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Film, Sound and Photography Issue

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Association
UK & Ireland

CONFERENCE

2019

Welcome...

Sound and visual inspiration

The theme of this month's issue of *ARC,* Film, Sound and Photography, is one that is close to my heart. As someone working largely with this medium, a large part of my time is taken up with thinking about and implementing ways in which to preserve and make accessible this fragile material, and the associated challenges.

It is clear from the articles in this month's issue, from the creation of a photographic collection website (see Launch of the Express & Star photograph website) through to tips on how to best implement an audio-visual digitisation project (see A pitch-perfect plan: how to achieve a harmonious relationship with your A-V digitiser) that there are many exciting projects underway, ensuring that the medium of film, sound and photography is being preserved and made accessible for future generations. The featured articles have inspired me in my own work practice. I am sure they will inspire you, too!

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed articles for this issue. A special thanks to Rebekah Taylor for sourcing the content.

More information on the ARA's Film, Sound and Photography section can be found at archives.org. uk/about/sections-interest-groups/film-sound-and-photography-group-fspg.html

I hope you enjoy this issue!

Alice

Alice McFarlane
ARC Editor

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Can you see the sheep in this aerial image of Orkney? © Crown Copyright

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Openinglines

Videotape: digitise, not fade away

Charles Fairall FCMI MIET
BFI National Archive

If it hasn't happened already, it will not be long before there's a generation that doesn't refer to saving video content or TV programmes as 'taping'. The term has certainly been in daily use within my entire working lifetime, and I imagine goes back to the 1950s, when sound recording onto reel-to-reel magnetic tape became commonplace.

In the early 1960s, video-tape recording revolutionised the television industry, making it possible to edit dramas elegantly in post-production, compile sporting highlights while a game was still in play and time-shifting programmes so that transmission schedules would be less reliant on live broadcasting and relatively cumbersome film materials.

Outside the well-heeled environments of broadcast television and a small number of niche producers, the majority had to wait until the early 1980s before video-tape recording became economically viable for home use, to coincide with an explosion in the video rental market. It felt like no time at all before personal video camcorders were sprouting from soft-carry cases and holiday holdalls, worldwide.

So why, in 2019, years after we all went digital, are we still talking about video tape? For those of us fortunate enough to choose a career in moving image archives, the day-to-day use of linear magnetic storage media, i.e. tapes, remains a constant. In fact, the pressure to maintain the craft of video tape has never been more acute for archivists, with all equipment manufacture now stopped and spare parts limited to what we have on our shelves or what we can track down through internet auction sites.

Through the Unlocking Film Heritage programme (which ran from 2012 to 2017), the British Film Institute (BFI) worked in partnership with regional and national film and television archives across the UK to devise methodologies, technical standards and working practices, and contracted a framework of commercial suppliers to achieve mass digitisation of 10,000 film titles.

The main outcome from this National Lottery-funded initiative was unprecedented free-to-view public access to curated works through the online BFI Player, including Britain on Film. Representing communities and geographic locations across the length and breadth of the UK, we can measure the phenomenal success of Britain on Film through the extraordinary level of public engagement with these digitised films - over 70 million video views online to date.

Additionally, a sophisticated digital preservation infrastructure was created within the BFI National Archive to ensure accessibility and long-term preservation of digitised and digital-born content. Hot off the heels of Unlocking Film Heritage, we began our next (and current) programme of work – Heritage 2022.

A key priority of Heritage 2022 is to address the imminent risk of permanent loss of the UK's video heritage, much of it locked into all manner of tape formats that the market no longer widely supports in equipment terms. We began this preservation-led imperative with an audit of 14 significant regional and national archives across the UK, which revealed over 1 million works. A process of 'significance assessment' – now under way - will hopefully lead to the digitisation of some 100,000 titles held uniquely on video tape. We aim to secure these titles within the BFI Digital Preservation Infrastructure, standardised as FFV1 open source files within Matroska, a combination of codec and container chosen as a non-proprietary format for archives.

Such a large-scale digitisation project also creates a strategic and economic necessity: identifying specialised technical capabilities and services to share the sheer volume and diversity of work involved with partners. Early in the project, we established a framework of six commercial suppliers to complement the BFI's own extensive video conservation expertise. With the project fully structured and operational, the seven partners are now digitising the first batches from across the UK's significant collections en masse.

The combination of challenges such a project presents is all consuming. It is impossible to overstate the complexities of maintaining precision - yet obsolete - machinery, to reach high volumes of digitisation from such a wide range of possible formats. There simply aren't any short cuts or modern solutions to make sense of the invisibly-coded patterns secreted within the magnetic coatings of what appear to the human eye as meaningless black and brown strips of plastic.

The only way is for each tape to be reunited with an exact match of perfectly-working machinery. But without this urgent and deliberate action, and the creation of an efficient, structured process, the UK's most important video heritage - spanning over half a century of artistic works, documentaries, animation, advertising, information and corporate productions - would face certain extinction.

Professional development
news

Chris Sheridan (ARA Head of Professional Standards & Development) congratulates the ARA's new Fellows, and tells us how to go about achieving Fellowship status.

The ARA is proud to recognise the first cohort of registered members to have qualified as Fellows. Fellowship is the highest level of professional qualification available through the ARA's professional development programme. It is open to registered members who have completed at least one CPD review.

In this article I explore fellowship in more detail. I will cover the skills, attributes, and level of achievement required to qualify, and how to go about reaching Fellowship (FARA) status.

So why become a Fellow?
Fellowship will be the highest mark of professional credibility and impact in the archives, conservation and records management community. It will position you as an authoritative professional, demonstrating innovation, leadership and influence.

Margaret Crockett FARA, a consultant archivist and records manager, with significant international experience was one of the first to qualify as a Fellow. Her motivation? "Having written about continuing professional development as one of the hallmarks of professionalism, I was finally able to demonstrate my commitment to it." Janice Tullock FARA "…(hopes) that being a Fellow will demonstrate to my clients and potential clients that I have achieved a high level of professional competency, and that I can be trusted with their projects. Most importantly, though, I think that recognition from fellow professionals means the most to me. It shows that I have committed to professional development, and have invested in learning and keeping my skills up to date."

Congratulations also to the other pioneering ARA Fellows: Gillian Sheldrick FARA, Elspeth Reid FARA, Charlotte Berry FARA and Sarah Wickham FARA

How do I achieve Fellowship?
There are several steps to a Fellowship qualification. These include:

Self-assessment
The self-assessment process involves aligning your dveelopment to the ARA competency framework, in order to establish whether you meet the qualification criteria for Fellowship. You can find both the self-assessment form and the competency framework at archivesandrecords.smapply.io

Use your network
Members looking to qualify as a foundation or registered member of the ARA must work with a mentor. Those working towards Fellowship can also use a mentor if they wish, or alternatively, seek out support for their application process from their own professional networks.

Enrol on the programme
The next step is to enrol on the programme at archivesandrecords.smapply.io

After setting up your profile, complete the enrolment form and pay the enrolment fee. You can now get started on your Fellowship application by following the Fellowship qualification options. Any mentor/adviser that you work with will also have to be registered on the website so that s/he can access your portfolio.

Preparing for assessment
To be assessed for Fellowship, you will need to submit the following:

- A copy of your current CV

- Your application of evidence: Six completed competency submission forms at minimum attainment levels 4-5 (the programme guidance notes explain this in more detail). Maximum of 1500 words per submission.

