

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Worcester		
Unit of Assessment: 28 History		
Title of case study: Revealing the identities of enslaved Africans through the preservation of rare and endangered manuscripts		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2011-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Suzanne Schwarz	Professor of History	2011-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Schwarz's role in digitally preserving, and making publicly accessible, documents of outstanding ethical importance, containing evidence on tens of thousands of enslaved Africans released at Sierra Leone, has enhanced international understanding of the identities of individuals uprooted by the Atlantic slave trade. During the United Nation's International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), Schwarz's interpretation of this evidence for diverse public audiences has enhanced global understanding of the importance of Sierra Leone's history to slavery and the African diaspora.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Schwarz's research draws on archival sources in Sierra Leone, America and Britain to reconstruct the identities and experiences of Africans uprooted and displaced by the Atlantic slave trade [References 1, 3, 4, 5]. Her research has explored endangered manuscripts in the Sierra Leone Public Archives (SLPA) containing rare biographical information on approximately 100,000 former slaves who resettled at Freetown between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. Schwarz's specialist knowledge of the sources influenced the award of two British Library Endangered Archives Awards to digitise these records (in collaboration with Paul E. Lovejoy, Distinguished Research Professor and Canada Research Chair in African Diaspora History at York University, Toronto), and these grants reflect the rarity and 'cultural importance' of the slavery collections in Sierra Leone [Grants 1 and 2].</p> <p>Schwarz's reconstruction of African lives in Sierra Leone reveals patterns of global significance, connecting their experiences to locations in the Caribbean, North America, South America, Canada, and slave supply zones in West Africa [References 1, 2, 5]. Importantly, Schwarz's research enables an identification of individuals by their African names, and not by the numbers used on slave ships or the European names allocated in the plantations [References 1, 4, 5]. Making 264 volumes from Sierra Leone available freely on the British Library website (consisting of over 74,000 digitised images), combined with Schwarz's publication and leadership of a major international conference in Freetown in 2012, have shaped the resurgence in Sierra Leone studies.</p> <p>Reconstructing the lives of Africans voluntarily or forcibly re-settled at Freetown has enabled Schwarz to trace individuals who undertook multiple Atlantic journeys [References 1, 5]. Tracing the experiences of individuals released at Sierra Leone by Royal Navy patrols after 1808 has revealed the names and family relationships of people from whom many current inhabitants of Freetown are descended. Schwarz's research in the Royal Archives traces how Africans lives</p>		

were affected by decisions made in Britain in the aftermath of the Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1807 [Grant 4].

Schwarz has extended the scope of her research on reconstructing African lives by securing funding in collaboration with leading scholars in Canada, the USA, and Europe. She was a co-applicant for a successful bid to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to fund an international conference on Liberated Africans in June 2017 [Grant 5]. Her research on Liberated Africans is included in the edited book arising from the conference held at York University [Reference 5]. Her research informs two international research networks. The SHADD Biography project (Studies in the History of the African Diaspora-Documents) is funded by SSHRC, and 'Documenting Africans in Trans-Atlantic Slavery (DATAS)', received support from the 'Trans-Atlantic Platform Social Innovation Call' in 2019 [Grant 3].

3. References to the research

1. S. Schwarz, 'Reconstructing the Life Histories of Liberated Africans: Sierra Leone in the Early Nineteenth Century', *History in Africa*, 39 (2012), pp. 175-207. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hia.2012.0011> [submitted to REF 2014 as part of a History submission of which 75% of outputs were 2* or above]
2. S. Schwarz and P. E. Lovejoy, 'Sierra Leone in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in P. E. Lovejoy and S. Schwarz, eds., *Slavery, Abolition and the Transition to Colonialism in Sierra Leone* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2015), pp. 1-28. [available on request]
3. S. Schwarz, "'A Just and Honourable Commerce": Abolitionist Experimentation in Sierra Leone in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', *African Economic History* 45, 1 (2017), pp. 1-45. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aeah.2017.0000> [submitted to REF 2021]
4. S. Schwarz, 'Adaptation in the Aftermath of Slavery: Women, Trade and Property in Sierra Leone, c. 1790-1812', in M. Candido and A. Jones, eds., *African Women in the Atlantic World 1660-1880. Property, Vulnerability and Mobility* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), pp. 1-37. [Available on request. This edited collection was awarded an 'Honorable Mention' in 2020 for the *African Studies Review* Prize for Best Africa-Focused Anthology or Edited Collection]
5. S. Schwarz, 'The Impact of Liberated African "Disposal" Policies in Early Nineteenth-Century Sierra Leone', in R. Anderson and H. Lovejoy, eds., *Liberated Africans and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 1807-1896* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2020), pp. 45-65. [submitted to REF 2021]

