

Institution: University of Birmingham
Unit of Assessment: UoA25 Area Studies
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p><u>Overview</u></p> <p>The Department of African Studies and Anthropology (DASA) is one of the most prominent centres in the world dedicated to the study of Africa and its diasporas. For more than 50 years, our research has spanned an exceptionally wide range of disciplines in the Humanities (History, Literature, cultural production in African and European languages) and Social Sciences (Anthropology, Human Geography, Development Studies, Politics). We have a long tradition of partnership with colleagues and institutions in Africa. Since REF 2014, we have built upon these longstanding commitments, identifying new ways of bringing our close-up, 'on the ground' research into impactful international collaborations. Through our strong presence in major publishing outlets and subject associations, we continue to shape the field of African Studies. DASA has highlighted unequal structures of knowledge production and exchange and advocates for changes that keep African colleagues and institutions, and their concerns, at the heart of the field.</p> <p><u>Research context and strategy</u></p> <p>DASA's influence is disproportionate to our small size (detail in §4). Our outward-looking approach, and our capacity to shape the field of African Studies, is underwritten by strong institutional support and effective mechanisms for devising, reviewing and operationalizing research strategy.</p> <p>DASA sits within the School of History and Cultures, under the umbrella of the College of Arts and Law. Appropriate linkages have been established, vertically and horizontally, to enable DASA to contribute to, and benefit from, the School, College and institutional research environments. DASA's Research Lead and Impact Lead participate in the School Research Committee, alongside the Head of School, the School Head of Research, the School Impact Lead, and the Director of the Birmingham Research Institute for History and Cultures (BRIHC). The School Research Committee provides a vertical link to the College Director of Research and the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, while BRIHC fosters horizontal linkages between DASA and the other subjects in the School (History, Ancient History, Archaeology, Classical Literature and Heritage Studies). Through its participation in BRIHC's thematic workshops, lecture series and capacity-building events, DASA engages with approximately 80 academic colleagues in cognate disciplines whose research spans all time periods across the globe.</p> <p>At REF 2014, DASA's over-arching aim was to generate and nurture world-leading interdisciplinary research on Africa and its diasporas - in individual staff members' projects, through our own interdisciplinary departmental community, and up to the level of international collaboration. In 2014, we had a four-pronged strategy for achieving this:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. diversification beyond our historic focus on West Africa; 2. the positioning of DASA as a 'hub' for Africa-focussed research, providing expertise to other disciplines and centres across the University of Birmingham, and raising our

- profile across the Midlands;
3. the sustenance and formalisation of partnerships with Africa-based colleagues and African institutions, including in the area of postgraduate research supervision;
 4. fundraising, and the establishment of scholarships for African postgraduate students.

Through the period 2014-20, DASA reviewed its progress against these strategic goals, notching up achievements in all four areas. Bi-annual away days enabled us to identify how our historic strengths and recent successes could be deployed in response to the new priorities and opportunities that arose within our institution and beyond. Our evolving research strategy is grounded in the thoughtful combination of longer-term commitments with agile responses to a fast-changing research environment. Goals identified in 2014 have served as launch pads from which to develop strategies for the **enhancement of research impact, research integrity and open research**.

Goal 1 – diversification beyond historic focus on West Africa

Despite its apparently similar size (7.6 FTE entered in REF 2014 and 7.0 FTE in 2020), DASA has navigated a generation change in staffing, furthering our transformation from a Centre of West African Studies to **a centre with expertise across the regions of sub-Saharan Africa and its diasporas**. Institutional support enabled us to go beyond the achievement of geographical breadth outlined at REF 2014. Over the past six years, the department, and institution, has developed a shared strategic focus on

- recruitment of outstanding individuals to three-legged open-ended academic posts;
- development of long-term research careers;
- cultivation of productive synergies in a supportive and inclusive research environment;
- active pursuit of, and strong support for, large research grants that establish and develop international collaborations, include pathways to research impact and facilitate our move towards an open research environment.

These shared priorities have been pursued via the development of six thematic, interdisciplinary and cross-country research clusters, which build on the targeted recruitment of new members of academic staff. The clusters cultivate critical mass through the attraction of postdoctoral and visiting research fellows, the integration of members of our postgraduate community, and the inclusion of fixed-term teaching staff:

- Gender and kinship [Johnson, Nolte, Skinner]
- Livelihoods, resources and mobility [Cline-Cole, Di Nunzio, Fesenmyer]
- Religion and difference in everyday life [Nolte, Fesenmyer]
- Slavery and its legacies [Rossi]
- Law, bureaucracy and reform [Johnson, Skinner, Di Nunzio, Bolt]
- Sources and texts [Skinner, Rossi, Nolte, Jones]

These clusters have enabled DASA to develop historic areas of strength, attract research grants and manage international collaborations, so as to deliver research impact and make more of our data and analysis available on open access. Rossi's ICS for REF 2021 was developed within the cluster on 'Slavery and its legacies', building on DASA's tradition of hosting world-leading researchers on slavery over the past 50 years (Tony Hopkins, Robin Law, Ann McDougall and Gareth Austin). Bolt's ESRC Future Leaders Fellowship, and the ICS arising from it, were

developed within the cluster on 'Law, bureaucracy and reform', in synergy with projects led by Johnson (monograph on gender justice) and Skinner (Leverhulme International Academic Fellowship on 'Learning, Leveraging and Living with the Law').

