



arc magazine

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10

**ARA
Excellence
Awards –
Building on
success**

18

**Think Creative
Archive**

26

**A socio-
technical
approach
to digital
preservation:
Fundamental
to digital
preservation
is human
knowledge,
skills, values,
and beliefs**

30

**A big
exhibition
for a big
anniversary**



ARA 2023 CONFERENCE

BELFAST
30th August to
1st September 2023



Welcome

arc magazine

May & June 2023 edition



Welcome to the May/June edition of *ARC Magazine*.

A varied edition this time highlights some key focuses of the work of archivists, records managers and conservators. In our Opening Lines Julie Davis looks at a popular project working with young people experiencing particular needs who would normally be negatively affected by the barriers in working with these groups, highlighting how archives and heritage in general can be used to such great effect in opening up new avenues of interest for people who might struggle to engage with archives otherwise.

This practice of engaging with local communities appears again in our feature by Anna França and Dan Copley from Edge Hill University, who highlight the way the newly accessible archive can be used to connect a university with its community in ways not possible without an archive that can be accessed and interpreted by people who can acknowledge it as part of their heritage. Kostas Arvanitis et al in our feature about how disaster support groups and archive professionals can work together also shows that collaboration is vital to understanding what is important to each group and how working together can lead to important archives and stories being deposited in institutions and

made accessible for future generations. A key theme in this is trust and mutual understanding between people and groups that may not naturally collaborate.

Our final feature, by Irina Smidt from the American University in Cairo, looks at socio-technical systems for digital preservation: again, highlighting the importance of how an archive – physical, digital or both – needs to understand and communicate with the people and places it represents. Irina shows that digital preservation is fluid and not restricted by what platform is used for the work. As usual in our magazine we also bring you news and updates from the ARA, and good news stories from around our own community.

We are always looking for more content, either longer features or short articles in our news pages. If you have an idea for any future content please email arceditors@archives.org.uk.

Happy reading!

Ally McConnell
ARC Joint Editor





arc magazine May & June 2023

in this issue

COVER
STORY

22

Archiving disasters: A guide for disaster support groups and professionals

- 3 Welcome
- 5 Opening Lines

From the ARA Chair

- 8 Killian Downing reflects

ARA News

- 10 Learning from experience – conversations around diversity and the archives sector
- 10 ARA Excellence Awards – Building on success
- 14 ARA Conference

Professional Registration News

- 16 Chris Sheridan reflects on professional registration with Miten Mistry

Features

- 18 Think Creative Archive
- 22 Archiving disasters: A guide for disaster support groups and professionals
- 26 A socio-technical approach to digital preservation: Fundamental to digital preservation is human knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs
- 30 Beyond 'Beyond 2022' an interview with Peter Crooks

Industry News

- 36 Training provider announced for the Level 7 Archivist apprenticeship
- 36 Have you seen the new inclusion hub recently launched on The UK National Archives' sector site?

- 36 Announcing the 2023 Business Archives Council cataloguing grant
- 36 Plowden Medal Conservation Award
- 37 Creative Commons Licences toolkit

Community News

- 37 Grants for conservation of manuscripts
- 37 Friends of the National Libraries grants
- 38 The Travelling Museum of Communities
- 40 A big exhibition for a big anniversary
- 41 Black and Gifted
- 42 The Yerusha Project
- 43 Jameson and Ancestry partner to publish historical publican agreements that reveal a vanished Ireland

Back Chat

- 44 Ally McConnell interviews Arthur Green, an independent book conservator and bookbinding historian

And finally

- 46 ARC Magazine and ARA Today notices

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Opening lines

Opening Lines has been provided by **Julie Davis**, Archives & Local Studies Lead (Development, Wellbeing & Local Studies) at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre. Julie provides insight into a radical project hosted by the local authority archive service to engage diverse audiences to increase skills, and inspire and spark creativity.

The nine-week DigiCreative Heritage project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund with a grant of £25,500 was a pilot project set up by Julie Davis at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre alongside freelance practitioner Louise Jordan. We both shared a passion for history and heritage and wanted to engage with members of the Wiltshire community who may be less likely to work with our organisation due to barriers engaging with education and learning opportunities.

The aim of the project was to work with a small group of people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties (SEMH) needs or care experience who may lack confidence and/or experience anxiety issues. We hoped that over the course of the nine weeks the group would locate and study items in the History Centre's archive and local studies collections, gain research and technology skills such as learning to assess and handle items, using excel spreadsheets, digitising material, alongside planning skills to turn their ideas about their items of choice into a creative piece using drawing, collage, animation, sound and other techniques, with a visit to Chippenham Museum to hear about how they plan their exhibitions. The culmination would



Creative skills
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Swindon History
Centre

Creative skills
© Wiltshire &
Swindon History
Centre



be an exhibition, which is currently touring six Wiltshire libraries and a final session about next steps: how to move forwards with new skills gained. We hoped the participants might be able to gain confidence, better their communication skills and feel a sense of belonging by the end of the sessions. A certificate of completion was handed out to all those who completed the project.

Project partners included Prime Theatre, Building Bridges and Wiltshire Council (acting as referrers), Chippenham Museum, Chippenham Library and the Wiltshire Family and Community Learning team. We also worked with three amazing creative practitioners: Caroline Rudge, Kirsty Jones and Ian McGinn, with Greg the

videographer bringing his unique skills into play to record the project journey. The varied expertise and experience of the partnership team proved key to its success.

Well, what a journey we had! The group gained all the above skills and more; they gelled so well as a group; made friends, had fun, blossomed and really grew in confidence. We learnt a lot from each other, and everyone felt genuinely sad when the sessions came to an end. Engagement with the project was brilliant with some participants regularly travelling long distances to attend, the draw of the project helping them overcome their anxieties. It was wonderful to be able to share with them their passion for history – it gave a real

sense of connection and enlivened the sessions. The project has far exceeded our expectations, each session bringing such a lively buzz to the History Centre, it was contagious! We had many positive comments from staff and visitors; the participants were welcomed and appreciated which added to their sense of self-worth. There were challenges but none that could not be overcome. We at the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre were totally inexperienced at working with vulnerable adults with additional needs. This was a worry before the project began, but we have learnt so much from our project partners and the participants themselves who have been fantastic and have achieved so much.

Creative skills
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Swindon History
Centre



Social skills
© Wiltshire
& Swindon
History Centre



Is there anything we'd do differently? Realise that planning and administration takes a lot longer than you'd think. Hold more sessions, as they flew by and were a bit more rushed than we all would have liked. A couple of participants very much wanted to engage with the project but their social anxiety proved too big a barrier. Louise, the project's participant mentor, worked

hard to enable them to continue but unfortunately this wasn't possible. We would very much like to investigate remote working for future projects with hybrid online and face-to-face participation to try to break down this barrier.

Would we run the project again? Yes! It's been a wonderful project to work on; the staff at the History

Centre who assisted felt a real sense of achievement and ability to make a difference to others and to help the group learn more about WSHC's collections. We've seen a new side to our collections and how they are studied and it's been refreshing and exciting to see them looked at from different perspectives. We are already investigating new funding options and can't wait to go again.

The project's evaluation report and toolkit will be available here soon. You can also find the animations created for the exhibition on the History Centre's YouTube [channel](#).

From the Board

Killian Downing shares his experience as a new ARA Board member and discusses his work with Dublin City University Library and as a Councillor for the Europeana Network Association.



Hi everyone, I'm an archivist working in Dublin City University Library (DCU). I joined the ARA Board in July 2022, having been the treasurer for the Archives and Records Association, Ireland, since 2018.

As a music student, studying sound recording and creative music technologies, I worked part-time in Dublin Zoo and Dublin City Libraries and Archive. Much of this time was spent at the welcoming desk of Dublin City Archive where I was enthralled by visitor stories and their artefacts, and especially humbled by their desire for sharing and learning about the past. After monkeying around in Dublin Zoo for a few years, I decided to study archives and records management and graduated in 2010.

DCU is a young and vibrant university in Dublin, focused on learning and delivering impact, through education, research, and innovation. DCU like many other organisations was transformed by the pandemic, as was the library's collaborative multi-campus response, which provided meaningful support and refuge to students and staff, many of whom were working on the frontline or supporting the healthcare sector around Ireland.