Grants

1. S. Schwarz (Co-I), '[Nineteenth-Century Documents of the Sierra Leone Public Archives \(EAP443\)](#)', British Library Endangered Archives Major Awards, £38,871 (Oct 2011 – Oct 2013).
2. S. Schwarz (PI), '[Preserving nineteenth-century records in the Sierra Leone Public Archives \(EAP782\)](#)', British Library Endangered Archives Major Awards, £25,586 (Jan 2016 – Aug 2018).
3. S. Schwarz (Co-I), '[Documenting Africans in Trans-Atlantic Slavery \(DATAS\)](#)', Trans-Atlantic Platform Social Innovation Call, £34,077 (Jan 2020 - Dec 2022).
4. S. Schwarz was awarded \$4000 through the first round of the Georgian papers Programme Fellowships at the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle in 2016 funded by the Omohundro Institute of Early America History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia.

5. S. Schwarz (Co-I), Funding for an international conference on Liberated Africans at York University Toronto, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), C\$23,000 (Jun 2017).
6. S. Schwarz was awarded a Short-Term Travel Fellowship of \$3000 at the University of Illinois, Chicago to carry out research on the Sierra Leone manuscripts in the Special Collections at the Richard J. Daley Library (2016).

4. Details of the impact

By preserving, and making digitally available, rare manuscripts in the SLPA relating to the life histories of enslaved Africans, Schwarz's research has achieved public impact in two interrelated areas:

1. Making evidence on the lives of tens of thousands of enslaved Africans globally accessible
2. Improving community understanding of the effects of slavery on the lives of enslaved people in Sierra Leone and Brazil.

These community impacts include the improvement of public heritage services, school education on slavery and heritage tourism in Sierra Leone.

1. Making evidence on the lives of enslaved Africans globally accessible:

Schwarz's research has raised international awareness of the ethical significance of the Sierra Leone archives [Sources C, D]. By enabling free public access to archives documenting the names of over 100,000 enslaved Africans released at Sierra Leone, Schwarz has enhanced global understanding of the impact of slavery on the lives of 'previously unknown and unremarked individuals swept up in the Atlantic slave trade' [G]. The United States member of UNESCO's International and Scientific Committee for the Slave Route Project comments that 'Professor Schwarz not only trained and supported local archivists and public historians but she made previously unknown African history available to the world' [G]. The global reach of this material is reflected in the range of countries where the archives have been accessed. As the Head of the Endangered Archives Programme points out the major use of the archives is in the US, Canada and the UK, but 'there are many page views from Sierra Leone, there is also significant interest from Barbados, Colombia and Brazil' [B]. A 'full list of countries' accessing the archives in 2020 includes Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Mexico, Senegal, South Korea, Turkey, among others. Worldwide access to cognate digital collections on slavery in the Royal Archives has also been enabled by Schwarz's research. The Archives Manager notes how Schwarz's research during her Fellowship in 2016 'informed the content of the Georgian Papers Programme catalogue, launched in January 2017'. The catalogue has 'had over 2000 users a month who would otherwise not be able to access material from the UK, the US and worldwide' [F].

Facilitating access to slavery archives is a 'human rights issue', according to the Senior Specialist of ICSC. She notes how 'for far too long ... access to archives has been denied to those who were victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade' [C]. As a result of Schwarz's research, people of African descent around the world can use the digitised archives and databases generated using the archives to trace their ancestry [C, D, H]. It has been noted how Schwarz's research has facilitated increased understanding of the lives of enslaved Africans through her contribution of individual biographies to websites, including <https://liberatedafricans.org> [G].

