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Research Assessment Exercise 2020
Impact Overview Statement

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University: The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Unit of Assessment: 34-History
Total number of eligible staff of the university in the UoA: 8

1. Context

The Unit contains distinguished scholars based in both the Division of Humanities and Division of Social Science, who study the history of China and Europe in a global and comparative perspective. The significant impact achieved from their research includes i) contributing to individuals' personal and cultural development through massive open online learning courses and public lectures; ii) enriching cultural heritage unearthed through historical study; iii) contributing to wider public access to and participation in cultural activities; and iv) informing public policy through reference to history. Their scholarly engagement has impacted and benefited the following non-academic user groups: i) members of the general public, in Hong Kong and Taiwan, who have gained access to new understanding of the experience of Chinese prisoners of war (POWs) in 20th-century conflicts through television and public lectures; ii) genealogists and family historians in search of links with Qing-era civil servants; iii) policy-makers informed by lessons from historical research (see case); iv) amateur historians and continuing education students from around the world who wish to learn from cutting-edge research in Chinese social history; and v) members of the Hong Kong public who want to learn more from the humanities and social science more broadly.

2. Approach to impact

Unit members have worked hard to make their research in history engaging, informative and accessible for the public through their choice of research areas, range of publication formats, and by reaching out through different platforms, including mass media (television, social media); massive open online courses (MOOCs); exhibitions; an online repository; and through public lectures delivered with the Hong Kong Museum of History. This approach is demonstrated in the following exemplars:

i) *Raising historical awareness through multimedia activities and outreach*: CHANG, whose pathbreaking study of Chinese POWs in the Korean War is forthcoming with Stanford University Press, has increased knowledge among broad non-academic audiences about this chapter in modern history. He has appeared as an expert commentator in four out of five episodes of the Voice of America television documentary, *Chinese People's Volunteer Army Prisoners of War* (2014-17). He introduced the producers to Korean War POWs, who went on to be featured in the documentary, and also assisted with fact checking. CHANG was invited by Lung Yingtai, Taiwan's former minister of culture, to deliver a public talk on "The Unknown Korean War", at the Civic Taipei Forum (Sept 2018). The talk was attended by over 300 people, including several former ministers, chief editors of two major newspaper in Taiwan, and a former Korean War POW. The talk was broadcast live on Facebook and viewed by 1,200 people. Storm Media, a major online newspaper in Taiwan, published three feature articles about the talk. CHANG has also organized a major exhibition, "Sha Fe: A Humanist Photographer at War (1912-1950)", which collected and for the first time exhibited the important war photographer's oeuvre at the HKUST Library and Archives (March-May 2017).

ii) *Knowledge transfer through online education*: LEE has been a pioneer of massive open online courses (MOOCs) in Asia, using his research on the quantitative social history of modern China as the basis for the 10-week Coursera online course, "Understanding China, 1700–2000: A Data Analytic Approach". Over the past six years, up to 75,000 people have taken the course. Most are in their 30s, with approximately 35% from North America, 30% from South and East Asia, and 25% from Europe.

iii) *Mobilizing research expertise for genealogical enquiries*: In the course of their research, LEE (UoA 34) and CAMPBELL (UoA 27) constructed the China Government Employee Database-Qing,

which contains the career histories of thousands of civil servants in the Qing empire. After receiving enquiries from members of the lay public, who heard about the database and wanted to look up records of ancestors, LEE and CAMPBELL created a website (http://vis.cse.ust.hk/searchjsl) that enables visitors to search for records of officials by name. The platform has handled 16,544 queries since it was launched in 2018.

iv) *Public humanities lectures*: Since April 2012, the Division of Humanities has organized a Public Humanities Lecture program with Hong Kong Museum of History. Its aim is to transfer knowledge from research to the public and stimulate conversations about the multidisciplinary humanities. Members of the UoA in the Division of Humanities have delivered hour-long lectures on a topic of research to a general audience on a Sunday during the semester. These have included Chinese POWs in the Korean War (CHANG), the historical reception of Confucius's philosophy (NELSON), forestry practices of the Miao people in Guizhou (DANIELS), intellectuals and political thought in Nazi Germany (DERMAN), the invention and tradition of modern Chinese tea practice (ZHANG), and the global history of famines in the 20th century (SMITH). A total of 704 visitors attended these lectures during the period of review.

3. Strategy and plans

Over the next six years, the Unit intends to further build on the strategies for maximizing impact that have served it well during the past period of assessment.

i) Building on the success of LEE's massive open online course, other Unit members are planning to offer MOOCs through Coursera in their areas of specialty.

ii) Expansion of LEE and CAMPBELL's online database of Qing-era civil servants is on-going. In addition to the 3,664,080 records that have already been entered, another 1.5 million records are expected to be added in the coming year. As the coverage by the searchable records extends, the number of visitors is expected to increase.

iii) Members of the Unit in the Division of Humanities will continue to share their research with the Hong Kong public through the Public Humanities Lecture series, which has demonstrated its success in engaging the wider community, as well as the interest of the Museum of History, with the academic research carried out in the Unit.

iv) New policies to stimulate the production of impactful research include a series of training sessions and one-on-one consultations, to be launched by the School of Humanities and Social Science Associate Dean for Research in 2020, which will assist faculty to define and measure their impact, identify stakeholders and beneficiaries, and review impact statements from successful research proposals. This will be funded at the School level and monitored at the midpoint and conclusion of the six-year period by an external reviewer.

4. Relationship to case studies

Through publication of a well-received book and widespread media dissemination, LEE has achieved significant impact by: informing policy-making; shaping opinion; and providing access to a historical database of great public interest to Chinese communities in particular. He has pioneered the use of big-data historical research – one of the hallmarks of the research conducted in the Unit – to trace the social background of over 150,000 students at two major Chinese universities over half a century. He and his collaborators were able to show how China's nationwide university entrance exam (*gaokao*) enabled large numbers of students with peasant and manual labor family backgrounds to receive a university education. The publication of this research informed a growing debate among Chinese officials and the general public about the future of the university entrance exam. It was also recommended by one of the highest-ranking members of the Chinese government to an official involved in reviewing policy. Together, this is evidence of the esteem, recognition, and influence that LEE's work enjoys in China and reflects the Unit's approach to achieving impact.