- A statement of contribution to the profession (maximum of 750 words)

- A statement of professional development (maximum of 750 words)

Submission deadlines are twice yearly, on 31 May and 30 November, and up to 10 years' relevant work experience can be included in your application. You will also need to include a reference from any mentor/adviser.

Completing assessment and qualification
Once your application is complete and you have paid your assessment fee, two ARA Fellows will assess your portfolio. Assessment takes approximately three months to complete. If you are successful, you will become a Fellow of the ARA.

Professional development is, of course, an ongoing process, and is taken seriously by the ARA. Therefore, once qualified, a CPD review process takes place every five years following qualification, ensuring that the Fellowship status you (and everyone else) have attained is kept to the new and high standards we aspire to.

If you would like to discuss Fellowship further please contact me directly at chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk

Collecting matters

Caroline Sampson, development manager (national and networks) at The National Archives (UK), considers the importance of digital preservation projects in film, sound and photography.

Reflecting back on the last 12 to 15 months, I am struck by how much of the activity in the world of film, sound, and photographic archives has been focused on the challenges of safeguarding these fragile media for the future. Of course, as people interested in and working with such records, preservation is a core part of what we do. However, the surge of large-scale digital preservation projects provides an indication of the priority that the sector is placing on this field.

My role is national, so I can see the gathering momentum behind the British Library's *Save our Sounds* project, as the regional consortia appoint staff, and begin the process of digitising priority sound recordings from across their regions. Film archives are similarly occupied with contributing to the British Film Institute's *Heritage 2022* video tape project, again with a view to digitising some of the most vulnerable moving image formats.

What these collections have in common, beyond their fragility, is an unparalleled opportunity to showcase material in highly intuitive and accessible ways. With digital copies available as a result of these vanguard projects, I look forward to seeing and hearing more about how the sector opens up these fabulous sounds and sights from the past, and the impact they have on those who now have opportunities to engage with them.

The 2019 ARA Conference – 28-30 August (Leeds)

Final keynote speaker announced – Dr Alexandra Eveleigh, Wellcome Trust

Focus: our careers, our challenges, change and how we should adapt

Register to attend Conference now at: http://conference.archives.org.uk/

Mike Anson, ARA Conference committee chair, announces the third and final keynote speaker for this year's Conference

I am delighted to announce, on behalf of the ARA Conference committee, the final keynote speaker for #ARA2019 – at the Queens Hotel in Leeds. Dr Alexandra Eveleigh will open Conference on the first morning, Wednesday 28 August 2019.

Dr Eveleigh is Collections Information Manager at Wellcome Collection in London, where her role complements her research interests in user experiences and digital technologies in library, archive and museum contexts. Wellcome Collection is part of the Wellcome Trust, where Dr Eveleigh worked before joining Wellcome Collection. The Trust is one of the most significant supporters of archives sector development in the UK. In her role, Dr Eveleigh encounters professionals in the widest range of roles in the sector and nationally.

Discussing with, and learning from, colleagues
The Conference committee is delighted that Dr Eveleigh has agreed to share her insights into the evolution of careers in the archives and records space, the challenges we will face and how we should meet them. This reflects the committee's drive to give a platform at Conference to practising professionals and colleagues – ideally in mid-career – and help shape meaningful, honest debate about the future of the recordkeeping sector, with a focus on challenges and managing change.

Keynote focus
Having worn the shoes of many Conference delegates, Dr Eveleigh's address will provoke and stimulate debate among attending delegates (and further afield on social media). There will be ample time for questions and delegate input, which will help inform the ARA's ongoing approach to careers and build on the Glasgow Manifesto, our action plan from the 2018 Conference.

Dr Alexandra Eveleigh,
Wellcome Trust

The Royal Armouries, Leeds.
Image courtesy of the Royal Armouries.

Yorkshire links

Dr Eveleigh has worked in a wide range of archives and records roles, including the universities' sector, research – a PhD from University College, London (UCL) in collaboration with The National Archives (UK) entitled 'Crowding out the archivist? Implications of online user participation for archival theory and practice' - and now the voluntary sector. In 2008, she was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship for her work on born-digital archives.

Appropriately, Dr Eveleigh also spent 11 years working in the UK local government sector, including 11 years early in her career at West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS), which covers our 2019 Conference venue (Leeds). 2019 also marks the twentieth anniversary that Dr Eveleigh started work at WYAS.

Our careers

The 28 August daily theme is how 'our careers' will be shaped and how we can anticipate and adapt to new demands, new approaches and resource and other challenges, while maintaining standards, ethics and integrity. Following Dr Eveleigh's keynote, that day's Conference sessions will include lone working, digital recordkeeping, crisis management, traditional and future skills, pay, hybrid working, international and cross-sector careers, and much more.

To come...

Keep an eye out for upcoming announcements, including on the winners of this year's Conference bursaries and on – reputedly - the world's only surviving example of elephant armour (see above, the location of our Conference reception this year!). (Images courtesy of the Royal Armouries)

Reminder

Visit http://conference.archives.org.uk/ for full details of – and updates on - this year's programme, venue, how to register to attend all three days or just one or two, and much more. Follow us, too, on Twitter - #ARA2019 and @ARAConf – and on Instagram @araconference!

It is only two months until Conference, so sign up now!

Backchat...

ARC Editor, **Alice McFarlane**, interviews the incoming President of the ARA, **Aideen Ireland**. Aideen will assume her new role on 30 August 2019, when current President, Dr Alexandrina Buchanan, steps down.

Hi Aideen. Could you tell us how you first became interested in working in the archives and records management, and how you got into the profession?

I studied archaeology and history in University College Dublin. One of our history professors – Robert Dudley Edwards – had recently established an archives department. I was interested in a career in archives and enrolled in the diploma course. After further training at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz (thanks to University College Dublin), I knew that I had made the right career choice. I subsequently joined the then Public Record Office of Ireland, now the National Archives of Ireland.

What is currently keeping you busy?

Many will know of the total destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland, on 30 June 1922, during the course of the civil war. The school of histories and humanities at Trinity College Dublin has set up the *Beyond 2022* project (histories-humanities.tcd.ie/research/Beyond-2022/). The project will have as its centrepiece an online resource - the virtual record treasury - which will provide a digital reconstruction of the record treasury of the Public Record Office of Ireland, as it existed in 1922, on the eve of the fire. The National Archives of Ireland is one of the partners, and I am working on the reconstruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland in the 1922-1923 period.

What are your interests outside your job?

Having studied archaeology, I have a deep interest in the study of Irish antiquarianism in the 18th and 19th centuries. Research, lectures and publications keep me very busy.

Who or what has been the biggest inspiration to you in your career?

Undoubtedly, the late lamented Friedrich P. Kahlenbery of the Bundesarchiv. Having been my external examiner when I was studying for the archives diploma, he became a seminal influence (and very good friend) in the year when I was training in Koblenz, and for the rest of his life.

What has been your biggest professional challenge to date?

No doubt: moving from being a hands-on archivist to being a hands-off professional. Moving from being part of a team devoted to accessioning and listing records, to being head of a division directing others in their professional work, was a big step. Thankfully, I enjoyed the challenge enormously and had wonderful colleagues to work with in my division.

Do you have any tips or advice to new professionals, or to anyone first entering the profession?

Undoubtedly, one's career does not progress (or even take off) as one imagines. This may be difficult at the time, but any challenges are well worth taking up. This may not be apparent at the time, but personally I have never found challenges to have been a waste of time.

As someone who has worked in the profession in Ireland for a significant part of your career, can you tell us a bit about where the archives and records management sector has come from, and where you think it is heading in Ireland?