Since its launch in 2017, this website has had approximately 20,000 users mainly from the US, Brazil and the UK [I].

Schwarz's research on African lives directly reflects the priorities of the United Nations International Decade of People of African Descent, and its importance is emphasised by the recent Black Lives Matter campaigns [D]. The Coordinator of UNESCO's Slave Route Project notes how Schwarz's research has increased public understanding of slavery through her role as an historical adviser to the UNESCO series of films entitled 'Les Routes de L'Esclavage' [E]. These films have been screened widely in the US, Africa, Europe, Australia, and the Caribbean and initial broadcasts and the initial screenings on ARTE had 700,000+ viewers [J].

2. Improving community understanding of the effects of slavery on the lives of enslaved people in Sierra Leone and Brazil:

Schwarz's research has enhanced public heritage provision, shaped heritage tourism initiatives and public education initiatives in Sierra Leone [D, H]. Drawing on funding from the British Library Endangered Archives Awards, Schwarz's leadership has enabled the long-term preservation of a collection of global ethical importance on slavery [A, B, G]. The Chairperson of the Monuments and Relics Commission of Sierra Leone between 2014 and 2018 (MRCSL) commented that Schwarz's work 'has made the resources more secure for the coming generations' [D]. As a direct result of these projects, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) based in the US, devoted resources to an international mission to the SLPA in 2019. The organisation's Senior Specialist for Methodology and Practice noted that Schwarz's work 'made possible a meeting with the Education Minister and, after our mission, both the archives staff and Sites of Conscience member the Campaign for Good Governance joined together to advocate for additional support within the state budget' [C].

Schwarz's research has had the effect of increasing public awareness and use of the collections related to Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone. This increased public engagement with the collections is 'manifested through the incorporation of research materials in community awareness ventures as well as in the creative and tourism industries' [D]. Impact was achieved also through Schwarz's role as an historical adviser for the BBC2 documentary series, *Black and British: A Forgotten History*. Episodes 2 and 3 attracted 1.7 million viewers in 2016 and have been repeated on numerous occasions in the context of the Black Lives Matter campaigns [J]. The documentaries had a clear public impact in Sierra Leone through the development of community heritage initiatives and educational programmes. It is noted how Schwarz's research on Liberated Africans was used to teach primary school pupils in Freetown about their history. The filming showed how the pupils then 'marched to the King's Yard Gate, a National Monument, ... where a plaque was erected to commemorate the struggle and resilience of these people'. Other plaques, erected in public ceremonies at Bunce Island and at the Cotton Tree in Freetown, have since had the effect of promoting 'public education and discourse' [D].

Schwarz gave a presentation on Liberated Africans at the Museu Vivo do São Bento in Duque de Caxias in 2015, an area in Rio de Janeiro state where over 56% of approximately one million inhabitants 'are of African descent', which received significant coverage in *O Globo*, Brazil's biggest newspaper. The museum director describing the impact of the presentation states 'many students, teachers and community members aroused their interest in the stories of Liberated

Africans, freed Africans, narrative of life stories of people who once were enslaved, and Rio de Janeiro's relations with Sierra Leone' [H].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. Senior Government Archivist, Sierra Leone Public Archives, Freetown, Sierra Leone.
- B. Head of the Endangered Archives Programme, the British Library, London.
- C. Senior Specialist, Methodology and Practice, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, New York, USA.
- D. Chairperson of the Monuments and Relics Commission of Sierra Leone (2014-2018), and Managing Director West Africa Heritage Consultants Ltd., Freetown, Sierra Leone.
- E. Coordinator of the UNESCO Slave Route Project, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Sector for Social and Human Sciences, Paris, France.
- F. Archives Manager, Royal Archives, Windsor Castle, Windsor.
- G. Gertrude Conway Vanderbilt Professor of History, Vanderbilt University and U.S. Member, UNESCO International Scientific Committee for the Slave Route Project.
- H. Director de Pesquisa, Museu Vivo do São Bento, Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- I. Distinguished Research Professor and Canada Research Chair in African Diaspora History, York University, Toronto, Canada.
- J. Email correspondence relating to viewing figures and distribution for *Black and British: A Forgotten History* and the UNESCO 'Slave Routes' films.