All six clusters have either received, or are working towards, large research grants. Grants held by Bolt (ESRC, in the 'Law, Bureaucracy and reform' cluster) and Skinner (BA/GCRF, in the 'Gender and kinship' cluster) support **our move to an open research environment** by generating primary datasets that are, or will ultimately be, freely available online. Such data may become increasingly valuable to other researchers in the light of COVID-19 travel risks and restrictions. Fesenmyer's ERC award (in the 'Religion and difference in everyday life' cluster) contains provisions for future publications to be made available on Gold Open Access. Johnson's recent book, *Pursuing Justice in Africa* (co-edited with George Karekwaivanane), is freely available to download as a PDF from the Ohio University Press website.

Goal 2 – DASA as a 'hub'

DASA's historic reputation as a leader in the field of African Studies was enhanced by Nolte's presidency of the African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUk) from 2016 to 2018, and by our hosting of the ASAUk's largest-ever biennial conference (detail in §4). In accordance with the strategic goals identified at REF 2014, we have also supported the **institutional emphasis on the civic university and regional engagement**. We have added new outward-facing events, such as Africa Arts Live (detail in §4), to complement our established departmental programme of Africa Talks and our prestigious annual Fage lecture. Our invited speakers come from a diverse range of backgrounds, whilst the Fage lectures have amplified the voices of UK-based academics from minority groups, as well as attracting senior academics from the African continent.

Since REF 2014, departmental events have been scaled up through **strategic intra-institutional and external collaborations**. Our relationship with the University's International Development Department (IDD) was boosted by their appointment of Professor Nic Cheeseman. This generated several DASA-IDD innovations, including the University's first-time hosting of the Royal African Society's 'Africa: Prospects and Forecasts' in January 2017, drawing journalists, leaders of NGOs and businesses (particularly the creative industries) and members of the public; and the founding workshop of the Midlands African Studies Hub in September 2017 (detail in §2).

DASA's pre- and post-2014 work as an Africa 'hub' enabled us to play an important role in institutional responses to the UK government's Global Challenges research agenda, and particularly to the establishment of the University's Institute for Global Innovation (IGI; see REF5a, 2.3). Skinner was an active participant in the institutional consultations that led to the establishment of the IGI, and an early advocate for its emphasis on SDG 5 (gender equality). The IGI has provided crucial support for new research projects in DASA (e.g. Skinner's BA/GCRF project on Ghanaian gender activists) and for the achievement of impact from established lines of research (e.g. an additional grant of £10,000 for Rossi's ICS on legacies of slavery) (detail in §3).

Goal 3 – collaboration and partnership for research excellence and impact

DASA's historic strength, and underlying source of excellence, is its commitment to in-depth, 'on the ground' research in particular African societies and diasporas. This research is essential in

ensuring that global challenges are understood in specific contexts and can be addressed with sensitivity and flexibility. DASA has long recognised that international collaborations provide an important vehicle through which to integrate our own in-depth studies with those of researchers in other countries and fields, and thereby establish global comparative and interdisciplinary engagement. But, since 2014, we have also re-thought older approaches to capacity-building and partnership, so as to establish a new strategy for the achievement of impact from excellent research. We have therefore established new ways of working

- between academics, practitioners and activists
- between academics located in the global north and global south, and particularly on the African continent.

Within DASA, we have **re-thought our annual Cadbury programme**, which, for the past 15 years, has been funded via a generous bequest from the Cadbury family. Hitherto, annual programmes had focussed on the identification of a shared research theme, a call for fellowship applications from early career researchers in Africa, a five- to ten-week programme of developmental activities and events in DASA, culminating in a conference at which our Cadbury fellows presented their papers to an international audience, prior to submission for publication.

Since 2016, the Cadbury programmes have been more closely integrated with staff members' externally-funded projects, extending the capacity-building benefits to more early career researchers from the global north and the global south (e.g. Nolte's 'Learning to be Muslim in West Africa' programme in 2016). We also introduced **shorter visiting fellowships for practitioners and activists**, thus involving them directly in research debates and in the formulation of research agendas and activities, and not merely in dissemination at the end of academic projects. The 2019 Cadbury workshop on 'Law, Custom and Property' established dialogues between academics and legal practitioners; provided opportunities for external partners on particular projects to engage with one another and compare the challenges encountered in different African countries; and enabled broad discussion around a policy-toolkit (for Bolt's ICS).

These innovations drew from DASA's long tradition of partnership with African academic colleagues and institutions. The **collaborations in doctoral training and supervision** that were highlighted at REF 2014 have since been deepened. During her 2019 Leverhulme fellowship, Skinner participated in a three-day programme on feminist research methodology, with postgraduates at the University of Cape Coast (Ghana), and Bolt continued to co-supervise with colleagues at WISER, South Africa, which offered him a visiting fellowship during his ESRC Future Leaders award.

But DASA has also embraced the challenge of '**doing collaboration differently**'. Our strategy is grounded in evidence that international collaboration, and particularly north-south collaboration, is more likely to have meaningful and sustained impact if it is genuinely collaborative – and this means recognising inequalities in structures of knowledge production and exchange. Contributions towards capacity-building of early-career scholars in Africa thus need to be combined with new efforts to tackle the marginalisation of academic colleagues and external partners in the global south, who have too often been treated as gatherers of data, or loosely-defined 'beneficiaries' of research projects formulated in the global north. Within DASA, **research integrity** has extended beyond adherence to the institutional Code of Practice, to encompass greater sensitivity to conditions of academic research in Africa, and in-depth and

context-specific consultations with African partners about research methods, ethics and wider dissemination of findings (including on Open Access).