DCU library staff innovated and prioritised opportunities using digital technology to ensure our services remained relevant, intuitive and accessible. Earlier this year, the Special Collections and Archives team launched a new Charles J. Haughey exhibition in the O'Reilly Library titled Politics in a Changing Ireland complementing an existing Google Arts and Culture digital exhibition.

DCU has a rich and proud history of innovation in teaching with new technologies and

providing flexible pathways to university-level education to diverse and geographically dispersed learners. Promoting wider access to higher education is central to DCU's mission of transforming lives and societies and I think equally important to ARA's role in shaping equitable and inclusive career paths in the sector.

Since 2018, I've been a voluntary councillor for Europeana, Europe's platform for digital cultural heritage. Recently, I helped to establish a new and growing Climate Action Community which advocates for collective action to support environmental sustainability work within the cultural heritage sector. With Europeana, I've been chair of the New Professionals Task Force, which worked to better support young and new professionals in the Europeana Network Association, which now has over 3,500 members internationally. Europeana has been implementing this task force's recommendations and also partnered with the Youth for the Future of Cultural Heritage in Europe to better support young and new professionals, providing a platform for research, addressing issues and opening up new collaborations.

Having been a member of ARA since I qualified, I'm acutely aware that the needed dialogue and action on equality, diversity and inclusivity has been slow. However, thanks to the work of the Diversity & Inclusion Allies, with the Board's support, and especially Jenny Moran for co-creating a new strategic direction, I think ARA is now taking a more nuanced role, listening, learning and welcoming members from different backgrounds across the recordkeeping sector. Importantly, ARA is asking, who still isn't part of our conversations and why?



Dublin City University (DCU) © Shutterstock

Helping to establish Europeana's new Climate Action Community, I have relevant experience to help advocate for and support better working practices that minimise the cultural heritage sector's impact on the climate and our environment. I'm very encouraged by the important work of the Environmental Sustainability Group, and I will be actively supporting their work around carbon literacy training.

As a new Board member, I will also be actively supporting the extension of the Archive Service Accreditation across Ireland which helps to assess and improve how cultural heritage organisations acquire, preserve and provide access to their collections over the long term, through the management of risks and by planning for change. This Archive Service Accreditation critically represents a pathway for the ongoing development of services while understanding the changing needs of service users.

I'm really looking forward to meeting more members and getting a better understanding of the multifaceted work of ARA. I'm particularly looking forward to the conference in Belfast later this year, where the theme is 'Communities' and over three days we will be talking about our communities of users, partners, colleagues, and collaborators. Belfast will be a wonderful opportunity to learn from the experiences of others. I hope to see you there!



A new addition to Killian's family, Penny, a very chatty 9 month old rescue from Drogheda Animal Rescue.
© Killian Downing



Learning from experience – conversations around diversity and the archives sector

ARA is pleased to announce that the first of its 'Community Conversations' is available to members. As part of the work of the Diversity Allies, Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan has undertaken online interviews to explore the experiences of people from different backgrounds in their engagement with the archive sector from a variety of perspectives. She talks to Makiya Davis-Bramble about her time working in archives as a person of colour. There's some real insight into how it feels to be in such a situation and some candid advice about how to make people feel welcome. In the other interview we learn from the archivist, Steven Jaffe, and a donor about the Belfast Jewish Heritage project and approaches to collecting from a specific community.

The interviews are available on the Members' area of the ARA website. There'll be more launched in the coming months so keep a look out. Also, if you have any suggestions for interviews or comments on how we can improve let Elizabeth know at elizabeth@elizabethoc.co.uk.



ARA Excellence Awards – Building on success

The ARA Excellence Awards returned last year after a two-year gap due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were very pleased to see so many organisations and individuals nominated in the different categories and a great turn-out for the public vote.

The awards are a great opportunity to spread the word about the value of the record-keeping sector – archives, records management and conservation – to the publics of the UK and Ireland. When the winners are announced we publicise the results not just to the sector but to the wider press (particularly focussing on press in the locations where the winners work) as well as to key government influencers – such as DCMS and local MPs.

Paul Stebbing, Archives Manager at Barnsley Archives and Local Studies – who won the Record-keeping Service of the Year Award - says of the impact of the award:

"After a very difficult couple of years for everybody, during which we had worked incredibly hard to continue to engage with our customers and provide access to the collections, the award of Record-keeping Service of the Year was a wonderful acknowledgement of that hard work and our achievements. It gave the whole team a lift, and was an immense source of pride for us, as well as our hard-working volunteers and loyal customers. It also raised our profile within the local authority and highlighted the importance of preserving and making accessible archive collections."

Raising the profile of the record-keeping service within its host organisation has been a theme of recent winners' reflections on their win:

Giulia Bernasconi, archives manager at the Central Bank of Ireland describes the impact of winning Record-keeping Service of the Year in 2019:

Katie Proctor with Andrew Nicoll and Aileen Ireland at the ARA Conference in Chester © ARA



Awards Ceremony at
the ARA Conference
in Chester © Simon
O'Connor



"..this has been a great way to ensure management is aware that our service is of high quality and recognised by our peers and the ARA like."

And

Erin Lee, archivist at the National Theatre in London, winner of Record Keeper of the Year in 2018 said:

"This was very much a win for the whole archive team at the NT and our work was recognised by a much broader range of staff than before."

Winning an award can also shine a light on a particular aspect of the record-keeping sector – helping people to understand its value, Katie Proctor, winner of the Record-keeper of the Year Award in 2022 says:

"Winning the ARA's Record Keeper of the Year 2022 award has been a highly beneficial and rewarding experience for me. As a winner of this prestigious award, I feel I have been recognised for my skills

“
It also raised our
profile within the
local authority
and highlighted
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accessible archive
collections.
”

in managing, preserving, and providing access to records and archives within West Yorkshire. I also feel recognised for continuing and promoting the valuable opportunity the Archive Conservation



Awards Ceremony at the ARA Conference in Chester
© Simon O'Connor



Paul Stebbings with Andrew Nicoll and Aileen Ireland at the ARA Conference in Chester

Training Scheme provides to those wanting to begin a career in Archive Conservation. It has increased the visibility not only of the conservation studio within WYAS but also the visibility of the training scheme and its valuable input into developing the conservation profession and the importance it has on preserving the valuable expertise of its instructors and committee for future generations.

Receiving the award has helped me to network with other professionals in my field and share knowledge and expertise on the care of collections to a wider audience, particularly within West Yorkshire.

Overall, the award has given me a sense of pride, accomplishment and motivation to continue the important work all conservation professionals do, in preserving our shared cultural heritage."

If we are to improve government and business funding and resources to the sector then we must take every opportunity to let them know what we do and why it is important both to them and to the general public. [The ARA Excellence Awards](#) is one such opportunity.

2022 Awards

The Awards were presented to winners at the Gala Dinner on the Thursday night of our conference in Chester. ARA Chair, Andrew Nicoll and ARA President, Aileen Ireland, travelled to Barnsley to make a special presentation of the record-keeping service of the year award to ensure that as many of the staff and volunteers involved in the service could share in the moment. Andrew Nicoll also travelled to Shetland to present Brian Smith with his Distinguished Service Award.

The 2022 award winners were:

Record-keeping service of the Year – Barnsley Archives and Local Studies (Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council)

Record Keeper of the Year – Katie Proctor (for work at West Yorkshire Archives Service)

New Professional of the Year – Gemma Evans (for work at Archives and Records Council Wales and National Library of Wales)

The above three categories are voted for in a public vote and in 2022 more than 750 votes were cast.

Further to these awards, four Distinguished Service Awards were made by the Board to: Michael Cook, Declan Kelly, Brian Smith, Maggie Tohill.

You can read more about the 2022 winners on the ARA website [here](#).

The award has given me a sense of pride, accomplishment and motivation to continue the important work all conservation professionals do, in preserving our shared cultural heritage.

How to take part in the 2023 Awards

A call for nominations went out to members and the wider sector in April 2023 but anyone can make a nomination for the four categories (you do not have to be an ARA Member). Each nominee requires a nominator and a referee, you can self-nominate for the Distinguished Service Award, Record-keeping Service of the Year and Record Keeper of the Year Awards but not the New Professional of the Year Award.

The Distinguished Service Award is decided by the ARA Board, the other three awards are decided by a public vote which will open shortly after the nomination process closes on 2nd June 2023.

Information on criteria for each of the awards as well as nomination forms can be found on the ARA website [here](#).