The archival / conservation / records management developments in Ireland at the present time could never have been imagined in Ireland in the 1970s. All national institutions north and south of the border now have professional archivists and conservators *in situ*. Many local authorities, charitable organisations, and

universities, for example, now employ archivists, while large business entities are devoted to the employment of records managers and often archivists, as well. At present, with the economic recovery, there are positions opening up for archivists, conservators, and records managers – often within organisations which did not have the capacity for such employment up until now.

What do you see as the main challenges and opportunities for the profession in Ireland? Do you think that Brexit will affect things?

The main challenge is, of course, to ensure that training and job opportunities for archivists, conservators, and records managers continue. While fewer travel to Britain for training, suitable training within Ireland is not available for all. Further, professional placements should be available to all throughout Britain and Ireland. How the political landscape will look a year from now – who knows!

Congratulations on becoming the incoming ARA President! Are there any areas that you are keen for the ARA to focus on in the next year?

I would like to encourage archivists, conservators, and records managers (and those with similar interests) to engage with the association. Being a paid-up member is not sufficient. The members are the driving-force within the association. They must drive development forward – but they will be unable to do this if they are not active within the association.

Is there anything that you would like to say to our members, as incoming ARA President?

Watch this space!

TownsWeb Archiving Heritage Digitisation Grant – increased award amounts for 2019

Following strong interest and some excellent applications from archives and other memory institutions over the last three years, the TownsWeb Archiving (TWA) Digitisation Grant has relaunched in 2019.

We are very pleased to be increasing the fund this year. The primary winner will receive up to £6,000, the secondary winner up to £3,000 and shortlisted applicants up to £500 of match funding, to support them in digitising their collections.

The TWA Digitisation Grant for 2019 opened on 19 June and welcomes applications from the following UK institutions:

*   Public, private & charity Archives
*   Business/corporate Archives
*   Public & private Libraries
*   Museums
*   Galleries

Last year's judging panel will return to assess the applications and select the winners. It comprises John Chambers, the ARA's chief executive, Claire Adler, the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)- appointed special advisor, and Paul Sugden, senior digitisation consultant at TownsWeb Archiving.

The grants can be used to fund the digitisation of bound books, written archives/manuscripts, oversize maps and plans, 35mm slides, microfilm/fiche, glass plate negatives, and other two-dimensional cultural heritage media. The deadline for applications is 28 July 2019. We will announce the winners at the ARA Annual Conference in Leeds, on 28 August.

To find out how to apply, and for more details, please go to: https://www.townswebarchiving.com/twa-digitisation-grant/

TownsWeb**Archiving**
Digitisation Grant 2019

A pitch-perfect plan: how to achieve a harmonious relationship with your A-V digitiser

Sarah-Joy Maddeaux, sound archivist at the Essex Record Office, shares pointers on how to get the most out of an outsourced A-V digitisation project.

Excellent news - you have finally secured funding to tackle the vinyl records or VHS cassettes lurking in the depths of your strong room, that have been nagging away at your conscience and calling out for attention. So, what next? How do you tackle an audio or moving image digitisation project? It's simple - one step at a time.

1. Take stock

Exactly how much material do you have, and in what format? What is the content? What condition is it in? Note down as much information as you can, and label each item with a unique identifier, catalogue reference, or a simple numbering system if they are uncatalogued. The VIAA (Flemish Institute for Archiving) have a useful identification tool, *Know Your Carrier* (knowyourcarrier.com). By answering a series of simple questions (with helpful images), it will help in determining exactly which formats you have.

2. Prioritise

You may not have sufficient funding or time to digitise everything. Applying two basic criteria will help in prioritising the material:

* How important is it?
  Is it historically significant and/or important to your organisation? Is it within your collections policy? Is it unique - do you or another institution have copies? If you have multiple copies, it is advisable to digitise the original or early copy, whilst considering the quality of the recording. Bear in mind that a label might not reflect the actual content.

* How vulnerable is it?
  For the physical item, different types of sound and moving image formats have different lifespans. All are at risk, but some are more at risk than others, and it is not always the oldest that are the most fragile. There are two factors to consider - the stability of the recording medium itself, and the availability of playback machines.

3. Choose a supplier

Find as much information about potential suppliers as you can, and ask for recommendations or references. Ask for a quote, ensuring the work will meet all your criteria. For added assurance, agree on a detailed specification in writing before accepting a quote:

* Do the company offer an assessment service, advising on the content of the recordings if you are unsure? You do not want to waste time and money digitising three audio cassettes containing identical recordings.

* What file formats will you receive? At the very minimum, you should get a high-quality, uncompressed, open file format such as a WAV file for each recording. For audio, the digitisation should be done to 96kHz, 24-bit (48kHz is sufficient for most spoken word recordings). For video, you should receive an uncompressed file format such as MOV or AVI, with a frame rate of 25 images per second (assuming a standard UK PAL recording) and 10-bit sampling. MP3s and MP4s are lossy compressed formats, which means data will be lost in the digitisation process. These formats are appropriate for access copies, but for a master copy you will need a lossless format. The aim is to digitise once, and never have to touch the physical carrier again, therefore you want to get the most out of the process.

* Who will be responsible for transferring the physical items to the contractor, and returning them once the work is completed?

* How will the digital files be transferred to you? Do you need to add extra security, for example encryption, if you are digitising sensitive material?

* Do you want additional copies on CD or DVD, perhaps for access copies?

> *" enjoy delving into the content, and enthuse your audiences about these previously hidden gems "*

Cleaning a grooved disc before digitisation. Copyright Essex County Council.

Below: Audio cassette tapes. Copyright Essex County Council.

Setting up an open reel tape for digitisation. Copyright Essex County Council

> *How do you tackle an audio or moving image digitisation project?*

- How will the company organise the digital files it produces? Can you specify the filenames allocated to each recording? How will you match up the digital files with the physical items?

- Will the supplier provide details about the digitisation process, and notes about the original carriers, to preserve a trace of what has been done, and help future preservation? Will they supply you with checksums for monitoring the files?

- Do you want digital images of the original carriers, particularly labels or cases? Again, bear in mind that you do not want to touch these items again once digitised.

- Does the company have the facilities to do minor repair or restoration work if necessary? Will the company contact you before undertaking this work?

- How will your recordings be stored while they are with the contractor? How will they be handled?

- Can the contractor supply you with details of cleaning regimes for their playback equipment? Players should be kept in good condition to get the most out of your recording, and to minimise the chance of damage during playback.

- Agree on the timescale for the work to be completed, particularly if you have a limited window to spend the money allocated to the job.

- Look out for any additional charges – VAT, storage charges, or project management charges.

Naturally, you will want to choose a company that offers good value for money, but this should take into account the quality of the work.

It is advisable to provide the contractor with a list of your items, including each unique reference number. This will act as a checklist to ensure you get digital copies of each item, and that you receive all the physical recordings back.

4. Monitor the work

It is perfectly acceptable to check in with the supplier periodically, particularly with a large job. You can ask for a sample output, to ensure the delivery will match your expectations. However, do be realistic. Do not expect acoustic perfection from an amateur recording, made on a cheap cassette tape in the 1980s. We operate a policy of fidelity to the original recording for the master digital files, hiss and all.

5. Enjoy!

Hopefully, the supplier will successfully complete the project to perfectly match the specification. Now enjoy delving into the content, and enthuse your audiences with these previously hidden gems. And the original analogue items? You will need to keep those too. One day, we may discover new ways to capture even better reproductions. Your funding for the project should include any necessary reboxing, for storing the originals in optimal conditions.