Thus just as the Cadbury 2019 workshop tackled a division between academic producers of knowledge and practitioner users of knowledge, so staff members' projects and outputs have increasingly built collaboration with Africa-based academic colleagues into the stages of design and analysis, as well as data-gathering and dissemination. This is evident in co-authored/collective outputs (by Skinner & Yayoh, and by Nolte, Jones & Ogen) and new collaborative projects (Skinner with Adomako Ampofo under BA/GCRF). These complement the strenuous efforts of Nolte to ensure that Africa-based colleagues were able to obtain travel funds and appropriate visa invitation letters to participate in the exchange of knowledge at the ASUK conference in 2018 (detail in §4).

Goal 4 – fundraising for international doctoral scholarships

Doctoral training for African students is a key element in DASA's broader commitment to **redressing historical and structural inequalities in African Studies**: without it, young African researchers will struggle to become agenda setters in the future, and this will undermine collaborative efforts to tackle the hierarchical relation of global-north to Africa-based expertise. A key challenge that we flagged at REF 2014 is the need for international students coming to the UK to demonstrate how they will meet tuition and maintenance costs before a student visa is granted.

Whilst DASA's collaboration with UoB's Development and Alumni Relations team was successful in securing generous private donations, our major donor focused on undergraduate student exchange with our established partner, the University of Cape Coast (Ghana). Split-site postgraduate research programmes with African partners remain a medium-term goal. Institutional funding was offered to complement DASA's fundraising efforts: two BRIHC international scholarships were dedicated to the PhD in African Studies, while the institutional Global Challenges Doctoral Scheme has opened up a new opportunity to develop a more diverse postgraduate research community in DASA (detail in §2, see also REF5a, 3.2).

DASA is still committed to securing scholarships for African students who wish to study with us in Birmingham, but our experience suggests that more institutions on the continent are developing PhD programmes, and that sustainable improvements in doctoral training can be achieved via split-site programmes, which are more collaborative and less costly.

Vision for the future

In the forthcoming REF cycle, DASA aims to maintain its long tradition of world-leading research on Africa, and to embed it even more firmly in meaningful and sustainable international collaboration for maximum impact. There are three main strategies through which we will pursue this overarching goal:

1. **Maintain critical mass around the six dynamic research clusters** through
 - continued institutional commitment to a core establishment of academic staff on open-ended three-legged contracts, funded from a sustainable combination of tuition fee and research income; and

- targeted recruitment of staff on open-ended contracts to maintain and enhance areas of historic strength that will be affected by forthcoming retirements and career moves.

2. **A selective but intensive approach to funding applications** that will

- boost our research clusters through visiting and postdoctoral fellowships, and postgraduate recruitment;
- embed from Day 1 collaboration and partnership with Africa-based academics, practitioners and activists, and maintain this approach through the stages of research design, data gathering, analysis, dissemination and impact; and
- extend current efforts to disseminate data and analysis on Open Access, enabling us to connect open research to the broader issues of research integrity in African Studies (as outlined above), and to embed 'openness' from the initial stage of project design.

3. **Continued advocacy for affordable, sustainable and collaborative approaches to doctoral training**, including split-site programmes that make doctoral training more affordable for Africa-based students and build UK-Africa institutional linkages.

2. People

Staffing and recruitment strategy

DASA has navigated a **generation change** in its staffing. Between 2014 and 2018, research income from successful grant applications encouraged the institution to respond to retirements and resignations with investment in five open-ended lectureships, four of which included responsibility for research. This led to the appointments of Johnson and Jones (2016), and Fesenmyer and Di Nunzio (2018). Jones decided to make a career change in May 2020. Bolt moved to Oxford University in April 2020. DASA's total REF-eligible staff resource in 2020 (7FTE) was similar to that entered in REF 2014 (7.6FTE).

The **commitment to three-legged open-ended academic posts** has been critical to the achievement of our strategic goals. Firstly, it enabled us to combine the recruitment of outstanding individuals with our ongoing emphasis on expanding geographic coverage beyond our historic focus on West Africa, leading to the formation of inter-disciplinary and cross-country thematic clusters that scale-up their individual research interests (as described in §1). Secondly, it enabled us to attract a diverse group of talented postgraduate researchers into co-supervision arrangements, and to provide strong support for their projects and career development. Thirdly, the commitment to open-ended posts helped us to monitor equality and diversity over multiple academic years, to ensure that colleagues are supported in a range of ways through the different career stages, and to avoid short-termist decision-making. Research capacity continues to be enhanced by, but is not excessively reliant upon, postdoctoral research fellows and visiting professors.

Geographically, Fesenmyer and Di Nunzio contribute a sub-regional specialist expertise that we had previously lacked (Eastern Africa and the Horn). A successful application, submitted in July 2020, for an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellow will further develop this area of expertise.

Thematically, the appointment of Jones built on our historic reputation in literature, popular culture and African-language texts, as established by Professors Karin Barber and Paulo de Moraes Farias. Jones' expertise cross-fertilised with Skinner/Yayoh's project on African-

language (Eve) newspapers in the era of decolonisation, and Rossi's analyses of Arabic and Hausa sources for the history of the West African Sahel.