Winners will be announced at the ARA Conference which takes place in Belfast from 30th August to 1st September 2022. Information on the conference can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions about the awards please contact Deborah at deborah.mason@archives.org.uk



Communities – ARA Conference 2023

30th August to 1st September in Belfast

Following on from our very successful in-person conference in Chester last year we return to Belfast this year for our 2023 conference on the theme 'Communities'. There is still time to register for the conference and you can find all the information you need on our conference micro-site [here](#).

Our Venues

Europa Hotel

The conference will be held in the world famous 4 star Europa Hotel located in the heart of Belfast City Centre. Having undergone major refurbishment the hotel now boasts 272 bedrooms, making it one of the largest and most luxurious hotels in Northern Ireland. Delegates booking on the Full Conference package will be allocated a room in the hotel (on a first come first served basis until all the rooms are allocated).

The Europa Hotel has an international reputation for hosting prestigious events and looking after many of the celebrities and VIPs who visit Belfast. This year, that could include you!

The Hastings Hotel group who own the Europa Hotel are committed to environmental sustainability and proactively work to negate their negative impact on our local and global environment. They fully support the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and look to incorporate these into all that they do to help achieve a better planet, and future for all. You can read more about their sustainability plan [here](#).

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

Our Wednesday night social event will take place at PRONI who will open up some of their spaces for guests to explore. Dinner and drinks will be served in their spectacular atrium with plenty of space to sit and eat and also stand and mingle.

Belfast

Each area of Belfast has its own character and charm, and its own unique variety of shops, restaurants, cafes, museums and attractions. Why not build in a little time to your visit to discover the city's hidden treasures in Belfast's neighbourhoods? You can find out more about Belfast [here](#).



The Conference Programme

Our three keynote speakers are now confirmed:

Wednesday: Jayne Brady, Head of Civil Service for Northern Ireland
 Thursday: Emma Markiewicz, Director, London Metropolitan Archives
 Friday: Peter Crooks, Associate Professor/Senior Lecturer in Medieval History, Trinity College Dublin & Founding Director, 'Beyond 2022: Ireland's Virtual Record Treasury'

There are six tracks to the programme this year to make it easier for people to plan their attendance and follow particular streams:

- Archives & Records
- Conservation
- Record-keeping profession
- Users and communities
- Digital
- Information Governance

Some topics cross all streams – in 2018 we made a commitment to put diversity and inclusion at the heart of what we do and there is a great line up of talks, panels and workshops for all those interested in this topic. We also have the return of 'Is It Okay' the fringe session led by Jenny Moran (pictured with Villy Magero and Saman Quaraishi) which proved to be one of the hits of 2022.

Europa Hotel,
Belfast City
Centre © Europa
Hotel,



'Is It OK fringe' Villy Magero, Jenny Moran, Saman Quaraishi © Simon O'Connor.



ARA Conference 2022 Chester © ARA



Belfast City Hall © Visit Belfast

You can find the full programme (which will be updated regularly) on the website [here](#).

Social Events

Tuesday 29th August

Informal drinks at the Europa Hotel – many people will probably travel on Tuesday to be ready for the start of conference on Wednesday 30th – come and meet other delegates over an informal drink in the famous Piano Bar at the Europa Hotel.

Wednesday 30th August

Dinner at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. As detailed above, our colleagues at PRONI are throwing open their doors to ARA Conference delegates for the Wednesday night dinner event.

Thursday 31st August

Gala Dinner and ARA Excellence Awards. These will be held in the stunning ballroom of the Europa Hotel. Don't forget to get your entries in for the ARA Excellence Awards (see pages 10 – 13 for details).

The Practicalities

Registration is via the conference website [here](#).

ARA Member fees are:

- Full conference with 2 nights accommodation £650
- Full conference no accommodation £550
- Daily rate £199

Non members pay:

- Full with accommodation £780
- Without accommodation £680
- Day rate £229

Information on travelling to Belfast can be found [here](#).

We have endeavoured to make the conference as accessible as possible, however if you have any special requirements please do make sure that you include these when registering so that we can ensure that we have plenty of time to meet your needs.

TRAINING

Professional Registration News

In 2022 ARA introduced a new, free personalised service to support those applying for professional registration. Candidates and their mentors can request an online meeting with ARA to discuss the application process and get answers to any questions they may have. In this article Chris Sheridan talks to Miten Mistry RMARA, cataloguing archivist at The Wellcome Trust about his journey towards Registered Membership.

Please give a brief overview of your career so far

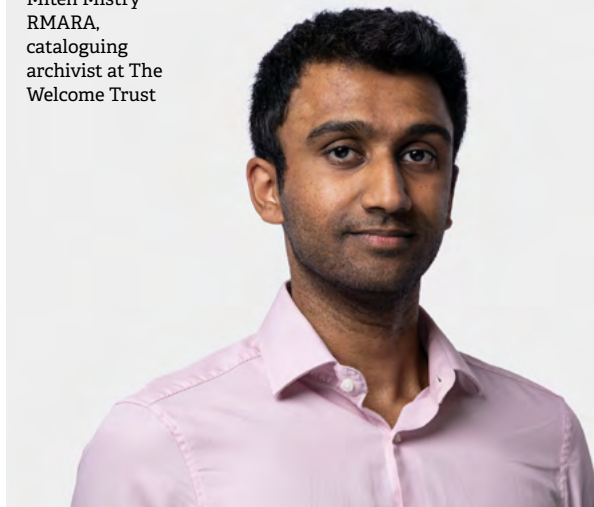
I found archiving by accident. A digital archivist traineeship at the Bodleian Libraries grabbed my attention – despite me not previously knowing what an archivist was. My application was rejected due to my lack of experience. So, I found volunteering opportunities and successfully reapplied the following year. The two-year traineeship involved learning about archives and libraries and included a distance learning postgraduate diploma. My next role - after a period of searching and failing to get past the application stage - was at Wellcome, on an initial one-year contract (which later became permanent) as a Cataloguing Archivist for the International Psychoanalytical Association archive.

Why did you apply for Registered Membership?

During my traineeship we used ARA's competency framework as a guide for our annual reviews and regular line manager catch up meetings. This provided a useful template for the skills I would have to develop if I wanted a career as an archivist. I had spoken to colleagues and friends about ARA registered membership, however I never felt particularly compelled to do it myself, as I wasn't sure I had the professional experience or time to dedicate to it. Conversations with friends in other professions, who had all pursued Charterships in their respective fields, reignited my thinking about registration with ARA.

On reviewing my skills and experience more objectively, I decided that it was time to pursue professional registration. I had gained more experience than I had appreciated and knew the application process would encourage me to measure my professional progress against a nationally recognised framework, helping guide my future development.

Miten Mistry
RMARA,
cataloguing
archivist at The
Wellcome Trust



What aspects of the application process did you find challenging?

I think the first challenge was to ask myself 'what if I don't have enough experience?' However, I quickly realised that there is a wealth of support offered during the application process, and the aim is to help you critically reflect and provide advice and guidance for a robust submission.

Picking the competencies was slightly difficult. I often found myself second guessing even small choices, thinking things like 'if I choose 'Competency A at level X', what if I don't pass, when I could have if I had instead chosen 'Competency B at level Y?'. Deciding on the best examples to evidence was a positive challenge, as you can draw upon ten years' worth of experience to support your application. This can include non-archive related examples that demonstrate transferable competencies.

There is a wealth of support offered during the application process. © Shutterstock



What ARA support did you find most helpful?

I found the support provided by ARA incredibly helpful, specifically the offer of a video call with Chris Sheridan. I utilised this early on in the process with my mentor. Chris explained everything clearly and the video call format meant that both myself and my mentor could ask questions and get answers immediately. This helped massively in my understanding of what I needed to accomplish and provided me with good hints and tips for a strong application. I also used the example competency forms on the application portal to help me to understand how to structure the content I would use. I attended some of the 'Introduction to Professional Development' webinars run by the ARA. These also allowed me to get a better understanding of the process and the commitment required.

How does it feel to have qualified as a Registered Member?

It feels great to be recognised by a leading professional body and has given me a definite boost in reassuring me that I'm on the right career path! Having the opportunity to take stock of where I am now in my career and reflect critically on both the positive experiences and the times when things didn't work out as planned, has been very rewarding. It also helped me to identify areas I'd like to focus on in the next stages of my career, while equipping me with more confidence in the skills I've gained so far and what I'm able to contribute to the profession.

What advice would you offer to others thinking of applying for professional registration?