More information on detailed digitisation specification can be found at www.iasa-web.org

If you are considering a digitisation project, seek advice from your nearest sound archive (www.bisa-web.org), or contact me at sarahjoy.maddeaux@essex.gov.uk for more details of the digitisation service we provide.

Thanks to Will Prentice at the British Library for comments on a draft of this article.

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Exterior view of Billingsgate Fish Market, 1973. Copyright: London Metropolitan Archives.

Unlocking the sounds of London

Funded by a £9.5 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Unlocking Our Sound Heritage project (2017-2022) aims to preserve digitally half a million rare and at-risk sound recordings, engage a wider audience with the value of sound heritage, and establish a UK network of audio preservation centres. **David Baldwin** (Unlocking Our Sound project manager – London Hub) reports on London Metropolitan Archives' work on this project.

On the daily commute we experience hundreds of different sounds - the early dawn chorus of birds, passengers chatting on the train, milk being steamed by a barista, music and debate on local radio, or even the cautionary ring of a bicycle bell. Together they form a soundscape, which, if we listen carefully, can tell us a lot about where we live, and who lives there.

For over 50 years, field and sound recordists have captured such soundscapes, to help develop an improved knowledge of local history - enabling researchers to identify change around language, technology, and the environment.

Examples of this work can be found on project websites like:

* Favourite Sounds (www.favouritesounds.org)
* London Sound Survey (www.soundsurvey.org.uk/)
* Essex Sounds (www.essexsounds.org.uk/)

Inspired by the value of these sounds and soundscapes, as well as understanding the risk of degradation to audio formats, and the obsolescence of playback equipment, in 2017 the British Library launched a UK-wide project 'to help save the nation's sounds'.

Interior view of Billingsgate Fish Market, 1973. Copyright London Metropolitan Archives

To help deliver this project, the British Library is working closely with ten regional hubs - London Metropolitan Archives, National Museums Northern Ireland, Archives+ in Manchester, Norfolk Record Office, the National Library of Scotland, the University of Leicester, The Keep in Brighton, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, National the Library of Wales, and Bristol Culture. Each hub is assigned the task of digitising and cataloguing work on 5,000 items, while also clearing rights to a minimum of 500 items for publication online. To support engagement with the project, each hub will deliver a volunteer programme, and run a series of outreach events, to demonstrate the value of sound heritage and show people how they can become involved in the project.

At London Metropolitan Archives, the project team will have digitised around 15-20% of its work by June 2019. We are currently working on content from the London School of Economics, Hackney Archives, and the National Theatre, in addition to sound recordings from our own collections. Among these recordings are examples of world music, oral

" *On the daily commute we experience hundreds of different sounds* "

history and public speaking. Yet, what is also clear from the recordings already digitised is the wealth of sounds (background or otherwise), that tell us about London's past soundscapes.

Billingsgate Fish Market
Included in the content that the London Metropolitan archives team have digitised, are the sounds and voices of Billingsgate Fish Market, held within the City of London archives. Formally established under an Act of Parliament in 1699, it wasn't until the mid-to-late Victorian period that work began on the design of a more purpose-built structure. First designed by architect to the City of London, James B. Bunning, the structure was later enlarged twofold by Sir Horace Jones, to incorporate Billingsgate Stairs and Wharf, and Darkhouse Lane. Opened in 1877, the fish market remained in this building, before it relocated to the West India Docks in 1982.

In January 1982, before the market moved, Capital Radio conducted a series of interviews with Billingsgate traders and porters. In one interview, the host reflects on what will be lost when the building is vacated – the powerful smell, the friendliness and language of the porters. An interviewee comments on how the younger traders lack the fish-handling skills of his generation:

"... you get hold of a salmon, you put your hand around the back of the salmon, lift it and the same with a hake, you put your fingers in the eyes, slide your hand along

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> *it is not only the interviews themselves that provide insight to its history, but also the transient sounds and colloquial voices heard in the background*

the body, lift it. You see them now, they get hold of fish, they just throw it and chuck it away ..." While another interviewee discusses the different buyers, from the West End to Walworth Road:

"... they'd have the fish on the stands by five in the morning when the market opened. It was bloody noisy then what with the clatter of the hooves and the wheels of the vans rumbling over the cobbles. After the West End buyers had bought the fancy fish for all the hotels, the costers from Kennington and Walworth came round and they bought loads of haddock which they smoked themselves at home overnight. They bought the fish for tuppence and sold it smoked on the street for about six pence or eight pence."

In the recordings of Billingsgate Fish Market, it is not only the interviews themselves that provide insight into its history, but also the transient sounds, and colloquial voices heard in the background. For instance, traders selling different types of fish, traffic echoing through the market from trucks or vans transporting goods, and the 'chat' used to sell produce:

"What about the mackerel?"

"You're not trying are you, really?"

"Sir, here you are: mackerel!"

"Where you going, handsome?"

Although the London Metropolitan Archives have printed collections of market cries within the wider archives, sound recordings like these help us to understand more about the pace and rhythm of the words spoken. It's a shame that the process of 'how to record sound' wasn't discovered until the 19th century!

For more information about the Unlocking our Sound Heritage project here at London Metropolitan Archives, please visit www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/london-metropolitan-archives/about/Pages/unlocking-our-sound-heritage.aspx

Launch of Express & Star photograph website

The first historic photographs from the collection of the Express & Star newspaper have been made available through a free website, in partnership with Wolverhampton City Archives and the University of Wolverhampton.
Heidi McIntosh, city archivist at Wolverhampton, sets out the process involved in making this possible.

Thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, around 3,000 images of the industrial past of the Black Country and its surrounding areas, covering the majority of the 20th century, are now preserved for future generations, and published at photo-archive.expressandstar.co.uk. Set up in 2008, the project partnership has gone from strength to strength. Initial funding went towards digitisation of the collection by Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service, the development of the website by archive specialists, Orangeleaf, and consultation of 750 local residents by heritage development consultants, Tricolor Associates.

From left: volunteer Brian Lester; Scott Knight of the University of Wolverhampton; National Lottery Heritage Fund chair for England (Midlands & East), Sue Beardsmore; Heidi McIntosh of Wolverhampton City Archive;, Midland News Association director of marketing and communications, Chris Leggett; and former Express & Star photographer, Dave Bagnall. Image courtesy of the Express & Star.

Feb 13 1981: Police battled to hold back 500 angry protestors when Employment Minister Jim Prior visited job-starved Telford. They were protesting at the shock news of the loss of 1,000 jobs at the giant GKN Sankey's Hadley Castle plant. Image courtesy of the Express & Star.

The project is supported by a core group of committed volunteers, who have so far contributed the equivalent of 260 working days of sorting, tidying, packaging and listing the photographs. Following digitisation, the original images were transferred to Wolverhampton City Archives, where they were catalogued, and preserved for future generations.

The first images to be published on the website, from the industry section of the archive, include photos taken at steel industry operations across the region - images from the final years of mining, and pictures of workers from local heritage brands, including Cadbury's and Chubb. In the first 24 hours, more than 2,000 users visited the website, viewing images not seen since they appeared on the pages of the Express & Star. In the first three weeks, 7,000 users viewed 100,000 web pages.

The wealth of photographs available enabled the Express & Star photo archive Twitter account to take part in the #Archive30 campaign throughout April, involving posting an image related to a daily theme. The popularity of the website, and the feedback and comments that have been received, have provided us with more information about some of the photographs, improving the quality of our catalogue.

22 March 1979: Fight against closure. Samuel Walker, a pump attendant at the British Steel plant in Bilston. Image courtesy of the Express & Star.