Fesenmyer's appointment sets off a new extension to Nolte's pioneering ERC-funded project on inter-faith encounters and practices in Nigeria. DASA is well-placed to support Fesenmyer in the completion of her monograph on transnational kinship (London-Kenya) and her contribution to a new ERC-funded project (hosted at UCL) on multi-religious encounters in urban settings. In his ethnographic research on urban growth, Di Nunzio benefits from Cline-Cole's longstanding expertise on geographies of development (including migration as a livelihood strategy, and access to and use of rural resources), and from Rossi's impactful research on historical and contemporary connections between labour exploitation and human mobility.

Our present geographic spread and thematic synergies are a source of considerable vitality, enabling us to provide expert feedback on each other's new project proposals, draft outputs and impact case studies, in a supportive and inclusive departmental writing group. Johnson's research on law, rights and gender justice in Malawi helped Skinner to develop her Leverhulme International Academic Fellowship proposal on post-Independence reform to family law in Ghana. This in turn helped Bolt to place his research on popular and legal norms in post-Apartheid South Africa into a comparative context during the Cadbury 2019 workshop, and identify possibilities for the scalability of his ICS.

Support for staff members' research

At 31 July 2020, DASA has seven members of staff with significant responsibility for research: three lecturers, two senior lecturers, two readers. Five are women and two are men; two are white British, three are white and of continental European background, one is white North American, and one is black African. Five staff members are carers of children under the age of 18; four took year-long maternity leaves in this REF cycle, whilst two took shorter parental leaves. One staff member spent approximately two years on a part-time contract in order to balance work and caring responsibilities.

All members of staff participate in a **robust mentoring system**, tailored according to career stage. In their first year, new lecturers are automatically given a workload reduction so as to ease their transition to three-legged responsibilities and maintain their research momentum. New lecturers in DASA are encouraged to develop specialist optional modules, which showcase their own research in their teaching and place their individual projects within a wider scholarly field. All new lecturers have an initial meeting with a College Research Funding Facilitator, which enables the Research Office to be proactive in matching appropriate funding opportunities to the new lecturers' research goals. New lecturers are guided through a three-year probation and professional development plan, including written yearly reviews with input from the Head of School, and quarterly discussions of progress with their mentors (REF5a, 3.4.3).

With the retirement of Professor Karin Barber, **research leadership** in DASA has passed to the next generation. In order to support this transition, DASA's mid-career cohort has taken up a range of opportunities created through institutional investments in leadership training (REF5a, 3.4.4). Nolte, Skinner, Rossi and Bolt were all selected for and completed leadership programmes. The alignment of individual, unit-level and institutional priorities is pursued through supportive annual Performance and Development Reviews. Everyone who was a lecturer at REF 2014 achieved promotion. DASA's current and former Heads of Department, Research Leads and Impact Leads are all women. This has helped us to achieve **gender parity** on

appointment panels since 2014 and to put new lecturers into probationary and mentoring arrangements with senior women (although additional measures are still required to promote diversity in future recruitment and staff development – see below).

All members of academic staff receive a personal research allowance (usually £1000 per year), and they are entitled to apply for one semester of study leave after six semesters of teaching and administrative service. In order to support projects of exceptional scale and significance, develop impactful projects, or kick-start research after intensive administrative service, staff members can apply for additional or double study leave. Skinner benefitted from a double study leave in 2017/18, enabling her to write two successful research funding applications after the end of her three-year period as Head of Department. Rossi also benefitted from an additional study leave in 2018/19, to focus on the development of impactful research and a successful application for an ERC Advanced Grant.

In order to ensure equal opportunities to conduct research and achieve impact from research, eligibility to apply for study leave continues to accrue through maternity leave and sick leave; academic colleagues returning from maternity leave are entitled to a remission on one of the three legs of their academic contracts; and workloads of all staff are monitored by the Head of Department on a termly basis. Criteria for promotion to reader and professor place a strong value on the achievement of research impact, as well as on publication, grant income, contributions to the scholarly field, and indicators of esteem (REF5a, 3.4.6).

All members of academic staff, including postdoctoral research fellows, participate in a supportive writing group, which provides feedback on draft proposals, outputs and impact case studies. Staff members have also benefitted from the targeted input of visiting professorial fellows, e.g. Jane Guyer, who visited under a Leverhulme scheme in 2015 and supported Bolt's ESRC Future Leaders application. **Postdoctoral research fellows** are given development opportunities that cohere with their research projects, e.g. leading research training sessions based on their expertise and experience, convening postgraduate reading group modules, and organising some of the Africa Talks.

DASA has hosted three postdoctoral research fellowships since REF 2014: Augustina Adusah-Karikari (BA Newton 2013-15), Leslie James (Leverhulme ECR 2014-17) and Rebecca Jones (ERC Knowing Each Other project, 2014-16). All of our postdoctoral research fellows progressed into open-ended three-legged academic posts. This is a reflection of their individual quality and our mechanisms for integrating them into a dynamic and supportive research culture. DASA also shared in a Global Challenges postdoctoral research fellowship programme run by BRIHC (detail in §1).

DASA values the **wide range of research activities and outputs** that staff members contribute to the field of African Studies. Where it is necessary to select outputs for REF grading, we have endeavoured to do so fairly, transparently and rigorously, guided by the institutional Code of Practice for REF 2021. A unit-level reading and grading group, which includes the Head of Department and the current and former research leads, ensures that each output is read twice within the unit before it proceeds to a College group. Declarations of individual circumstances are voluntary, confidential and handled in line with the institutional CoP.