Go for it, because you probably have way more relevant experience to draw on than you think. Have a look at the framework initially, even if you use it in a very rough way, which was my approach. It gives you a good idea of where you are in terms of experience and provides a great base to begin any conversations with potential mentors. The framework is freely available and you can start to record any activities and experiences as soon as you can, even if you're not yet sure about applying - it will make it easier to formulate your application if you do decide to apply.

Get in touch with Chris Sheridan; he's very helpful, provides a great introduction to the process, and was invaluable in answering any questions I had. My senior manager suggested that I find my own mentor for professional registration. It is a great way to meet peers and professionals who I didn't yet know, from outside of my organisation and current network. I was a bit nervous, but I contacted someone outside my organisation who's a librarian and has experience of the archive sector. I'm so glad I did as my mentor was amazing and I now know someone in a completely different geographical area and with different professional experience, who I would likely not have otherwise met. Finally, ask for and utilise any help you can! I was incredibly fortunate to have easy access to quality advice in terms of sense checking, proofing-reading and honest and critical feedback; this allowed me to consistently hone my application and ultimately submit with confidence.

Think Creative Archive

In this article **Anna França** and **Dan Copley** of Edge Hill University explore the way in which a small, fledgling archive can become a key connector between the University and the wider community.



Within the record-keeping sector we know that archives do not sit alone, isolated from the world around them, containing only arcane knowledge accessed by a few academics. They hold the history of individuals and communities and connecting them to their living, present day communities is a vital and useful function. We are, however, not in a position to say “if we build it, they will come” – communities usually need a little more encouragement than that and as part of an initiative to consolidate collaboration within and across Edge Hill University, the archive staff also came up with a way of connecting to the wider community.

In May 2021 and inspired by a scoping study undertaken by RLUK and AHRC, (Scoping study: The role of academic and research libraries as active participants in the production of scholarly research, a group of library and archive staff and academics at Edge Hill University came together to establish a new research group. Research Catalyst (named as a nod to our main library building Catalyst and the home of our archive), was formed with the aim of consolidating and furthering positive and productive research-orientated relationships that had been forming between staff in Library and Learning Services and several academic departments. From the outset, a key mission of the group was to facilitate greater collaboration around the University Archive and realise its potential to support teaching and research as well as further engagement with communities at Edge Hill and beyond. Despite the difficulties that library and archive services encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic, in some ways the forced closure of our building and face-to-face services acted as a driver by highlighting the need for greater collaboration and an appreciation for the importance of outreach and engagement in promoting the value of our archive service.

It is worth highlighting that in 2021 the Edge Hill Archive was what you might describe as a fledgling archive service. Although the collection itself dates back to our beginnings as a teacher training college for women in Liverpool in 1895, it only became accessible for the first time in 2018 when the collections were transported from uncatalogued and little-known boxes in our old library building to a purpose-built space in the newly built Catalyst building. This was followed by Dan's appointment as the university's first ever permanent Archivist in 2019 and the procurement of Epexio in 2021 which provided our archive collections with a shop window for the very first time. As we have continued to develop the essential building blocks and infrastructure for our service, we have taken the opportunity to weave a collaborative approach into the service design, engaging regularly with colleagues and key stakeholders to ensure our approach is user focused. Research Catalyst has acted as an enabler and is helping to drive the direction of development for our archive service, in effect becoming a sort of de facto steering group that is drawing on the expertise of library and archive professionals, academic staff and students from around the institution to create a service that is truly accessible, inclusive, and engaging. As an

Arjun Devkaran Singh, the overall winner in the 16-18 category, wrote a lovely piece inspired by a student's illustration from 1910 of a parent and child, hand in hand, walking into the distance. Arjun said, “I would say that my story was an exploration of the memories which shape us, and their influences on the present. It was a theme which I felt was in tone with the archive's mission... the lives of the women at Edge Hill, and the memories they made there.”

Display of the winning entries at the Think Creative Archive prize giving event © Alistair Emmett, Edge Hill University



Think Creative

Feature **arc**magazine

In a piece of writing from the Edge Hill Archive, while discussing the suffragettes and the suffragists, Helena Normanton mentions how those in power were taking advantage of 'the polite way' in which suffragists were asking for their rights and that they were 'victims of their own sweet reasonableness.' These remarks made me ponder over other instances in history when a movement had a non-violent approach to tackling injustice to begin with, but due to their peaceful pleas being side-lined by the government, there became parts of the movement that used more violent tactics.



Rosa Parks and Dr Martin Luther King Jr

One such instance was the American Civil Rights Movement. From a young age across the world are taught about the teachings and struggles of Martin Luther King who was famously non-violent in his protests, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This particular protest, he was alongside another famous non-violent protest, The Boycott lasted for a year, and King continued to co-ordinate non-violent approach to discrimination in America. However, there were those who took a violent approach to discrimination, such as Malcolm X, who said, "We are non-violent with us."

Both Malcolm and King had an impact on history, and they both affected the way we were treated America. Although there were some who were violent, they both affected the way we were treated America.

A display at the Think Creative Archive included all of the winning entries © Alistair Emmett, Edge Hill University



Think Creative Archive



Courtney Baker





Simra Nadim receiving her prize from Vice Chancellor John Cater © Alistair Emmett, Edge Hill University

institution with historic links to the women's suffrage movement Edge Hill has always been proud to promote social advancement and access to education for all and the ethos of widening participation is deeply embedded in the university and in the work of our group. 77 per cent of our students have at least one widening participation characteristic and 46 per cent come from the highest areas of deprivation (IMD quintile 1 or 2). From the outset we have looked to connect the archive with audiences beyond the university and empower individuals and communities to understand the transformative role that archives can play. We had already seen the power of the archive to build bridges and connections across the university and it was with this in mind that we launched our Archive Showcase and associated competition in 2022.

The Archive Showcase [site](#) was developed with the intention of sharing research and creative work by our staff and students that had been inspired by the Edge Hill archive collections. These pieces could, in turn, then be inspiration for the people taking part in our Think Creative Archives Competition.

It has always been the intention of Research Catalyst that the network would draw in academics, staff and students from across the university and the Showcase reflects this, with pieces including a blog about a remarkable 19th century Edge Hill student who went on to become a ground-breaking educational reformer through to a beautiful, animated film based on a First World War diary. This mix of research and analysis sitting alongside creative responses was vital to act as a springboard for the competition.

Funded by the Institute for Social Responsibility, one of Edge Hill's research institutes, the Think Creative competition invited entrants to create pieces that were inspired by or responded to things in the Edge Hill archive. We were aware that the Archive Showcase site would be the main source of ideas for the competition entries, so most of the research pieces we shared

Brontë Crawford, the overall winner in the adult category, wrote a beautiful piece imagining the experiences of former Edge Hill student Annie Williams when she becomes a missionary in India in 1896, and said, "I thought the competition itself was a great way of getting people to actively engage with the history of Edge Hill and the local area, re-imagining how those in another time might have experienced many of the same places and life events that we do today. I really wanted to capture that sense of place in the piece that I wrote, and I decided the best way to do that would be through the lens of folklore local to both Lancashire and Shillong in India, as I think local superstitions are deeply shaped by the landscapes they grow out of. I wondered how that might induce a level of doubt in someone training to instruct others in her own Christian faith."



Brontë Crawford receiving her award from Vice Chancellor John Cater at the Think Creative Archives prize giving event © Alistair Emmett, Edge Hill University



© Alistair Emmett, Edge Hill University

were short and accessible, while the creative works would hopefully inspire people to stretch their own imaginations and explore their own response to the archive. Some of the work on the site, such as those focussing on women's suffrage or the First and Second World Wars, would relate to topics young people were learning about in schools. The creative works, such as a story that was inspired by a thesis about the techniques of trampolining and one story responding to mysterious, orphan work photographs, would hopefully encourage competition entrants to find new, unique ways of engaging with the archive.



© Alistair Emmett, Edge Hill University



The Think Creative Archive prize giving event included a display of all the winning entries © Alistair Emmett, Edge Hill University

Split into three age categories (14-16, 16-18 and 18+), the competition was promoted by Research Catalyst members and through the usual Edge Hill promotional channels (including different departments as well as corporate communications). The top three winners in each category and fifteen commendations in each category received vouchers as prizes. We also offered a voucher for the top three entrants' schools/colleges in the two younger categories. Research Catalyst members shared the competition with networks and organisations they already knew (which, thanks to the broad membership was a good range) and all took responsibility for contacting a variety of schools and colleges, with many visiting in person to speak directly with pupils. While this engagement promoted the competition, it also benefited the archive by raising awareness of the service and our collections, with new, promising partnerships emerging with local community groups and historical associations, for example.

