Learning</i> expanded this debate by exploring the complex relationship between religious and political liberty in the seventeenth century, in particular developing understanding of how dominant theological-political ideas of the early modern period were challenged and transformed by the claims of religious diversity and Enlightened tolerance.</p> <p>In his ‘Seeing the past’ (2003) peer-review journal article, Champion, drawing on his Enlightenment research insights, called for historians to engage seriously with public history, arguing against any compromise in the rigour of academic research. Acknowledging the tensions between the ambitions and procedures of academic historians and documentary broadcasters, (the one committed to pedagogic instruction and the other to education), Champion demonstrated that publicly-funded research historians have an ethical imperative to present the past in a comprehensible and accessible way, thus challenging the commonplace presentation of the incompatibility of rigorous scholarly output with a debased popular story-telling. The ethical imperatives of communication, Champion maintained, mean that good history and good broadcasting can combine.</p> <p>Champion’s reflections on the public responsibilities of practising historians, and historical perspectives on the nature of history in the public square (including the powerful broadcast media of television and radio, but also schools, museums and other cultural institutions), were amplified in his much-cited article, ‘What are historians for?’ (2008). Developing earlier arguments that historians have a wide-ranging obligation - ethical, aesthetic, and political - to make, and take their academic work into public <i>fora</i>, it substantiated a robust defence of the tasks and responsibilities of public history. Connecting contemporary practice with the ambitions</p>

of both antiquity (where history was very much a means of teaching civic duties by example), and the early modern defence of objective, but ethically 'true', history, he argued that historians have the duty both to communicate knowledge about the past, but also to intervene in modern debates about the nature of history and the institutional presentation of the past.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. *John Toland's Nazarenus 1718* (The Voltaire Foundation, 1999).

'Un travail tres soigne temoignant du renouveau des etudes sur Toland'. 'Cette edition ... est un evenement tant par l'importance du texte que par la qualite du travail de Justin Champion.' D. Bourel (Jerusalem), *Francia* 28 (2001): 258.

'an exemplary edition of a vitally important text in the history of British free thought' – Brian Young, *English Historical Review*, 116, 465 (February 2001): 222-223.

2. *Republican Learning. John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture, 1670-1722* (MUP: Manchester, 2003; paperback, 2009; Open Access edition, OAPEN, 2011).

'This is a significant contribution based on extensive new research, and is likely to be the standard account of Toland for many years to come.' David Wootton, Queen Mary, University of London.

3. 'Seeing the past: Simon Schama's A History of Britain and public history', *History Workshop Journal*, 56, 1 (2003): 153-174.

This article is cited in works on public history, media studies, and broadcasting history. It is regarded as a foundation statement in works outside the historical discipline eg *The SAGE Handbook of Film Studies*, eds. J. Donald and M. Renov (2008); *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, eds. B. J. Graham and P. Howard (2008), and as set reading for postgraduate courses in (1) Public history and (2) Documentary Film-making in both the UK and Australia.

4. 'What are historians for?', *Historical Research*, 81, 211 (2008): 167-188.

Peer-reviewed and used by universities and schools as the starting point for consideration of the ethical duties of practicing historians.

5. 'Why the Enlightenment still matters today', Royal Historical Society/Gresham College Annual Lecture 2012.

c. 5,000 hits on YouTube. 'An excellent talk. The more I hear of the Enlightenment, the more I am fascinated by it and that today's secularism owes so much to it.'

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Champion's research on historians' civic duty past and present has generated impact (1) as an individual agent through engagement with the Historical Association (HA), the Prince's Teaching Trust, and national broadcast media, and (2) in projects with local/national partners including Surrey County Council (SCC), community museums, and heritage institutions.

Champion's research on the public role of historians was recognised nationally when he was invited onto the HA's inaugural Public History Committee (itself an outcome of the attention that his work had focused on this way of approaching the past) and subsequently addressed its 2010 Annual Conference on 'Is Public History for Everyone?', further raising the issue at this national level. The HA's Public History Committee has shaped the nature of access of the

Impact case study (REF3b)

public to a range of resources and professional development. Champion has also affected practitioner understanding among with teachers, educators and heritage workers through his input at the *Is England's Past for Everyone. Learning and Outreach in the Historic Environment* (Armada House, Bristol, 2009) (a HLF-funded project run by the Victoria County History, attended by over 120 people). In 2013, Champion was made an Honorary Fellow of the Historical Association for services to History; the citation included his contribution to public understanding and engagement.