The life and photographic legacy of Raissa Page

David Johnston-Smith reports on a Wellcome Trust project to catalogue and repackage the photographic collection of Raissa Page.

1 May 990: Show at the National Exhibition Centre about the new Cadbury World tourist centre. Photograph shows Maria Cadbury, alias Frances Land, and Steve Johnstone arriving in a large Cadbury World Creme Egg on wheels. Image courtesy of the Express & Star.

The collection as a whole amounts to approximately one million photographs. The majority of photographs are black and white, with colour images covering more recent dates up to the mid-1990s, at which point the photography department converted to digital. Many of the photographs were published in the newspaper, and often had the associated article on the rear, providing context to the photographs. Therefore, at the beginning of the project, we decided to digitise the front and back of every photograph.

Carl Chinn (Professor of Community History at the University of Birmingham) has described the Express & Star photo archive as one of the most important regional photograph collections in the country. Contained within the collection are photographs of royal visits, including Prince Charles, Princess Margaret, and the Queen Elizabeth, cabinet ministers, including Sir Stafford Cripps, Tony Benn, and Norman Lamont, in addition to images of local industries that have fallen into decline, such as chainmaking, barrel-making and the leather industry. The collection also contains images from the Second World War, which were not published due to government censorship, and a photograph of American civil rights activist, Malcolm X, visiting Smethwick in 1965, nine days before being killed.

The future aim of the project is to digitise and preserve more of the collection, including local and mostly unseen images of World War II, in addition to local landmarks and places. Some funding has already been secured, such as from the Friends of Wolverhampton Archives. The partners are continuing to seek further sources of funding for the remaining photographs.

For further information, and to follow progress on the project, follow the Twitter account @ESPhotoArchive or 'like' the Facebook page www.facebook.com/photoarchivebid.

Raissa Page (1932 – 2011) was born into poverty in Canada, to Greek and British parents. The fascinating story of her early life, told by Raissa in oral history recordings made in 1994, are preserved at the British Library, and can be accessed at sounds.bl.uk/Arts-literature-and-performance/photography/021M-C0459X0057XX-0100V0.

Moving to the UK in the early 1950s, Raissa started a successful first career as a social worker, specialising in looked-after children and their carers. In the late 1970s, when she was in her mid-40s and her daughter had left home, Raissa decided on a complete career change. Largely self-taught, she embarked on life as a documentary photographer. Her work is associated with the all-female photographic agency, FORMAT. Originally formed as a collective, later becoming a partnership, FORMAT ran for two decades from 1983, with Raissa a founding member.

The Richard Burton Archives, at Swansea University, was lucky enough to have Raissa's photographic collection (consisting of work produced between about 1977 and 1993), donated to it in 2014. I began work on a one-year Wellcome Trust funded project to catalogue and repackage it in November 2018.
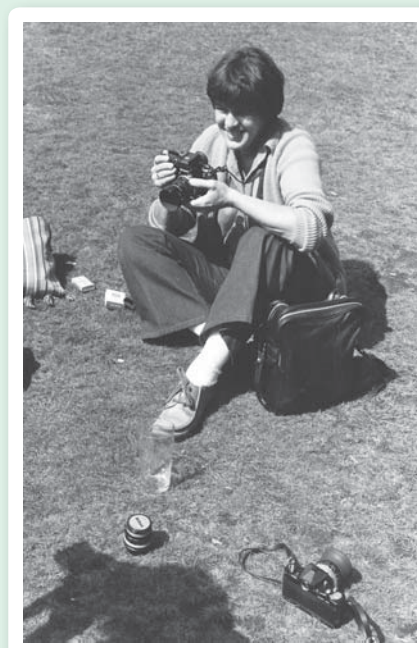
Raissa Page, China, 1978. Copyright: Adrianne Jones. Courtesy of the Richard Burton Archives Swansea University.

Cataloguing the Raissa Page collection, 2019. Copyright Archives & Records Council Wales (ARCW) / Richard Burton Archives Swansea, University

Pensioners' vigil at Greenham Common, 20 May 1984. Copyright: Adrianne Jones. Courtesy of Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University.

arc magazine

Miners' wives
fundraising
at Pant, South
Wales, May
1984. Copyright:
Adrianne Jones.
Courtesy of
Richard Burton
Archives, Swansea
University.

China, 1978.
Copyright:
Adrianne Jones.
Courtesy of
Richard Burton
Archives, Swansea
University.

> " *Raissa's photographic work reflected her own personality and interests, as well as the interests of her FORMAT colleagues – including feminism, radical politics, internationalism, and social care* "

Raissa's photographic work reflected her own personality and interests, as well as the interests of her FORMAT colleagues – including feminism, radical politics, internationalism, and social care. Amongst specific subjects covered in the collection are the women's peace camp, and related peace protests, at Greenham Common (established 1981 – 2000 to protest against nuclear weapons), the UK miners' strike of 1984 - 1985 (some of her best-known images arise from these disputes), the institutional care of children, the elderly, those with mental health issues, and photographic assignments undertaken abroad in countries including China, Israel, the U.S.A and Cuba. The Chinese assignment was very soon after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976), and is particularly revealing of a time when few Western photographers had visited.

The collection includes over twenty boxes of prints, over 55,000 negatives, transparencies, and related publications and correspondence, totalling approximately 6,000 items that require cataloguing. Wherever possible, we are seeking to reflect the original agency descriptions in the catalogue. These descriptions are creating interest amongst academics, as the language used, although only three to four decades old, can be very revealing and markedly different from that considered acceptable today. For example, the description of 'old folks home' was used to describe an image containing a residential care facility for the elderly. This term was common until fairly recently, but would not be used now.

The project has included research trips to the University of South Wales, which houses a collection of photographic books belonging to Raissa, donated whilst she was alive, and to the Bishopsgate Institute in London, where the informative FORMAT agency archive is kept. These visits were immensely valuable in terms of contextualising the work of Raissa Page, both in a historical sense, and in relation to the work of her colleagues.

It has also been a great treat to have conversations with Raissa's friends and colleagues - Maggie Murray, Michael Ann Mullen, and Anita Corbin, as well as having a very supportive donor of the collection, Raissa's long-time friend, Adrianne Jones. Input from academic staff at Swansea University has also been hugely beneficial, in terms of looking at potential areas where the collection could feed into existing research interests, and indeed generate new ones.

The project advisory group, including senior academics from the history, public health, and social science departments, have recognised potential research areas beyond photography and 20th century social and political history, such as child care and disability. This could lead to some unexpected and fascinating outputs.

I have found working with these images a hugely positive experience. I qualified as an archivist from the University of Liverpool in May 2018, and initially spent five months working as a digital archivist in Dorset. However, wanting to work with a specific collection, this project instantly connected with me, despite not having a great deal of previous photographic experience. I am in my early 50s, and so the period covered by Raissa's photographs are from my formative years. Being older than many other new colleagues has also been of great benefit for the project – having an awareness of image subjects and events has meant less time spent on research.

The project completes in October 2019, and the catalogue will be added to Archives Hub (archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk). Swansea University has purchased the equipment to digitise the collection, so hopefully that will follow on from cataloguing. For updates on the progress of the project, and to find out what events are planned (possibility of an exhibition and seminar/conference), follow us on Twitter @RaissaPage and @SwanUniArchives.

> " *I have found working with these images a hugely positive experience* "

Teaching archives – it begins with practice

Stacey Anderson RMARA (archivist at The Box and associate lecturer, University of Plymouth) and **Louisa Blight** RMARA (collections manager at The Box and associate lecturer, University of Plymouth) reflect on their work on the creation of a new MA Archival Practice programme.