In recognition of the need to maintain and step up commitments to **equality, diversity and inclusion**, DASA participated in a large data-gathering and self-assessment exercise within the School in 2018 and 2019. The DASA research lead is carrying out an evaluation of annual

Performance and Development Reviews across the School, with a view to ensuring more consistent mentoring for all members of academic staff. We also follow the principles of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic inhibited recruitment to University-funded open-ended three-legged academic posts in 2020. However, the COVID-related cancellation of our usual Cadbury programme in the spring of 2020 resulted in an accumulation of funds, which DASA proposes to spend on the establishment of an 18-month fellowship for an Africa-based early-career scholar in 2021-22.

Postgraduate researchers

All postgraduate researchers now have a minimum of two supervisors and some have three, enabling a wide range of thematic, methodological, theoretical and country-specific expertise to be brought to bear upon dissertation projects. DASA runs its own PhD programme in African Studies; in addition, our experience in an ESRC-funded doctoral training partnership with five African institutions (2012-15) leads us to take the **broadest possible approach to shared supervision**. We contribute supervision to, and draw it from

- other units at our own institution, particularly History, International Development and English Literature;
- other UK institutions with whom we have shared doctoral training arrangements – e.g. Skinner contributes supervision to Julia Fernando at Aston via an ESRC-DTP arrangement, and Jones co-supervised AHRC-funded students with colleagues at Nottingham Trent and Leicester;
- international exchange programmes – e.g. Rossi supervised Ana Luiza de Oliveria Silva from the University of São Paulo under the CAPES sandwich scheme, whilst Skinner supervised Kirsty Wissing from Australia National University through the Scope Global Endeavour programme.

The shift away from sole-supervisor arrangements and towards shared supervision within DASA and across other units/institutions, has helped to establish a virtuous cycle. Our current doctoral researchers have access to a wider range of expertise and are stimulated by interdisciplinary insights and cross-country comparisons; the successes of current doctoral researchers (in terms of completion, publication and future employment) strengthen DASA's reputation with key national and international funders of doctoral research; this enables us to work with talented prospective doctoral researchers to establish original, significant and fund-able projects, thereby building our diverse research community.

Since REF 2014, despite our small size, we have had a steady stream of **prestigious doctoral funding**: five doctoral awards from the AHRC Midlands Consortium (M4C), including two run in partnership with cultural organisations; one collaborative AHRC award with the British Library; two ESRC awards, and two joint awards under the institution's inter-disciplinary Global Challenges doctoral scholarship scheme (Cline-Cole with a colleague in Geography, and Johnson with a colleague in Political Science). Partly as a result of these awards, during the assessment period DASA awarded 16 doctoral degrees (compared with 9 in the last census period). Amongst our M4C and ESRC award-holders are two parents of young children, one of whom is studying on a part-time basis alongside caring responsibilities. Supervisors **support doctoral researchers with caring responsibilities** through the flexible scheduling of supervision meetings, and the use of Skype supervision where necessary.

Institutional scholarships have been critical in enabling talented postgraduate researchers from Africa and the global south to overcome cost barriers, pay their tuition and provide the evidence of maintenance that is required for their student visa applications. So far, the BRIHC international scholarships for African Studies have supported one Indian woman and one Zimbabwean man. Two DASA candidates (both Ghanaian men) were successful in the College of Arts and Law doctoral scholarship competition, whilst another DASA candidate (a French woman) was successful in the institutional competition for an AE Hills scholarship. The initiation of a Distance Learning PhD programme has also reduced maintenance costs (although not tuition fees) for Africa-based postgraduate researchers, and provided another option for those who need to balance caring responsibilities or paid work with their research. Our first graduation via this route was achieved by a Kenyan woman in 2019, and another student is now close to thesis submission.

DASA adheres to the institutional focus on a rigorous but supportive approach to monthly supervision and annual progress review, and the documentation of these meetings in standardised online forms. In order to ensure a culture of research integrity, all postgraduate research projects are subject first to a supervisor-led self-assessment of ethical considerations; the majority of DASA projects proceed to full ethical review, according to the institutional Code of Practice (REF5a, 2.2). Departmental relationships with African partner institutions also allow for consultation with Africa-based academics around ethical issues arising in particular projects and contexts.

Postgraduate researcher training needs analyses are conducted annually and mapped on to a suite of research skills courses offered by the University graduate school (REF5a, 2.2). Paid teaching assistant roles are advertised across the School. Wherever possible, development opportunities are matched up with sources of financial support, and postgraduates are encouraged to propose and convene their own events. In May 2017, two DASA M4C award-holders convened a conference of 40 researchers on 'Postcolonialism in Interdisciplinary Perspective', drawing from the M4C's cohort development fund.

In order to cultivate research impact in the future, DASA has been particularly supportive of funding applications that embed collaboration with cultural organisations into doctoral projects. Examples include Jones' support for Pernille Nailor's partnerships with the Africa in Words blog and the Africa Writes Festival, and Stacey Kennedy's partnership with the Ikon Gallery and the Art X Lagos Fair.

