

Institution: University of Liverpool

Unit of Assessment: 30 - History

a. Context

The beneficiaries of the research conducted by historians at the University of Liverpool are both numerous and diverse. They include: museums and galleries and their visitors; practitioners in the heritage and cultural sectors; community organisations; school teachers and their pupils; the self-employed as well as larger businesses; and the media. Some beneficiaries are local (Liverpool City Council; National Museums Liverpool), others are national (BBC; Department for Education), while many are overseas (from continental Europe to West Africa and the USA). The impact of our research has been especially strong in Ireland, due to the work of historians based in the Institute of Irish Studies, which - along with the Department of History - forms part of the School of Histories, Languages and Cultures.

The types of impact our research has achieved are similarly wide-ranging, but there are some prominent pathways. We have long been collaborating with National Museums Liverpool – the largest concentration of museums and galleries outside London – to generate impact through exhibitions and public events. This activity has been especially intensive in the last ten years due to new initiatives such as the International Slavery Museum (2007) and the Museum of Liverpool (2011). Engagement with local government and cultural organisations has directly informed culture-led contributions to economic prosperity and urban regeneration (notably in **Belchem’s** input to the development of Liverpool’s successful bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2008). Our research has been widely utilised by the media – in press commentaries, radio discussions and television documentaries – enabling us to contribute to public debate and understanding of history and current affairs. It has also informed the work of community organisations, ranging from **Elliott’s** contribution to events organised by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council to an original stage play inspired by **Davies’** research on youth gangs, written and performed by a community theatre company.

b. Approach to impact

We maximise the impact of our research by three means: supporting individual researchers, fostering collaboration through Research Centres and the Institute of Irish Studies, and engaging with University initiatives such as the ‘Policy Provocations’ public debate series. All staff are encouraged to explore the potential impact of their research beyond the academy. This is addressed at each stage of the research process, from research design to dissemination of findings. Individual impact plans are recorded in Portfolios of Activity completed each year by all members of staff and discussed one-to-one with senior colleagues as part of the University’s annual process of Professional Development and Review. Assessment of the potential for impact is now a major component of internal peer-review of grant applications (co-ordinated by the School of Histories, Languages and Cultures). Individual research allowances (currently £500 p.a.) and institutional sabbatical leave, previously reserved for archival research and writing-up, are now additionally used to enhance the impact of research. All staff are likewise encouraged to disseminate their research findings as widely as possible through talks to historical societies (locally and nationally), blogs, and through the media. Researchers in the School work with the University’s press office in providing expert opinion on news hitting the headlines, and developing press releases on research findings, such as the recent work by **Davies** on Glasgow gang culture, and public events, including the four panel discussions on conflict resolution hosted between 2008 and 2013 by the Institute of Irish Studies.

Our commitment to maximising the impact of our research is illustrated through the work of the Institute of Irish Studies and each of our Research Centres. The Institute, which maintains high-level political and diplomatic links, was endowed by the Irish government (2008) in part in recognition of ‘its valuable outreach and cultural programming to the wider public’. Liverpool’s Research Centres have long-standing ties to public-facing institutions. The *Centre for the Study of*

Impact template (REF3a)

International Slavery is a joint venture with the International Slavery Museum; the *Eighteenth-Century Worlds* Research Centre has developed links with the Walker Art Gallery and the Athenaeum; and the *Liverpool Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies* has recently appointed a representative of National Museums Liverpool (NML) to its Board.

Our long-standing partnership with the museums and galleries that make up NML enables us to feed research findings into new galleries and exhibitions. For example, **Ashworth** was appointed the official academic consultant on the development of a national tax museum (now the UK Border Force National Museum, housed within Merseyside Maritime Museum). Insights from Ashworth's monograph, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production, and Consumption in England, 1640-1845* (2003), directly informed the museum's permanent exhibition ('Seized! The Border and Customs Uncovered'), which opened in 2008 and had attracted more than one million visitors by January 2012.

Our collaborations with NML have also helped to increase the impact of our research overseas. The *Centre for the Study of International Slavery* facilitated the development of a series of international summer schools (2009-2011) on 'A Shared History of the Transatlantic Slave Trade' between historians at the University of Liverpool, the Education Department of NML, the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition at Yale, and the University of York (see the *History Teaching Review Yearbook*, 24, 2010.) These summer schools discussed the use of our research findings in secondary schools with teachers from the UK, Ghana and the USA. Further international impact stemmed from **van den Bersselaar's** collaborative research with NML's Zachary Kingdon (see REF2), which not only informed the Africa Gallery in Liverpool's World Museum (opened in 2005), but also resulted in invitations from the Centro de Estudos Afro Orientais in Salvador, Brazil (2011, 2012), where it informed a redesign of the gallery of the Afro-Brazilian Museum (2013).