Picture the scene. Two archivists in a room, reflecting on their career journeys - the variety of skills and knowledge gained, and the years of practice, combined with a growing passion for a profession that inhabits the mind, heart and soul. "Wouldn't it be great" said one to the other, "to give something back – to help nurture the next generation of practitioners?" So that is exactly what we did!

In 2015, to coincide with the development of The Box (previously the Plymouth History Centre), and the strengthening of partnership working between Plymouth Museums, Galleries and Archives Service, and the University

> *Our main goal was to align this programme to the values of the professional archive sector*

of Plymouth, academics and archivists worked together to develop a new and innovative programme. The programme may have lacked a name, but it certainly had appeal!

Our main goal was to align this programme to the values of the professional archive sector. If we were going to nurture successfully the next generation, it made perfect sense. We looked to the new professional competencies framework developed by the ARA (archivesandrecords. smapply.io/res/p/competencies/), which gave us our unique selling point - an emphasis on practice. This was also our inspiration to build in a continuing professional development module, for existing practitioners to enhance their knowledge and skills, applying this to their everyday work. The combination of these goals provided us with the official name for the programme – MA Archival Practice.

Archive film tape 1. Courtesy of The Box, Plymouth

Media Technician. Courtesy of The Box, Plymouth

> **"For the management of media assets session, students have the opportunity to see, feel and 'sniff' the collections"**

Over the next two years, we worked closely with our colleagues in the School of Humanities and Performing Arts, at the University of Plymouth, to develop the reams of paperwork required to secure approval for the course. We appointed our academic lead - Dr. Rebecca Emmett. She refined our curriculum and in September 2018 welcomed our first intake. In truth, it wasn't just the students who were facing a marathon journey of learning - as professional archivists, we stood alongside them at the start line. With the support of Dr. Emmett and other colleagues within the University, we were equipped with the tools needed to deliver the programme with confidence.

An optional module of the programme is the sound and vision module. These sessions focus on the film, tape, and audio collections from the South West Film and Television Archive (SWFTA), as well as other media and digital collections within The Box. Students begin by exploring materials, formats, standards and recommendations, key players, and initiatives, including the British Library and the British Film Institute. The second phase is delivered primarily through workshops from within the film and television archive itself, which has added real value to the learning experience of the students.

For the management of media assets session, students have the opportunity to see, feel and 'sniff' the collections. For the management of digital assets session, our media technicians give students technical experience around digitisation, check-summing, and the preservation of video files. The final phase of the module explores the value of media collections for programming, interpretation, engagement and access, whilst also providing important understanding around copyright, due diligence, orphaned works, and licensing for commercial and non-commercial use.

This year, we have added two co-ordinated spotlight sessions, looking at 'at-risk' media and the mitigation of known perils, such as mouldy acetate film, and sticky shed syndrome (a condition created by the deterioration of the binders in a magnetic tape). We invited one of our conservators to co-deliver these sessions to demonstrate what we do in practice.

Reflecting on the programme as a whole, it has been a significant team effort in terms of delivery. Our students have benefitted from hearing the voices of professionals from across the service - not just the voices of archivists, but learning and engagement officers, conservation specialists, specialist technicians, and staff responsible for business and operational management. This co-delivery approach, between a range of personnel working within The Box and the University of Plymouth, has proven to be

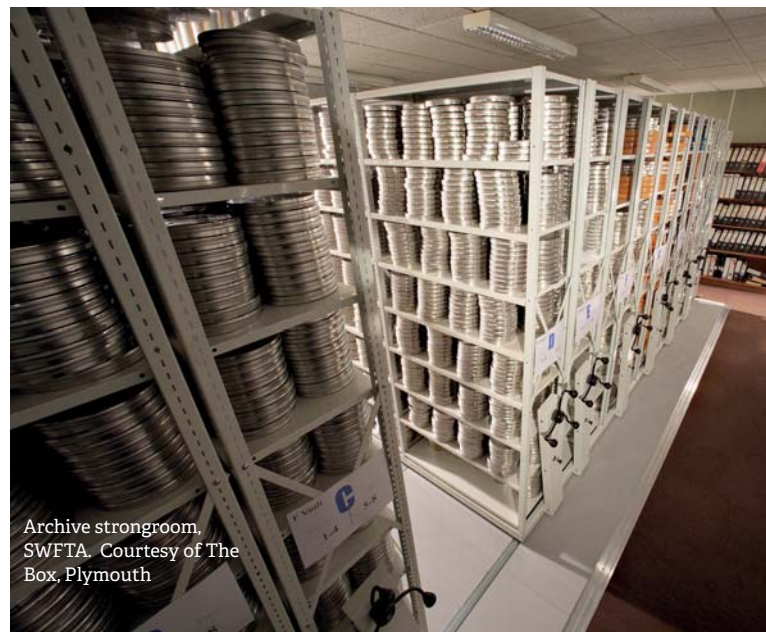Archive film tape 2. Courtesy of The Box, Plymouth

a major strength, whilst also helping to truly embrace the values of the ARA competency framework.

What started as a conversation between 'two archivists in a room' has now evolved into a living, breathing, professional replication of archival practice. We are working archivists and we teach. Through teaching, we have been given many wonderful opportunities to build on our sense of professionalism - to appraise how we are doing as practitioners, and to ensure our knowledge and skills remain current. Teaching archives has, in many ways, defined and added value to what it means for us to be an archivist, and furthermore, an archivist in practice.

In writing this article, we are reminded humbly of our starting ambition 'to give something back'. In taking that forward, we have stepped into a legacy that is shared by all who teach in the sector. Programmes like this allow us to pass the baton to those who will continue to practise and inspire others beyond us. We could not be more proud of that.

For more information see: plymhearts.org/thebox/
Twitter: @theboxplymouth and plymouth.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/ma-archival-practice
Twitter: @ArchivalPlymUni

We are associate lecturers for the MA Archival Practice programme, along with Anne Morgan, RMARA (senior archivist, The Box) and Claire Skinner, RMARA (archivist, The Box) with Dr. Alan Butler and the programme leader, Dr. Rebecca Emmett of the University of Plymouth.

Archive strongroom, SWFTA. Courtesy of The Box, Plymouth

Our grateful thanks to:
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Dick French and family watching the Cup Final, Exmoor, April 1985. Photograph by James Ravilious. © Beaford Arts. Digitally scanned from a Beaford Archive negative.

Hidden histories: opening up the Beaford Archive

Emma Down, project archivist, writes about the work involved in bringing to life a north Devon archive, thanks to a National Lottery Heritage Fund Hidden Histories' grant

The Beaford Archive was commissioned in 1971 by John Lane, one of the founding directors of Beaford Arts, a charity based in north Devon which promotes arts and culture in north Devon. The archive comprises over 80,000 black and white 35mm negatives, and corresponding contact sheets of images of north Devon, taken between 1971 and 1990. Until recently most of the collection had been inaccessible due to its format, but thanks to a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, a large proportion of the collection is now available to view online.