Staff members' externally-funded projects have also provided opportunities for postgraduate researchers to gain experience and develop new skills – e.g. Rossi's SLAFNET project employed Pernille Nailor and Tessa Pijnaker in the organisation of the 'Slavery, Post-Slavery and Gender' conference in March 2018. Postgraduate researchers have also presented their work at workshops convened by DASA staff members and by colleagues in the School, e.g. Nimrita Rana presented at Skinner's 2017 Cadbury conference on 'Marriage in Africa', and Jovia Salifu presented at the 2018 BRIHC workshop on 'Debt: the first 5000 years'. The **Midlands African Studies Hub**, which was established as a DASA-IDD collaboration in 2017, has held annual workshops (Coventry 2018 and Warwick 2019) that provide postgraduates with opportunities to present, receive feedback and network across Midlands institutions. This is important for DASA as a small department, since it links our postgraduates into a larger Midlands research community.

DASA's hosting of ASAUK 2018 gave our postgraduates ready exposure to a major international conference. Multiple opportunities to present have encouraged our postgraduates to refine their work for international peer-reviewed publications. One notable postgraduate achievement was the publication in 2018 of an article by Nathalie Raunet Robert-Nicoud, in one of the major journals in Area Studies (*African Affairs*). Visiting PhD student Ana Luiza de Oliveria Silva (from Brazil) also went on to publish in a special issue of *Islamic Africa*, edited by Nolte.

After graduating, several DASA alumni have been employed as postdoctoral researchers on staff members' externally-funded projects (Jones on Nolte's ERC project, and Jovia Salifu on Skinner's BA/GCRF project). Three others have secured postdoctoral research fellowships in South Africa (Tom Penfold and David Kerr at the University of Johannesburg, and Allen Kiconco at the University of the Witwatersrand). PhD graduates from the previous REF cycle are now making a significant impact and are providing important Africa-focussed expertise to research projects in other academic disciplines and to related sectors. Eunice Apio is now a research fellow on an ERC Gender and Transitional Justice project run out of the Birmingham Law School, whilst Plangsat Dayil is now Acting Director of the Centre for Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Jos (Nigeria). Dayil's research has analysed the Bring Back Our Girls movement, and highlighted the gendered dimension of the political violence in Jos and elsewhere in Nigeria. Paul Naylor is now Cataloger of West African Manuscripts at the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (USA).

In order to maintain and strengthen an **inclusive research culture** among postgraduate researchers, the School has expanded and consolidated welfare support, paying particular attention to mental health. The Africa Talks have been scheduled earlier in the day to reduce barriers to participation for researchers with caring responsibilities. Online presentation platforms are being trialled in 2020 as a response to COVID-19. This will benefit our distance learners, and it has enabled the pairing of speakers and discussants from global north and global south institutions, in the spirit of more equal knowledge exchange.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

By maximising unit-level, College-level, and institutional expertise and resources, DASA has secured grants of various sizes (totalling research income of £1,566,950 during the current REF period) for a wide range of research and impact activity. This **diversity of funding** has enabled us to realise commitments to

- interdisciplinarity and associated methodological innovation,
- studying oral and literary texts in African languages,
- the production of world-leading outputs (including substantial book-length projects),
- the increased dissemination of data and findings on open access,
- sustaining ambitious international collaborations for the generation of impact from our research.

Bolt's ESRC Future Leaders Fellowship (£142,690) supported a year of immersive ethnographic fieldwork in the Johannesburg courts and associated legal bureaucracy, and the generation of an open access dataset of estates files (wills). Skinner's BA/GCRF award (£267,016) is supporting filmed interviews with gender activists in Ghana, leading to the archiving of transcripts on open access, and a free-to-view documentary. Nolte's ERC award (£1,012,851, distributed across the 2014 and 2021 REF periods) supported a large-N ethnographic survey in

Nigeria, and an innovative interdisciplinary analysis of that survey data via computer-driven corpus methods (detail in §4).

In the context of a squeeze on modern languages in the UK university sector, DASA has **secured funding to maintain and enhance its commitment to research with African-language texts**. The tradition established by Professors Barber (FBA) and de Moraes Farias (FBA) is being taken forward by various colleagues. Skinner's BA IPM-funded project with Wilson Yayoh (£26,165) supported a book-length translation and analysis of an African-language (Eve) newspaper from the Ghana-Togo borderlands. Following her research on the Agadez chronicles and Y Tarichi, Rossi became a senior research fellow on the new ERC-funded LANGARCHIV project on Hausa and Kanuri sources. Jones successfully developed her AHRC-funded doctoral research into a monograph on Yoruba travel-writing, whilst Di Nunzio's ethnography of street life in Addis Ababa also entailed substantial research with Amharic newspapers.

Smaller, but very prestigious awards, such as Rossi's IGK Re:Work fellowship at Humboldt University (£19,531) have supported periods of intensive writing, contributing to high-quality outputs. Skinner's Leverhulme International Academic Fellowship (£9,713) supported a 'discipline hopping' experience at the University of Cape Coast, enabling her to engage with legal scholars and practitioners, so as to develop a new area of expertise in legal history.

Participation in funded collaborations, such as SLAFNET (EU-RISE), CHIBOW (EU-ITN) and CSiW (SSHRC), and leadership of LESLAN (AHRC-GCRF) (£94,071), have been central to the internationalisation of Rossi's research on historic and contemporary forms of slavery in Africa. Funded collaborations have also enabled the development of her close relationships with Africa-based researchers, anti-slavery activists, heritage institutions, and providers of services for people who have experienced enslavement (further detail in her ICS).

