

Taking History into the World

Annotated Bibliography

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Introduction

This annotated bibliography is a little different in that it is less focused on history than others featured on this website. Rather than providing an overview of a specific discourse or historical theme, the intention is to point the reader in the direction of texts that explore some interesting ideas and perspectives on both ‘taking history into the world’ and on the social role of higher education more broadly. It begins with a historian’s view on the value of history beyond universities, then moves on to texts examining and critiquing the concept of the civic university, concluding with a handful of case studies that bring these two themes together.

The historian’s public role

Justin Champion, ‘What Are Historians For?’, *Historical Research*, 81:211 (2008), pp. 167–88.

Based on his inaugural lecture delivered at Royal Holloway, University of London, in 2006, Justin Champion’s soul-searching article on the shifting and evolving significance and value of historical research still feels relevant nearly two decades on. Champion reflects upon the importance of challenging pseudo-histories and conspiracy theories through factually grounded, rigorous scholarship. Yet he argues firmly against a closed world of academic scholarship cloaked in exclusive language and retreating into inaccessible elite journals and books. For Champion, the key imperative for the discipline is to directly engage with the public, and to make history interesting, accessible, and relevant for the world outside of the academy.

The civic university

John Goddard et al. (eds), *The Civic University: The Policy and Leadership Challenges* (Cheltenham and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2016).

This volume of collected essays and case studies asks important questions such as: ‘What are universities for?’ and ‘What benefit do they bring to civil society, and how?’ The chapters explore a range of topics and case studies to address these questions, including discussions on governance, educational systems, external and community partnership working, and theoretical approaches. Two key chapters may be of particular interest to student readers. In chapter 2, ‘The historical roots and development of the civic university’, Paul Vallance analyses the historical context of the ‘civic university’ from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries with a particular focus on Europe and America. He highlights significant tensions that have arisen in higher education between the more recent marketization of the sector and the historical social mission of these institutions. In the volume’s fascinating opening chapter, ‘Introduction: why the civic university?’, John Goddard and his co-editors present a model for reconciling these tensions and for reconnecting universities to their founding civic principles. They argue that both universities and the wider society benefit greatly from holistic approaches that embed civic engagement into every aspect of the university’s operations.

Case studies

Clyde Ancarno, Oliver Davis and David Wyatt, ‘Forging Communities: The Caerau and Ely Rediscovering Heritage Project and the Dynamics of Co-production’, in Dave O’Brien and Peter Matthews (eds), *After Urban Regeneration: Communities, Policy and Place* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), pp. 113–30.

The Caerau and Ely Rediscovering Heritage (CAER) project utilizes local expertise and the rich and untapped heritage of the Iron Age hillfort in Caerau, south Glamorgan, to develop educational and life opportunities. This article, written relatively early in the project’s life cycle, provides a snapshot of the development of its co-research principles and reciprocal partnerships. It explores the project’s early evolution and impact, both on local participants involved in co-research and on the academics who were learning from these participants and from their community development partners.

Genevieve Carpio, Sharon Luk and Adam Bush, ‘Building People’s Histories: Graduate Student Pedagogy, Undergraduate Education, and Collaboration with Community Partners’, *Journal of American History*, 99:4 (March 2013), pp. 1176–88.

This fascinating article by three postgraduate researchers/teachers provides a critical account of the ‘Building People’s Histories’ project which embedded community-centred archival research into a programme of undergraduate teaching. The project was developed in close partnership with the Southern California Library (SCL), an archive that documents histories of popular struggles against oppression and makes these histories accessible to local communities. The authors introduced undergraduate students to ‘social justice’ efforts through forms of co-creative historical research. Working together with the SCL and local community members, the students employed participant observations, feedback, interviews and archival research in a ‘live project’ that explored experiences of oppression, state violence and poverty. Students were assessed through group work and co-created digital resources that were of benefit to community partners and then archived at SCL. They were also directly involved in curriculum development as the project unfolded, providing an interesting and inspiring example of embedding social mission into the higher education curriculum.

Research for All, UCL Press: <https://journals.uclpress.co.uk/r4a/>

Research for All is an open-access journal focusing on research that involves universities and communities, services or industries working together. Contributors and readers are from both inside and outside of higher education, and include researchers, policymakers, practitioners, community-based organizations, schools and businesses. The journal highlights the potential of active co-creation and public engagement for discovering new knowledge, community development, and for the ‘real world’ impact of research. It features a range of themes that are key to engaged research including the development of reciprocal relationships, good communication, and participatory action research. It explores engagement with different groups and their cultures and contains numerous valuable articles and case studies on engaged research including heritage, history and archaeology.

Conclusion

The articles and books discussed here will help you to better understand the role of history and universities in the wider world, and the potential of different projects to make a difference to communities and researchers. Finding resources that will help you to take your historical skills and knowledge into the world can involve a bit more digging than looking for articles or books on particular historical topics. Many projects that generate co-produced research are based in local communities, so if you are looking for opportunities close to hand, it might be helpful to look at the websites of local community organizations, sites of historical interest, libraries and museums – and also, if you are a student, within your own university.