The archive consists of the work of two photographers, Roger Deakins CBE, who contributed to the archive between 1971 and 1972, and then James Ravilious who continued the archive from 1972-1990. The images show all aspects of north Devon life, from farming to village fetes, and harvest festivals to holidaymakers. The archive provides a window into a unique moment in north Devon history, when it was on the cusp of significant landscape and population change - as farming became more mechanised, and the building of
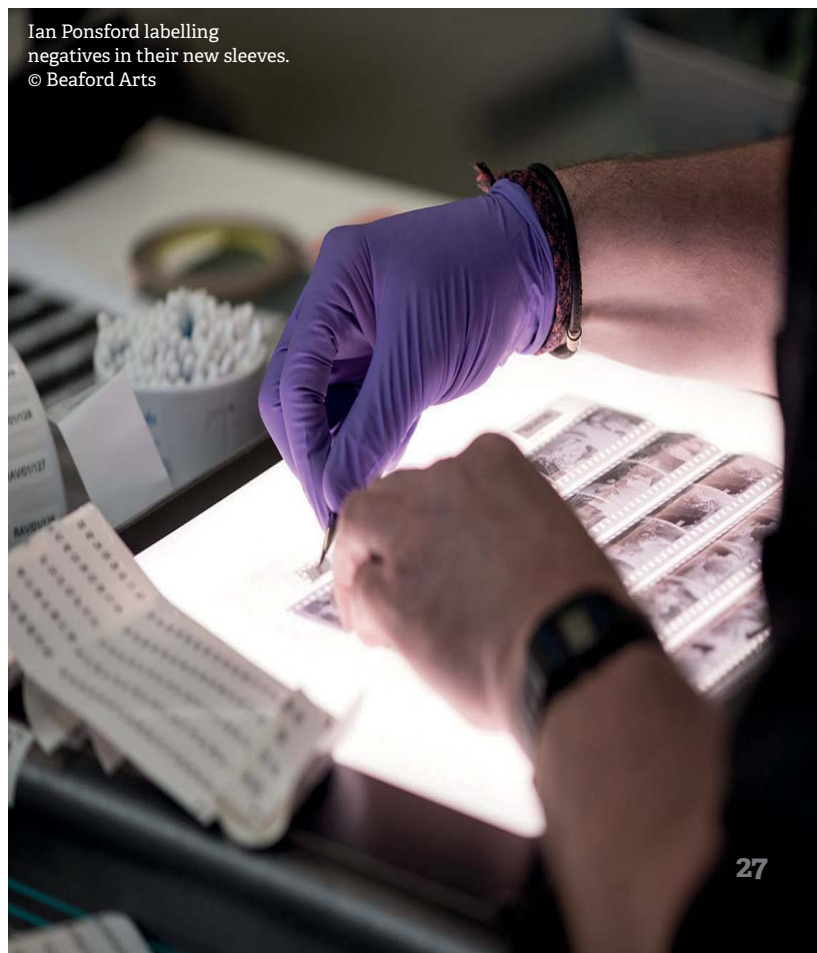
Archie Parkhouse and Ivor Brock moving a sick ram, Addisford, Dolton, March 1976. Photograph by James Ravilious. © Beaford Arts. Digitally scanned from a Beaford Archive negative.

> ❝The images show all aspects of north Devon life, from farming to village fetes, and harvest festivals to holidaymakers❞

Ian Ponsford labelling negatives in their new sleeves. © Beaford Arts

the North Devon Link Road brought more tourism and trade to the area.

In 2016, work started on a three-year project to clean, repackage, catalogue, and digitise the collection. Each strip of negatives were cleaned and placed into polyester sleeves and archive boxes. With the support of volunteers, the sleeves were also labelled with a unique reference for each frame. Making the collection digitally available was a priority, but financial restraints meant that only a proportion of the collection could be digitised. To decide which images to digitise, a curator went through the collection, and made a selection based on a number of criteria, including images which evidenced changing

Young men riding a motorcycle on the beach at Braunton, c. 1972. Photograph by Roger Deakins. © Beaford Arts. Digitally scanned from a Beaford Archive negative.

> **The end result has revealed a previously unseen part of north Devon history, which is now accessible and searchable for future generations**

environment, rural crafts, social roles, and farming practices. Whilst this resulted in a good representation of the images, it didn't necessarily present them in their historical context. To overcome this we also scanned the contact sheets, allowing a user to see the context in which each of the individually scanned frames was taken, as well as the working practice of each photographer.

The negatives were photographed using a full-frame 35mm DSLR Nikon camera, mounted on a Bowens Illumitran slide copier with an LED light source. Each digital image was then converted from negative to positive, and sympathetically enhanced in Adobe Lightroom. The images were 'spotted' in Photoshop, to remove any dust or hairs which may have settled on the negative, and been captured during the copying process. Three copies of each image were saved - the RAW 'negative' file, a Tiff for creating prints for exhibitions and for use in publicity and presentations, and a Jpeg to be uploaded to the website with the catalogue data for each image.

Cataloguing the collection presented a challenge. James Ravilious had made a list of his work, which included his personal comments, and a grading system he used to identify images he felt had artistic quality, as well as documentary value. To preserve his voice, but at the same time create a catalogue which complied with modern ISAD(G) cataloguing standards, we created new description fields to record the 'quality' grading and keywords which Ravilious gave to each image, but also left his original description unaltered. Any extra information about the image was included in square brackets under the original description, allowing a researcher to explore how Ravilious viewed his own work, but at the same time search a detailed catalogue. This approach has inevitably led to repetition in the catalogue, and more fields than usual. However, we felt this was a necessary compromise,

Ian Ponsford and Emma Down consulting negatives. © Beaford Arts.

enabling users to get a sense of how Ravilious interpreted his own work.

In addition to digitising the archive, we also added new material by conducting oral history interviews with local people. With the help of volunteers we conducted 77 interviews, recorded using an H4nPro audio recorder. The interviews were summarised and transcribed, allowing them to be searchable online. Five of the interviews were group interviews, involving 8-10 people with a common interest or skill, such as agriculture or local celebrations. The interviews have brought to light additional information about the images, including names of people, places, shops, details about farming practices which have long since disappeared, and how communities have evolved and developed.

We wanted the local community to feel a sense of ownership and belonging with the collection. So, we built a 'tagging' function into the website, enabling users to identify people, or places shown in the images, and also to share comments and memories. Additionally, we harnessed social media to fill gaps in our knowledge of the archive, by asking local groups for information about

> *In addition to digitising the archive, we also added new material by conducting oral history interviews with local people*

images in the collection. It garnered a huge response, and enhanced our understanding of the collection. The end result has revealed a previously unseen part of north Devon history, which is now accessible and searchable for future generations.

The Beaford Archive is available to view at beafordarchive.org

Appraisal is important to ensure the best images get digitised, like this view of Edinburgh Castle. © Crown Copyright.

Ten lessons we learned when we digitised our photographic collections

Kim Harsley – Historic Environment Scotland - offers tips on how to approach a photographic digitisation project.

Over the last two years, Historic Environment Scotland has been working on a mass digitisation programme. We want to make our material accessible to a wider audience and improve our catalogue records. To do this, we opted to work with external digitisation companies, who would be able to digitise large amounts of material rapidly. However, some reading this will know that digitisation is not always easy, and so we thought we'd share some of the things we've learned…

You don't have to digitise from the negative

Our negatives are not grouped by collection but in numbered runs, making it difficult to find the images that we planned to digitise. So we decided very early on to digitise from the mounted prints that we had used for access pre-internet. By digitising the prints we also reduced the risk of losing or damaging the archival originals - the negatives remained safe and sound in the strong room.

It's not always black and white

When we were writing our specifications, we had different requirements for whether an image was black and white, or in colour. Colour requires bigger file sizes, depth, and different colour profiles. Therefore, a black and white digital surrogate's properties will look very different from those of a colour image. Make sure this difference is captured in your specifications.

What's appraisal got to do with it?