College research development staff helped Bolt to plan for the maximum impact of his research during his ESRC Future Leaders Fellowship, from the initial design through the methods for the delivery and recording of impact. Institutional funding further supported the project by enabling the extension of activities beyond the project period.

Strategies to support the drafting of high-quality funding proposals include the use of our unit-level writing group to secure specialist feedback, and the identification by the College Research Office of experienced colleagues to serve as internal peer reviewers of applications. Institutional investments have proved critical to the success of medium and large applications: Bolt's ESRC Future Leaders Fellowship was secured following a successful pilot study carried out with College seed funding; the IGI provided Skinner with an additional £6,185 to enable the purchase of film equipment that was beneficial to her BA/GCRF project but could not be accommodated within the external funders' rules. IGI has also provided additional funding for the achievement of impact from established strands of research (e.g. supporting Rossi with an additional £10,000).

Whilst mid-career staff have secured the largest awards, strategies are in place to ensure a pipeline. Probationers are not expected to raise a specific amount of funding but they are supported to write at least one high-quality funding application as part of their three-year probation plan, and receive support for this from colleagues in the relevant research cluster.

The UoB Main Library is one of the largest university libraries in the UK with 1.8 million print and 500,000 online books, and over 85,000 print and online journals (REF5a, 4.3). The library has a substantial collection of African archival material including the Church Missionary Society papers, the Cadbury Papers 1890-1960, the Joseph Chamberlain papers, a collection of West African popular pamphlets, the Swanzy “Caribbean Voices” papers, and, on microfiche, a large collection of African newspapers as well as the Bascom Collection of early Yoruba publications. It has also acquired access to the online World Newspaper Archive providing searchable text for early African newspapers (1800-1922). The newspaper collections proved critical to Leslie James’ choice of DASA as the host for her Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship (2014-17), and to Jones’ monograph on Nigerian travel-writing.

The Danford Collection of West African Art and Artefacts, a major collection of more than 500 items curated by the University’s Research and Cultural Collections staff, is housed in the department and used both in teaching and as a focus for research and engagement. In 2018/19, the collection acquired a series of masks from the Eastern Niger Delta (the Salmons-Nicklin collection). Cataloguing is still in progress, but a preliminary exhibition of the masks was facilitated by Nolte in September 2019, during the ASUK conference.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

Research collaborations, networks and partnerships

DASA exercises an influence disproportionate to its small size. This is not only through the achievements of outstanding individuals, but also through a strong presence in leading publication outlets and subject associations, and a commitment to re-thinking our relationships with African colleagues and institutions. This has made us both an initiator of impactful international collaborations, and a partner-of-choice for networks established elsewhere.

Nolte’s presidency of the African Studies Association of the UK (ASUK) provided new avenues for the commitment to ‘doing collaboration differently’. Central to this commitment has been action to address the marginalisation of Africa-based colleagues from knowledge exchange at international conferences. Following up on the well-publicised visa refusals at the previous ASUK conference (Cambridge 2016), Nolte worked with the ASUK council and membership, and the University of Birmingham, to raise the number of Africa-based delegates to the 2018 conference in Birmingham.

DASA’s Cadbury bequest yields income of approximately £27k per annum, some of which was mobilised alongside private donations by ASUK members, to increase the number of conference bursaries. The University of Birmingham directed administrative resources and expertise towards the provision of invitation letters for those applying for visas. Ultimately the conference was attended by 800 delegates, of whom 188 were from African institutions. Almost half of the 40 thematic streams were organised by an African colleague. Africa-based participants in streams and panels convened with or by DASA colleagues were eligible for financial support from the Cadbury Fund.

Nolte (outgoing President) and Ambreena Manji (incoming President) **reported to an All-Party Parliamentary Group (Africa) meeting** on 22 January 2019, reviewing the visa application, refusal and reapplication experiences of the 186 Africa-based delegates who had received letters of invitation from the University of Birmingham. A broader agenda for keeping Africa at

the heart of African Studies was set out in Nolte's presidential address to the conference. This has since been published in the *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. Other DASA staff members share these concerns – including the three (Cline-Cole, Jones and Bolt) who are or have been members of ASAUK council.

DASA staff members are aware of the historic marginalisation of African academics, activists and practitioners into roles as data-gatherers or agents of dissemination. We have sought to tackle this through the **joint determination of research questions and research design**. Examples include Skinner's project run jointly with Adomako Ampofo, and Bolt's legal ethnography, which was conceived and developed in relationship with the Pro-Bono.Org NGO. Projects initiated prior to 2014 have now generated collective publications that break from a historic tendency of global north researchers to separate data-gathering in Africa from analysis in the global north. This is particularly evident in the *Beyond Religious Tolerance* volume, edited by Nolte, Ogen & Jones, arising from their ERC-funded project. This book, and a set of conference proceedings, have also been published in Nigeria, so as to make them more affordable for readers there.

Co-authorship with activists and practitioners has been an important element of specific Impact Case Studies (for example, Bolt with legal practitioner Tshenolo Masha) and of a range of other efforts **to render research accessible, responsive and relevant to wider publics**. Several staff members have shared research findings on blogs – e.g. Fesenmyer's blogposts on the Oxford University Centre on Migration, Society, and Policy; and the posts written by Skinner and her team of researchers and practitioner collaborators, for popular blogs including *Democracy in Africa* and *Critical Interventions in Humanitarianism in Africa*.