The competition was judged by the Research Catalyst members, with time to look at the entries independently and then a hotly contested discussion about who the winners should be! Eventually, decisions were reached and all entrants were contacted to let them know how they had done and invited to a prize giving event at the university. For

Sundus Fatimah was awarded third prize in the 14-16 category for a short essay she wrote responding to articles about the campaign for women's suffrage that some of Edge Hill's early students wrote.

Sundus said, "I think the competition was quite different from what I usually take part in, but that challenged me to think further and more deeply about topics than I usually do. It motivated me to link ideas from the archive to my existing knowledge."

this, we had our Vice-Chancellor, John Cater, speak to the 65 attendees and distribute the prizes. We also combined the event with some showcasing of other work Research Catalyst have been doing across the university to celebrate the variety of activity going on. We'd also have to admit that having lovely cake available for everyone didn't hurt either! Following the event, the winning work has also been uploaded to the Archive Showcase site and in some cases, originals have been donated to the archive for future preservation.

The event was a great way of sharing the work of Research Catalyst and celebrating our growing connections with local communities, with local community groups attending alongside the prize winners and their families. Seeing the value that competition entrants have gained from the initiative and hearing their positive feedback has been fantastic and furthermore, these activities have paved the way for further discussion and work with local schools and societies. Fundamentally, the success of this project has stemmed from strong and collaborative partnership working and the co-development of a clear and inspiring vision for our archive. We hope this work will serve to inspire other small and developing archive services to build engagement into their service design and consider how they can positively influence their local communities.

About the Authors

Anna França and Dan Copley work in Library and Learning Services at Edge Hill University in West Lancashire, having both joined the University in 2019 in the respective roles of Head of Collections and Archives and Archivist. Anna and Dan can both be contacted on Twitter @AnnaFranca11 and @dan_copley

Archiving disasters: A guide for disaster support groups and professionals

By **Kostas Arvanitis, Anne Eyre, Andy Hardman, Jen Kavanagh** and **Jelena Watkins**



How can members of a disaster support group go about understanding what it means to form an archive of the group's materials? And how can they identify and approach a cultural organisation to start a conversation about depositing this material?

How can cultural professionals start a conversation with a disaster support group about forming an archive of the group's history and activity?

From January to August 2022, the authors (a team of collective trauma and heritage consultants and academic researchers) engaged with the above questions. This was prompted by a relevant discussion that was initiated by a member of the team and Trustee of the September 11 UK Families Support Group (S11UKFSG). S11UKFSG was founded in 2002 by and for the UK families whose loved ones were lost in the terrorist attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001. The organisation's aim is to provide a forum for the mutual support of the UK 9/11 families. In the context of the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, S11UKFSG decided to explore the possibility of forming an archive of the Group's history and activity. The group's archive features both individual and collective records, consisting of documents related to the formation and running of the group as well as cuttings, invitations, letters, documents and minutes, among others, regarding memorials and events.

This led to a project funded by the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, University of Manchester (Social Responsibility Fund), which aimed to:

- Understand the motivations, aims, benefits and challenges of the formation, relevance, value, and use of personal, family, and community archives around traumatic events;
- Explore models of self and group management of such archives, assist individuals and communities plan for such work, and identify the scope of cultural professional and psychological support that this work might require; and
- Produce relevant guidance for key stakeholders including those directly affected by disaster (bereaved people, survivors, associations and communities) and professionals working with such groups (e.g. trauma therapists, disaster managers and museum professionals and archivists).

We present here the Archiving disaster support group records: a guide for professionals and support groups, which is the outcome of the above project, further informed by a workshop with archivists, disaster professionals and academics that was held at Archives+ in October 2022.

The guide consists of two parts:

Part 1: for disaster support groups and family associations

Part 1 provides advice for disaster support groups who are looking to deposit their archive with a public institution. Key points for consideration include:



National 9/11 Memorial, New York © J Watkins

- Why archiving may be a consideration for you
 - Disaster support groups and family associations may accumulate materials of historical and other significance
 - You may wish to retain, preserve and hand on material for future generations
 - It can be hard knowing what to do or where to start
- Understanding the emotional significance
 - Dealing with disaster-related materials can be a deeply emotional and symbolic experience
 - Working with these materials – whether personally or professionally – requires patience, sensitivity and compassion
 - Emotional preparation and support are important for these endeavours
- What heritage organisations do and how they may help you
 - Organisations interested in 'heritage' might be interested in your materials
 - It may depend on their collection policies and practices
 - A good first step may be to speak with an archivist or museum professional in a relevant organisation
- Advice and suggestions for embarking on this journey
 - Have discussions within your group about your wishes and feelings around the material you have and what might happen to them
 - Develop a good relationship with heritage professionals
 - Acknowledge the sensitivity of subject matter
 - Let everyone be heard and have their say
 - Understand the process and expect to ask questions
 - Make sure you feel comfortable and trust those involved in dealing with your collection
 - Take your time and do not rush this
 - Be clear about ownership
 - Understand your rights and who has control of materials after handover
 - Consider access options after handover

Part 2: for archivists and heritage professionals

Part 2 is aimed at archivists, museum and heritage professionals and academic researchers who are considering embarking on a collaborative journey of acquiring an archive related to a disaster or traumatic event. When working in collaboration with the owners of a private archive, clear communication and open consultation is required throughout. Assumptions that the group may have a good understanding of the archive and heritage sectors and how archiving works should be dismissed, and clear and open dialogue should be entered from the beginning to build trust. Following is a summary of points for consideration when starting the journey of consultation with the private archive's owners:



Knowledge about archives and how they function

Those outside of the heritage sector have very little or no knowledge of how archives operate and what their requirements for depositing material with them would involve. An introduction on how the process of depositing with an archive might work and what the implications would be is essential.

Build trust and a relationship with the group

Archive material that involves sensitive content and subject matter requires a sensitive approach to engaging with those who own the content. Building trust with the group and allowing them to lead on the pace and process of working through their archive is important, as is understanding the relationships within the group. Finding a gatekeeper or lead representative who can communicate to the wider group is also helpful.

Concerns regarding access

Handing over personal and sensitive information to a third party can be an overwhelming task. Understanding what restrictions the group might want to put on access to certain parts of the archive, and ensuring this is documented, can help to build trust further.

Ownership and control

Group archive material will likely involve multiple owners, and these individuals may have differing views on how their material is documented, stored and accessed by a potential host organisation. Having discussions about what control the individuals can have on the material once deposited will help to again manage expectations.

Concerns regarding sensitive nature of the content

Being asked to engage with personally sensitive and traumatising content can be an overwhelming task

9/11 Memorial Garden in London, Grosvenor Square © J Watkins



White roses laid on the 9/11 anniversary © J Watkins

and one that some individuals may not feel able to do without support. Who will access this material in the long-term also needs to be considered. The process of asking people to talk about and share this type of material needs to be done carefully, with room for discussion and flexibility over the timeframe and methods used.

Open communication

Getting to know the owners of the archive and giving space for them to get to know the project team leading the archiving process is critical. Meetings where everyone can introduce themselves and begin to ask questions or flag concerns is an important starting point. Providing a way for the group to ask follow-up questions, including on a one-to-one level and in a safe and confidential environment, will help to continue to build trust. Share contact details and be clear as to what everyone's role in the team is from the beginning.

Define the archive

Fitting a personal/private archive into the definitions and parameters of an institution will not always be easy. Such archives are not necessarily created with any archive intentions or aims in mind. They will grow and evolve over time, reflecting the experiences of the groups and people they represent. They will likely contain duplicates of material, with multiple group members collecting and documenting the same events and stages of development. They may also feature gaps in content, which the group may wish to look to fill before depositing with a host organisation. Be considerate when asking a group to communicate what their archives consist of.

Audit the archive

Asking a group to conduct a thorough audit of sensitive material without support should be avoided. The auditing process should be done in partnership with the host organisation, ensuring the correct and relevant information was captured and to allow for the process to be as open and collaborative as possible.