Beyond our connections with museums and galleries we have developed a broad network incorporating organisations in Merseyside and beyond, which makes it easier to plan future impact. For example, much of the activity documented in the REF3b case study 'Liverpool: Identity, History and Heritage' was designed around existing links with Liverpool Record Office, Liverpool Central Library and Liverpool City Council. These links, which are being consolidated at University level through the Heseltine Institute for Public Policy and Practice, continue to provide avenues for impact for historians, most notably in **Milne's** 'Mapping Memory' project exploring memories of Liverpool's waterfront districts.

In addition to planned impact activity, our approach is to support unanticipated impact arising from our research. For example, after **van den Bersselaar** had completed his cultural history of gin in West Africa, he was approached by the Jenever Museum in the Netherlands to produce an exhibition based on his research. 'King of Drinks: Jenever in Ghana' (2007-8) attracted the largest number of visitors in the history of the Museum. Significantly, the idea for the exhibition was proposed not by van den Bersselaar, but by Lucas Bols B.V. (one of the leading Dutch gin producers). Bols used material from van den Bersselaar's research for its own marketing and PR for several years, and the Museum included the research in a subsequent exhibition on gin exports in 2011-12. As this example highlights, many of our research projects have multiple beneficiaries, with impact extended over a number of years.

The annual University public debate series, 'Policy Provocations', organised by the Heseltine Institute, has provided another opportunity to produce tangible impact from our research. **Towsey** drew on his work on the history of reading to arrange a 'Policy Provocation' debate that brought together leading policy makers, charitable bodies, professional librarians, media commentators, academics, and library users to debate the future of public library provision in the UK. This led to a new, historically-focused research network, which held its first workshop at the University in 2011. As this example demonstrates, we strive for a 'virtuous circle' through which our research generates impact, and impact in turn generates new directions for research.

c. Strategy and plans

Our goals are: (i) to continue to generate diverse types of impact from our research through engagement with beneficiaries in a wide range of sectors (including museums and galleries, policy-makers, the media, community organisations and large businesses) locally, nationally and overseas; (ii) to ensure that more impact is generated from research into medieval and early modern history. We aim to meet these goals via strategic appointments of new staff, and by establishing new mechanisms for sharing best practice and external contacts.

Potential for research impact has been specifically discussed as part of the appointment process for all academic positions since 2008, and new staff are already making significant contributions to our Research Centres and the Institute of Irish Studies. Recent appointments have enabled us to maintain our long-standing links with NML. **Milne** benefits from many of the links cultivated by **Belchem**, and is developing new contacts with, for example, the artists' collective, Re-Dock. **Huzzey's** appointment was made in part to enhance our links with the International Slavery Museum: from 2012-13, he has organised the annual public seminar series of the *Centre for the Study of International Slavery*. **Towsey** is developing links between the *Eighteenth-Century Worlds* Research Centre and the Liverpool Athenaeum. New colleagues are also strengthening our contribution to public understanding through the media. **Downham** has made a series of television appearances, notably in the BBC/RTE co-production, 'The Story of Ireland' (2011), which attracted weekly audiences of 1.2 million. More recently, she wrote ten children's programmes for RTE's 'Storybike' series, drawing on Irish legends and folklore (broadcast 2013). Her appointment will help to boost the impact generated from our research into medieval and early modern history.

In 2013, we established a new series of dedicated impact workshops for historians in the School of Histories, Languages and Cultures to enable us to share best practice. Along with external contacts (including curators from NML), colleagues from the Heseltine Institute and the University's support departments will be invited to these sessions. For example, the University's senior press officer will lead a training session on communicating research findings through the media (this assistance has previously been provided to staff on a one-to-one basis). Support is also provided for doctoral students in a session on 'Pathways to Impact' as part of our Postgraduate Development Programme. A History Impact and Knowledge Exchange Lead (currently **Towsey**) helps to keep staff aware of new developments and opportunities. During 2014, we will establish a database of external contacts. This will help both to share contacts across the School, and to ensure that relationships can be maintained in the event of future staff departures.

d. Relationship to case studies

Our case studies illustrate both the numerous and diverse beneficiaries of our research, and the wide-ranging types of impact that our research has generated. The impact of **Belchem's** research into Liverpool 'exceptionalism' demonstrates the importance of our established connections on Merseyside, including Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Record Office as well as NML. Belchem's work has been of value to practitioners in the cultural and heritage sectors both locally and across Europe. **Davies'** work on youth gangs in Victorian Manchester has had wide-ranging impact, notably in inspiring new forms of artistic expression but also among practitioners in the education, criminal justice and tourism sectors. Davies' collaboration with MaD Theatre Company - a major, unanticipated beneficiary of his research - was facilitated by dedicated, internal sabbatical leave and financial support (including a grant towards the cost of staging additional performances in Liverpool). Beneficiaries of **Elliott's** research include the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council and the Belfast Exposed gallery. Belchem, Davies and Elliott have all made substantial contributions to public understanding of current affairs, as well as history, through their media appearances. Each of our case studies is multi-faceted, in keeping with the breadth of the impact of our research.