Our staff members have become the partner-of-choice for several networks initiated in other countries (e.g. SLAFNET and CSIW), and we have built on this experience to initiate new impactful international collaborations (particularly LESLAN, which was crucial to Rossi's ICS). We have been invited to feed our experiences, and lessons learned, back to major funders. For example, Nolte convened two panels at the GCRF Global Engagement Event for UKRO (at the British Academy, June 2017), and Rossi was invited to present lessons learned from LESLAN to the AHRC in March 2020.

Collaborations have also been key to developing DASA's work as a **centre for methodological innovation**. Whilst DASA has a long tradition of exchange between disciplines within the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, we continue to innovate. For example, in collaboration with linguist Clyde Ancarno, corpus-linguistic methods were used to analyse text from the open-ended questions in the ERC-funded Knowing Each Other survey on inter-religious relations in Nigeria. This generated what we believe to be the very first publication demonstrating an analysis at the intersection of computer-driven Corpus Linguistics and Anthropology.

Wider influence, contributions to and recognition by the research base

DASA's expertise in, and longstanding appreciation of, African cultural production has enabled us to **contribute to major exhibitions**. The British Library hosted 'West Africa: Word, Symbol, Song' for four months in 2015 and 2016. The exhibition attracted 19,002 visitors and was rated 4* by Time Out. De Moraes Farias, Barber and Nolte assisted by organising the loan of material from DASA's Danford Collection, writing notes for exhibition displays and sections of the exhibition book, and advising on a timeline. This relationship laid the foundation for a successful

AHRC collaborative award with the British Library, during which Paul Naylor catalogued their collection of West African Arabic manuscripts.

A departmental series of performances, film screenings and readings (Africa Arts Live), initiated in September 2016, led to an exciting **new collaboration with the Royal African Society and the Birmingham Literature Festival**. This brought an 'Africa Writes' event to Birmingham for the first time in October 2017, thereby making the Birmingham Literature Festival more representative of and responsive to the diverse population of the city. This collaboration, initiated by Jones, is now being developed by her PhD student, Pernille Nailor, under an M4C doctoral award. Jones also utilised institutional funding to initiate a promising new collaboration with the Ugandan writers' collective, Writivism.

DASA's influence in the field of African Studies is enhanced by these collaborations, and by **the esteem in which our staff members are held**. A few indicators of this esteem include the election of Senior Honorary Research Fellow de Moraes Farias as a Fellow of the British Academy in 2016; the appointment of Rossi as the Evans Pritchard lecturer at All Souls' College, Oxford, in 2018; and the selection of Bolt to give the Malinowski lecture at the London School of Economics in 2018. De Moraes Farias and Barber (retired 2017) were awarded (jointly) the Distinguished Africanist Lifetime Achievement Award by the ASAUk in 2018. DASA staff members have been invited to give a range of keynote and public lectures, including several on the African continent. Nolte gave the Vice-Chancellor's lecture and received the VC's honorary award at Lagos State University in October 2016. Skinner gave a public lecture on 'Child Maintenance in Ghana: historical and contemporary perspectives' at the University of Cape Coast in October 2019.

DASA postgraduate researcher Jones was runner-up for the ASAUk's Audrey Richard thesis prize in 2016, whilst monographs by Rossi and Bolt were finalists for both the ASA book prize (Herskovits prize) (ASA-USA) and the Fage & Oliver prize (ASAUk). Bolt's monograph won the BBC / British Sociological Association Ethnography award, and Bolt was interviewed about his research on the BBC radio show *Thinking Allowed*. Di Nunzio's monograph has attracted considerable attention in Ethiopia, including two book launch events, two public lectures, and a radio and a newspaper interview, all in February 2020.

Staff members also make **substantial contributions to leading publications** in the field of African Studies. Building on a tradition established by Barber (retired from DASA 2017), and Shear (retired 2018), Bolt was invited to take up the editorship of *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, and Johnson was invited to take up the editorship of the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, both in 2018. Cline-Cole serves as a co-editor and as a member of the editorial working group of the *Review of African Political Economy*; Nolte continues to sit on the editorial board of *Africa*; Rossi sits on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Global Slavery*, *Slavery and Abolition*, *African Economic History* and *African Studies Review*; Jones sits on the editorial board of the *Journal of African Cultural Studies*; and Fesenmyer sits on the editorial board of the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*. A new development was Jones' managing editorship 2015-17 of the blog *africanwords.com* which makes debates on cultural production in Africa accessible to those excluded by journal pay walls.

DASA staff members also contribute to the publication of high-quality peer-reviewed monographs, through their participation on the committees of prestigious book series. Nolte sits of the board for the *International African Library* series, whilst Skinner sits on the board of the *Fontes Historiae Africanae* series of the British Academy. Rossi sits on the editorial boards for

two major encyclopedias: *Histoire mondiale de l'esclavage* and the *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African Slavery, the Slave Trade and the Diaspora*. Peer-reviews of book manuscripts and proposals have been conducted for Cambridge University Press, Manchester University Press, Routledge, Boydell & Brewer, and James Currey.

Our seven staff members have also reviewed articles for nearly 50 journals, contributing their expertise to

- the field of African Studies,
- the improved coverage of Africa in major disciplinary journals (in history, anthropology, political science, education, development studies and business studies), and
- publishing infrastructure on the African continent.

Finally, in their role as external examiners of PhD theses at 12 different universities during this REF cycle, DASA academics contributed to the sustainability of the discipline through the maintenance of rigorous academic standards and the development through constructive feedback of the next generation of researchers.