Records and archives related to disaster support groups help to tell different stories – personal, organisational and societal. They can also be of social, historical, cultural and political interest, not only for those first owning and retaining them, but also to cultural, heritage and civic organisations interested in acquiring them. Such organisations often face a number of challenges, including building trust with the support group, defining the scope of a possible archive, and developing a sensitive practice of engaging with the group throughout the process. The Archiving disaster support group records: a guide for professionals and support groups aims to address some of those challenges that both disaster support groups and heritage professionals and organisations might face.

For more information and to access the full Guide, please visit <https://www.disasterarchives.org/>.

A socio-technical approach to digital preservation: Fundamental to digital preservation is human knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs

In this article, **Irina Schmid** from the American University in Cairo argues that a socio-technical approach—one that applies an understanding of social structures, roles, people, and technology—is a more sure pathway to success in digital preservation than relying on technology in isolation.



A socio-technical system is one that considers requirements spanning hardware, software, personnel, and community aspects. It applies an understanding of the social structures, roles and rights to inform the design of systems that involve communities of people and technology. In this article I hope to demonstrate the importance of these socio-technical factors in the process of digital preservation. Project planning, human knowledge, skills, values and beliefs, and personnel training all represent complex and significant activities critical to safeguarding digital data. It is not always obvious how this combination of factors might support the digital preservation process, but attention to them can assist digital strategies in proceeding smoothly.

When I joined the American University in Cairo, the common assumption in my department was that digital preservation is run solely by the IT team, through backups, which is not real digital preservation. This is a belief with which, I would guess, many organisations struggle. I realised that the Digitization Center team's understanding of their responsibility was hazy. It was not clear about its values or its mission. And because the conditions for it were not well understood, digital preservation wasn't happening.

Digital preservation does not follow a linear model; often it entails taking one step forward and one step back, and sometimes it does not seem to move at all. Its complexities can discourage and prevent the team from finding practical solutions and/or taking appropriate actions. Misunderstandings amongst the team as to what constitutes good practice can then further derail digital strategies. Part of the solution is to become open and

mindful—being open to the unexpected. Trying to understand the team's aspirations and knowledge, their environment, and habits, helped us make the necessary shifts to ensure a successful framework and eventually reach our digital preservation goals. This can take some time, but when we face problems and mistakes without fear, have constructive discussions within the team, and feel comfortable talking about barriers and how to move forward, then we can create and nurture a culture of knowledge, action, learning, and achievement.

Much of what we know about digital preservation has been based on using software and hardware tools that ensure the accessibility of digital materials. Technology has proved key to meeting digital preservation challenges. Yet, we forget that digital preservation begins from a small thing—from a file creation moment. We rarely consider this when we start thinking about the preservation of digital assets. We expect software to solve problems and shape preservation goals. But effective data management is not something software manages; it requires human intervention and data knowledge. After all, there is little point in storing data if it cannot be found. More data is not always better than less. We might think that more data makes a business foundation stronger, but adding infinite amounts of data does not necessarily improve accuracy; it just becomes noise.

This is why I started to reorganise our digital preservation process by going back to basics, developing preliminary conditions for digital preservation, and using our basic tools to affirm our old knowledge and generate new.

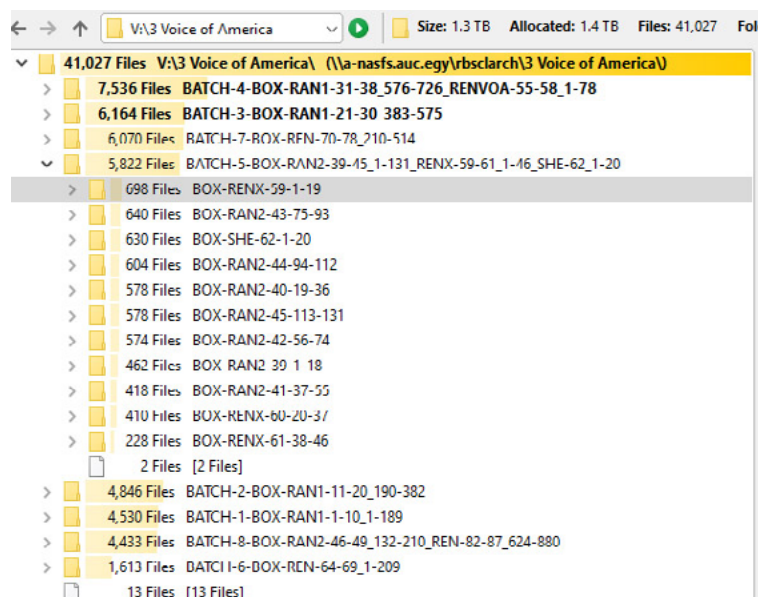
American University in Cairo (AUC)
campus: Library and Learning
Technologies department
© Irina Schmid

“Planning, a solid mindset, and repetition are the keys that will create the right environment for digital preservation to be achieved faster.”

Generally, connecting the intellectual aspects of values, ideals, and principles with digitisation processes is not something we do when we set up digitisation activities. We assume if one knows the equipment well, then we will achieve the desired outcome with ease. However, digitisation activities can be executed more effectively if the team transmits and applies another knowledge set on top of the technical one. I refer here to intellectual knowledge, which is made up of innate skills, talents, and self-evaluation. It is key to optimising organisational efficiency and strengthening and enhancing the desired performance.

In our situation, to take advantage of the different types of knowledge and technology available, I needed to create a framework of technology, challenges, and individual skills. This would allow us to understand the impact of our knowledge on the whole situation of data management and to identify the information we did not know. I started with the basics, with file organisation. This created a foundation of certainty and provided clear, simple steps with timetables for us to follow. Cleaning the data was akin to spring cleaning a disorganised library. If a library has its books strewn on the floor, what would you do? Pick them up and arrange them on shelves, of course. I knew that a

clear structure (whether in files, books, archives, etc.) is usually a precondition for solving a complex problem. To solve a complex problem, it is often helpful to identify its cause, which usually stems from the most basic and overlooked origins. If we understand the causes of the problem, then we can alleviate impacts and find a solution. By starting



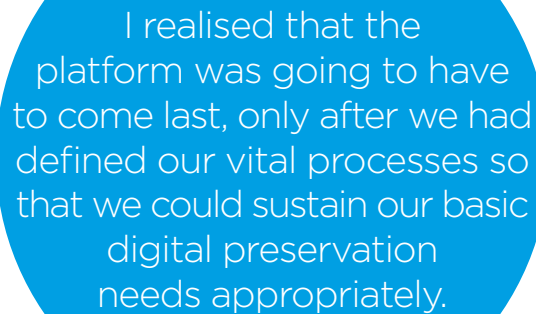
Voice of America collection: Using TreeSize program to check folder and file names, and a number of files © Irina Schmid

with the files, and sorting them out, in effect I was sorting out our data management problem within the digital preservation framework.

Going forward we had to make sure that our data was being managed effectively and efficiently. We needed to change our mindset about how we created it; if we are going to utilise data, we should be able to find it. We had to address how we measured data. Again, if we could not measure it, then we could not manage it. Our commitment to a good data culture also included enabling stronger data collaboration across the team and understanding the importance of digital preservation. The digital preservation narrative had to be broken into small informational pieces so my colleagues could make sense of it and realise that the IT department plays a different role in safeguarding digital assets. The upkeep and protection depend on us.

Merely managing data is not sufficient. It requires planning. Data management as a project depends on preparation and a capacity to think ahead. A project cannot happen without groundwork, skills, tools, and people—all significant elements that either make or break the outcome. If we want our outcomes to be successful, we also need to add enhanced human knowledge—a hidden tool. Human knowledge is expansive, deep, and elusive. It is based on logic and human thinking, values, and beliefs, not just on assimilating technical information. It would be a mistake to assume that knowing hardware and software is enough; technology offers support, not an intellectual solution. Each file, like each project, has unique deliverables; it can only be successful when it is created with enriched human knowledge that works appropriately within the social context. Files and folders must be clearly organised to be effectively utilised. If we want our digital preservation program to function well, we have to start by considering how we manage data from a human knowledge perspective, and how to improve or re-use it. Knowledge is not a typical commodity; unlike physical resources, it can be used and re-used without losing value. Knowledge-related initiatives—such as understanding our business needs, our organisation's culture, and our personnel—attract progress. If we strengthen the knowledge environment with an elementary set of tools (preparation, skills, people), then we can create solid conditions for data management and preservation.