Champion also contributed to the second phase of the HEA *History Virtual Academy*, which in 2010-11 brought together school students and HE academics in online forums designed to engage schools in interaction and learning with specialists in their fields. Since 2010 he has likewise collaborated with the Prince's Teaching Trust (PTT) and its annual Teaching School (March 2010; November 2011) to refine practical approaches towards the ethical education of children as 'public historians'. Bernice McCabe, Co-Director of The Prince's Teaching Institute, specifically noted Champion's impact, while one of the teachers afterwards commented: 'I will go back reinvigorated to take on the challenge of fighting our corner in our current curriculum review'.

Champion's research regarding the historian's duty to intervene in debates about public access to significant historical resources has been evident in his involvement in on-going preparations for the commemoration of the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta to take place in 2015. Since 2012, he has been a member of the British Library (BL) Magna Carta Advisory Group, which is informing the contents, ambitions and preparation of the BL's international exhibition and associated events. He has particular responsibility for representing Magna Carta's legacy in the period between 1600 and 1800 (precisely the centuries in which his research has explored understandings of liberty and freedom). In this role he also participated in debates in 2012-13 on the proposed commemorative activities in Runnymede itself: his involvement in successful local opposition during this period to the building of a costly interpretation centre by Runnymede Borough Council, in favour of a series of community-based public history activities, has been acknowledged by representatives of Surrey County Council as directly helping to save £5 million of SCC resource for re-investment in other Magna Carta-related activities. As a trustee of the Egham Museum, and in direct partnership with SCC, Champion has deployed his historical expertise to initiating commemorative activity with local and regional communities.

Champion has contributed to or presented 36 programmes on BBC Radio and TV, Channel 4 and PBS (USA). Five contributions to BBC Radio 4 *In Our Times* have produced audiences of c. 3.5 million each: BBC blogs associated with each programme provide evidence of the impact of his contribution while the entire archive remains accessible free to the globe. Champion acted as advisor and contributor to *Shakespeare Uncovered*, a six-part series (BBC4 2012 and PBS 2013) that has received critical acclaim in the UK and USA: the PBS 'Teacher viewing Guide' for use in schools describes Champion's contribution as one 'not to miss'.

In 2009 Champion established the MA Public History to realise his conception of the role of the public historian and contribute to public understanding of history. By the end of 2013 he has helped to train 200+ individuals (attached to Surrey History Centre, Heritage Lottery Fund, National Trust, English Heritage, Historic Royal Palaces and the BBC) in the professional communication of the past, transforming practice in the sector. The benefit of this training is evident in the funded internships and placements provided by two partners – HRP and Parliament's Education Service.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Is England's Past For Everyone? Conference report 2009, http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/sites/default/files/page-attachments/conference_report_6039.pdf Evidence of external practitioners seeking input from Champion regarding public history responsibilities.

2. Evidence of an event and the reaction of the participants to Champion's input to that event. The Prince's Teaching Trust, <http://www.princes-ti.org.uk/News/detail.shtml?id=944405886> and testimonials <http://www.princes-ti.org.uk/AboutUs/Testimonials/>

3. Director, The Prince's Teaching Trust. This source will corroborate the impact of Professor Champion's research in relation to the Trust.

4. Chair of the HA Committee for Public History, The Historical Association. The source will corroborate the impact of Champion's research in relation to the Public History project at the Historical Association.

5. M. Reitz, 'Historians told to be 'evangelical' in their duty to inform public', *THES*, 10 June 2010 <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=412196>

6. Melvyn Bragg 'Gödel, Leibniz, Socrates, JS Mill – does this sound like dumbing down?', *The Observer*, 2 May 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2010/may/02/melvyn-bragg-academic-bbc-internet>

7. HA Report 'Eminent Historians Debate Public History and the Historical Record', 4 February 2011, http://www.history.org.uk/news/news_1036.html

8. This source corroborates the impact of Champion's research in relation to the preparation of school teaching and public history activities in the USA. Shakespeare Uncovered Teacher Viewing Guide, PBS, USA, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/shakespeare-uncovered/education/shakespeare-uncovered-teacher-viewing-guide-professional-development-resource/shakespeare-uncovered-teacher-viewing-guide-the-tempest-with-trevor-nunn/>

9. Cabinet Member for Community Services and 2012 Games, Surrey County Council [for local Magna Carta-related impact].

10. Chair, Communities Select Committee, Surrey County Council [for local Magna Carta-related impact].