Do you want to digitise the whole collection? Sometimes it might not be worth digitising 3,000 photos of the outer wall of Edinburgh Castle - 1,000 will do. Think about what you're digitising and why, and build appraisal into your preparation time.

Digitisation gives you something else to look after

It's easy to forget that once you've digitised something,

> *It's easy to forget that once you've digitised something, you've created a whole other object to preserve*

Can you see the sheep in this aerial image of Orkney?
© Crown Copyright.

you've created a whole other object to preserve. Just because it's a digital object, doesn't mean it doesn't need attention! When you're planning and implementing your project, always keep in mind the resources required in managing a digital archive.

Size does matter
The size of your files can indicate how well they have been digitised. If you have a surrogate for a colour 35mm slide that has a file size of your average pdf, then it's likely that the image will be very poor. The tones might be off, it might look grainy, or it might only be reproducible as a postage stamp.

Can you see the sheep?
Whilst we were evaluating companies' submissions, we always looked for the sheep! Many of the aerial photography images captured some unsuspecting sheep.
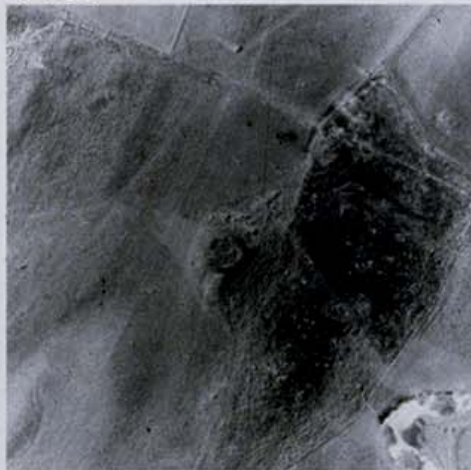
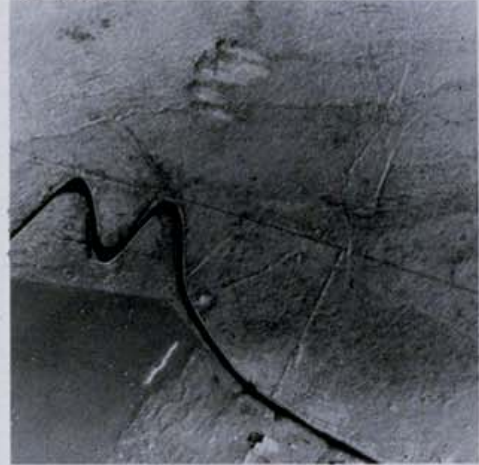You don't have to digitise from the negative...
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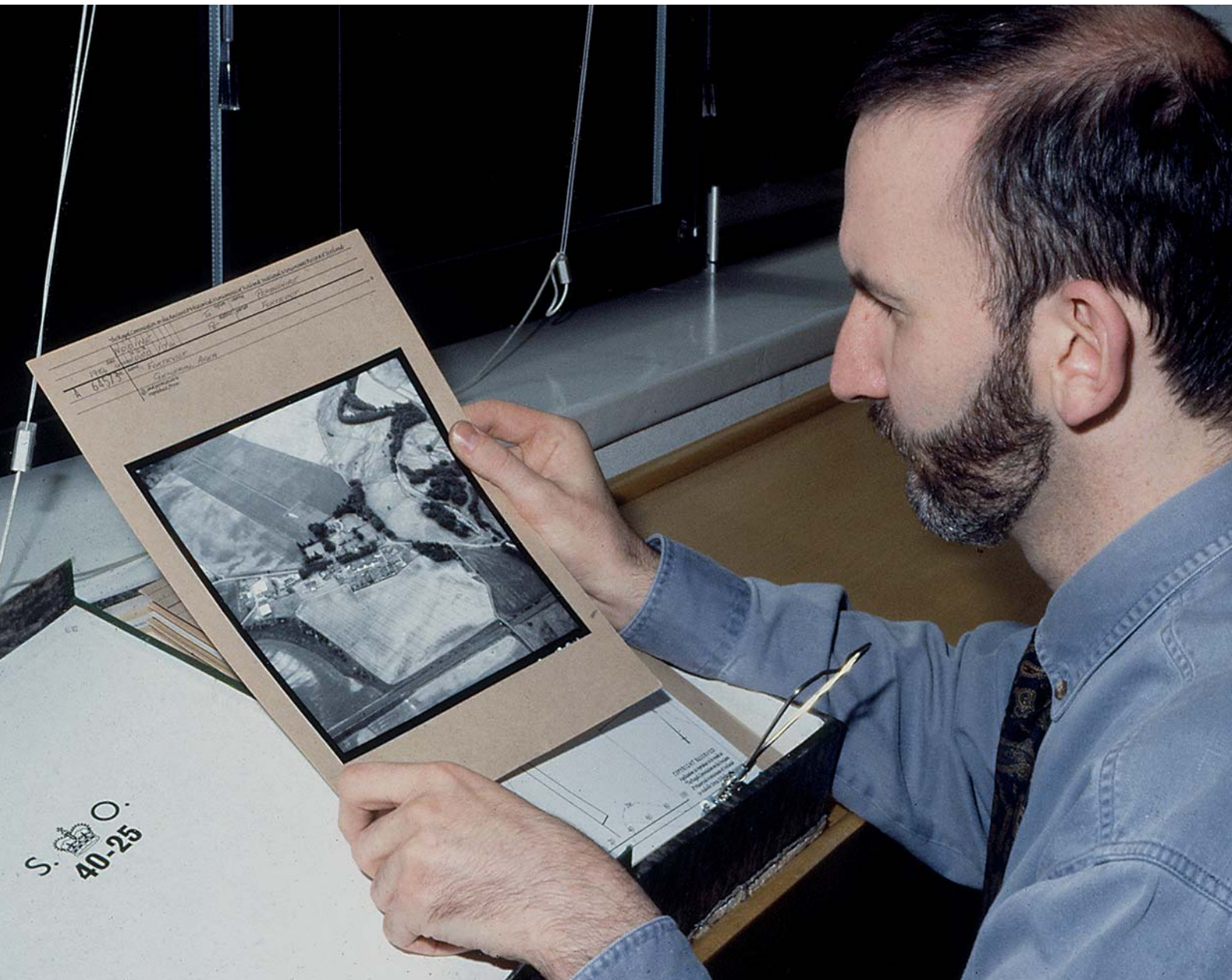
You can digitise from prints. © Crown Copyright.

They turned out to be useful in determining whether the digital surrogate had captured enough detail. If we couldn't see the sheep, the surrogate didn't meet our standards.

What's in a name?
The naming of a file must be unique, and allow you to match it to the original item. It might be that you need an additional spreadsheet to do this, or you want the folder structure to mimic your collection's arrangement. These might have extra costs. Be certain that your company can not only meet the cost of image quality, but also has the resources to name your files correctly.

What's the angle?
Every little aspect of an object will need consideration early on in the process. The angle at which a bound volume opens affects how it can be digitised, and the equipment required. Digitisation companies will want to know these seemingly minor details.

Collaboration
It's likely that your digitisation programme - no matter how big or small - will affect others within your organisation. Think about who this might be, and involve them early on.

There's no such thing as a quick win
Any collection that seems like an 'easy target' or 'low hanging fruit' will still have its issues. Carefully plan your project, and mistrust anyone who tells you something will be quick to digitise. It won't be.

If you're planning your own project and would like to get in touch, you can email me at kim.harsley@hes.scot. Or look at some of the 140,000 images we've digitised so far on canmore.org.uk

Queens Hotel, Leeds
28-30 August 2019

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