Initially, when I started looking into digital preservation, I reasoned that it could be reached in two ways: by structuring preservation strategies and selecting an appropriate platform, such as Preservica, Libnova, or Arkivum. I imagined that if



I realised that the platform was going to have to come last, only after we had defined our vital processes so that we could sustain our basic digital preservation needs appropriately.

we acquired the platform, our problems with the preservation of unstable digital data would simply disappear. Although having a digital preservation platform is the whole point of digital preservation; in our case, I gradually realised that the platform was going to have to come last, after we had defined our vital processes so that we could sustain our basic digital preservation needs appropriately. We needed to start with something small and doable and work together to achieve improved knowledge and sustainability. Getting the platform first would have brought a partial solution; there would not have been a resultant benefit if we did not ensure that our files were in balance first.

Awareness of the basics defined our long-term digital preservation goals. We managed to establish a system with a defined set of elements that relate both to each other (data creation, data management, and quality) and to our work (in terms of accountability and interactions). By reworking old approaches, we recognised that digital preservation has a layered structure and that each of us plays a part in incorporating it well. We approached digital preservation in solidarity and with a growth mindset. And, as my colleagues' needs and desires were articulated and my team's talents better expressed, we could move forward and grow good practice. We understood the importance of our data and that creating it correctly would ensure it would remain readable and accessible.

Reading this, you may now have the impression that every process is complex and challenging, requiring years to reach the goal. However, reflecting on the past two years, I can firmly say that is not the case. Planning, a solid mindset, and repetition are the keys that will create the right environment for digital preservation to be achieved faster.

Digital preservation is a critical need and demands

Digitisation centre:
passing skills and
knowledge © Irina
Schmid



a range of abilities on the part of archivists and records managers. We need to be more responsive to the social and aesthetic requirements and to develop a blend of hard and soft skills and talents. The technical part of digital preservation is straightforward, but the social part is multifaceted. It is virtually impossible to do it well without mindfulness and thoughtfulness, without an ethical response to our teams, and without working collaboratively. The changes I implemented did not require a large budget or reinventing the wheel. Values, beliefs, and responsiveness do not entail additional software and hardware. My emphasis is on communicating and observing, giving time, coaching, listening, and learning together as a team from our mistakes. Mistakes provide a great way to learn and unlearn certain things. We connected ourselves with our work, with the stakeholders, and with the university. We understood the importance of being unified. Keeping an open mind and embracing social and technical factors have been essential to shaping digital preservation in collaboration with our teams and colleagues.

Digital preservation requires planning and good habits. Gaining good habits requires time for development, and they are hard to achieve even with a new perspective. Therefore, a good plan and timeline should be in place. Sensible strategies and legible files are very important too. We must take risks and relearn to do things differently. Taking a chance on a rough idea is worthwhile. It can always be polished and made better with time. What is

most important is that we continue to take action and move forward.

About the author

Irina Schmid is an Instructor and Digital Collections Archivist at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. Irina has a background in records and archives management, with expertise in data analysis assessing how data is fit for the given purpose, such as the selection, preservation, maintenance, collection, and archiving.



Beyond 'Beyond 2022'

an interview with Peter Crooks

In this article, **Deborah Mason**, Head of Communications at ARA interviews **Peter Crooks**, Associate Professor/ Senior Lecturer in Medieval History, Trinity College Dublin & Founding Director, 'Beyond 2022: the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland' who will be our Friday morning keynote speaker at our Conference in Belfast on 1st September.



To start us off I wonder if you could tell me a bit about how you came to be involved in the Beyond 2022 project and how it came into being?

There are many beginnings to Beyond 2022, but I first came to this, as an historian, to see what could be recovered on my period, which is the late Middle Ages. There was already a tradition in Trinity amongst the medievalists, going right back to the late 1920s, of trying to recuperate from that disaster of 1922. Then in the 1980s there was a very early digital computing project that created the first database to survey multiple archives and reconstruct the Irish Chancery Records. That project was led by a woman, Annette Jocelyn Otway-Ruthven. She had studied in Cambridge and became Professor in Trinity. Reconstructing those chancery records lost in 1922 was to be her retirement project. In fact, it took 40 years for that work to finally come out – many decades after it began and long after she died. As a post doc – I'd done my PhD in Trinity – I submitted a successful funding application to revive this old Chancery project, and to do it as a brand new digital humanities enterprise. It was published in 2012 as CIRCLE - Calendar of Irish Chancery Letters. It's only a decade now since it was launched and it already feels like a different world, because technology moves so quickly. So this was how I was first launched into digital humanities and archival reconstruction.

Then there is a more immediate beginning for the Beyond 2022 project around 2016. The centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising was greeted as a great success in terms of commemoration, and it became obvious to me that there was something that needed to be done about the centenary of the destruction of the

Public Record Office of Ireland (PROI) in 1922. We were about six years out from that centenary when a mad idea to reconstruct the Public Record Office of Ireland virtually first emerged. We knew where we might want to take this and what the journey might involve. But this was still an entirely new thing in the world and we didn't know if we would ever arrive at the destination. So the five, six years between 2016 and 2022 were incredibly exciting as more and more archival partners gave their support and an idea became a reality.

The co-founder of the project was a computer scientist, Prof Séamus Lawless, who we tragically lost in May 2019. Another key founding figure was Dr Ciarán Wallace, a modern historian with an incredible gift for communication with the public and our archival partners. Soon the team began to grow: Dr David Brown became our archival discovery lead. Dave is an early-modernist, expert on the seventeenth century in Ireland and Britain, and he has an extraordinary knowledge of the archival terrain and how to piece together archivally dispersed collections. So that was the research core.

Another core that grew up in 2016-18, which was the early phase funded by the Irish Research Council, was the core archival partnership. At the National Archives, Ireland (the Dublin successor of Record Office destroyed in 1922) Aideen Ireland was very generous in sharing the internal understanding at the National Archives about the old PROI. I learnt that the NAI had organised an exhibition called the Terrible Fire 20 years before – so they'd done important work in shaping that narrative, and they had significant records from earlier generations of the Public Record Office of



Careful conservation work on the Athlone Port Revenue Accounts (1790) © National Archives of Ireland

Ireland staff members who had tried to recover records after the fire. This became our early treasure map to how to recover materials from the internal records, including the salvaged records of 1922, recovered from the rubble after the fire, which NAI's senior conservator Zoe Reid has done so much to champion.

Next, I was able to get in touch with The National Archives (UK). People really matter in this kind of collaboration. Just by luck, as a medievalist, I had a longstanding connection with Dr Paul Dryburgh who is principal medieval records specialist at TNA, so I could ring Paul and, as a massive advocate for medieval records, he was very excited. It also

happened, another piece of luck, that Dr Neil Johnston, who is now TNA's early modern head, is from Dublin. So, although Neil has responsibility for all the early modern records at TNA, it would have been very close to his heart to see something significant happen with their Irish collections. Then the third part of the archival triangle is PRONI (Public Records Office Northern Ireland) Michael Willis, the director and Stephen Scarth were both, in those early days, very responsive. Michael was always happy to come to Dublin and meet up and was very wise about navigating some of the trickier aspects of the project.

Because Trinity is not attached to any state institution, we could broker the discussion between those three state archives for involvement in an academic project. It became a very sincere collaboration, and it was at that point that the Irish state, on an official level, backed the project from 2019-2022 as a state legacy initiative.

It's also important to note that the Virtual Treasury is not an archive. We host digital archival materials, but the physical records belong to our partners, and we draw on their goodwill, and their expertise. We in turn offered historical expertise, computing innovation, and a place to pool material. This was a neutral and trusted space where all this historical material related to the lost collections of the PROI and Ireland's deep history would be equally accessible to all.

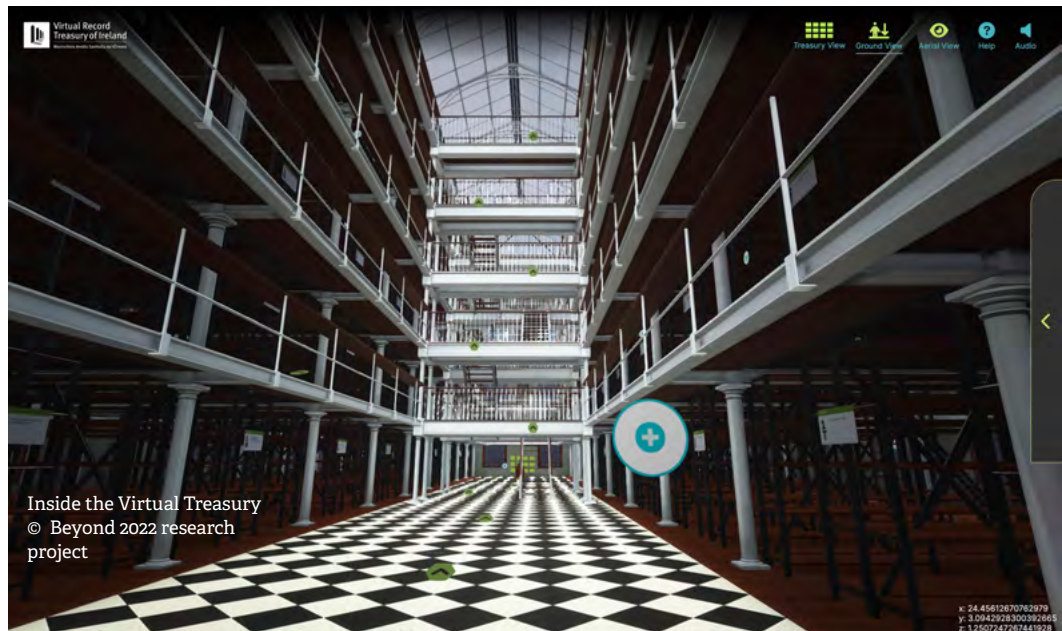
As well as the core partners you also have another 70 or so organisations around the world involved – how did that work – did you go out asking, or were people coming to you?
A mix. Sometimes we would follow a trail from research knowledge and sometimes



3D model of the Public Record Office of Ireland, destroyed on 30 June 1922 © Beyond 2022 research project



Interior reading room © Beyond 2022 research project



Inside the Virtual Treasury
© Beyond 2022 research project



Inside the Search Room at the Public Record Office of Ireland (1914) © The National Archives, Ireland

we would seek to do something strategically with a sectoral grouping. All relationships have to be cultivated – in a good sense. For example, the work we are doing now with libraries. There is a different form of collecting practice and a different form of accessioning in the Library sector. They were collecting for a purpose. The collectors, whose collections these Libraries have collected, were often interested in Irish records for political reasons and, in the early modern era, even for colonialist reasons. We have a researcher now, Dr Sarah Hendriks, who is dedicated to connecting, intellectually, historical materials that have ended up in (for instance in the UK) the British Library, the Bodleian and Cambridge University Library; and in Ireland, Trinity College Dublin Library, the Royal Irish Academy and the National Library of Ireland. All these institutions are distinct in kind from the state archives, but for historical purposes, for what we are trying to re-

create digitally in the Virtual Record Treasury – that is, a lost historical state archive – these may be the institutions that hold materials that antiquarians or bureaucrats in the past copied out. Equally, these libraries sometimes now hold the papers that state officials ‘borrowed’ from Dublin Castle, but never returned. So that’s an example of where we are actively doing something to bring a collaborative network together in answer to a research question. Another example, equally important, is the network of archives at local government level in Ireland. One day we’ll hopefully have the resources to do something on a similar scale at the local government level in Britain, because we know the county-level record offices are rich in material.

A lot of what we were doing in the last phase (2019-22) was archival discovery – answering the questions: What is out there? What seams of

replacement material are rich and worthy of full development? In our next three-year phase, we will be building on that, moving from discovery into much more targeted exploration and reconstruction. We have more work to do on the medieval material and early modern state papers that are in the UK National Archives, so that research strand is going to be hosted from London. We have work to do on the Chief Secretary's Office (the head administrator in Ireland from the early modern period to the nineteenth century) and that will be based in PRONI in Belfast. And we have work to do on census and population records, based in Dublin at the National Archives, Ireland. In a way we are structuring the project to strengthen the core partnerships developed for the centenary in 2022, using these archival centres as hubs to feed out into these communities. Dr Brian Gurrin is leading on the census work. He pioneered the 1766 census gold seam for the centenary, and he is now pursuing surviving fragments of statutory censuses – that's the 19th century censuses – and he's based a lot of that work in National Archives, Ireland. But the whole research strand is called 'Localities and Communities', so he is also pursuing that local government layer which is so important to local communities, and making that connection between the state-level archives and the localities. Brian is finding significant things every week. That's



The ruined Record Treasury of the Public Record Office of Ireland, 30 June 1922. © The Irish Architectural Archive



Official in the ruins of the Four Courts © UCD Archives

one of the big differences in now having boots on the ground in terms of archival work, as opposed to doing it through the catalogue, which was how we were doing it in the pandemic. Being able to lift the lid on the box and look at an unpromising record has made all the difference. On the basis of his historical expertise, Brian can say to an archival partner: 'that is incredibly important because there are no census records from this county and this list of names, tens of thousands long, is an amazing surrogate for the census that was lost.'

The other thing to ask, of course, what comes next?

The Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland is a permanent and dynamic legacy for Ireland's Decade of Centenaries: it can't just be up online and accessible – it has to thrive and develop, in terms of its archival reach and research collaborations and inspiring engagement at all levels. The "University and the Archive" – how do we normalise that as a connection that can be mutually enriching, so the one service isn't auxiliary to another — this might be a key theme of my paper in September. I think this project has been a very good demonstration of the value of deeper links between Higher Education and the cultural heritage sector.

Equally, on the technical side we also want to ensure that there is permanence but in a dynamic way. We are just getting into something very exciting in terms of linked open data – the technical underpinning. It is something I'm now pursuing very strongly with a computer scientist at Trinity's School of Computer Science and Statistics and the ADAPT Centre— Professor Declan O'Sullivan. He is a specialist in linked open data and what Declan is telling me is that, although there is a tremendous amount of resource in the semantic web, it is still quite difficult for the non-computer scientist to engage with that material directly. There's obviously a benefit if we can create the tools to enable – say the archivist and the historian - to harness the semantic web's power. This is where the capacity of having a big project that can do infrastructure is exciting. It's not all about the glamorous front end; the infrastructure underpinning the resource is crucial. For instance, developing the tooling so that we can create a new linked open data entity for identifying people or places or organisations, and being able to edit that in a dynamic way. This facility doesn't exist yet in a user-friendly fashion for the benefit of historians and archivists, but we plan to create it. This should mean that it will not just be the treasury's digital records that will jump forward in the next three years, but also how those resources are presented and the technology that underpins them that will be much more sophisticated.

My final question, what do you think is the most fundamental thing that sets the treasury apart?

Our fundamental ethos is democratising access. That means, first, that there is no paywall. 'Democratising' also means prioritising intellectual access to the materials. So for example in the case of medieval records – written in unfamiliar handwriting and dead languages - we have a team of medievalists bringing these materials to life, translating some of the oldest and most important original records relating to the PROI to survive in Britain and Ireland. Through work of this kind, for the first time, a new cultural artefact is being created and presented online—digital editions, accessible to everyone, anywhere in the world, without barriers of cost or intellectual access. That is 'democratising access'. And this what being a "Treasury" means, as opposed to just being a digital repository. We enrich historical materials with understanding and digital capacity. Democratising means giving you, the user this enriched access to old records that would otherwise need very specialist skills, like Latin and palaeography, to engage with.

And we really are inspiring engagement. I was thinking the other day that there must now be more people who have used the Virtual Treasury in the first few months since it was launched than were ever in the old Public Record Office of Ireland reading room during the 55 years of its existence before the calamity of 1922. The reading room was quite tiny – there were only a few desks for the public. Now we have tens of thousands of people who are engaging with the Treasury and exploring their deep history. And this is just a beginning—for their journeys into the past and ours into a digital future.



You can hear Peter speak in person at our annual conference in Belfast (30th August to 1st September). Peter will be speaking on Friday 1st September. Find out more about the conference [here](#).



Training provider announced for the Level 7 Archivist apprenticeship

The UK National Archives has announced that Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) will be the first provider to run the off-the-job training for the Level 7 Archivist and Records Manager apprenticeship, meaning that apprentices will be able to start this autumn. Apprentices will spend 20 per cent of their time completing formal learning with a training provider such as WAES, while the other 80 per cent of apprentices' time will be dedicated to on-the-job training at the archives that employ them. By combining formal learning and on-the-job training, apprentices will achieve a high-level qualification over 3 years while working and earning. This opportunity will enable a wider range of people to join the recordkeeping profession.

Find out more about WAES and the apprentice [scheme](#).

Have you seen the new inclusion hub recently launched on The UK National Archives' sector site?

The aim of this project was to provide a helpful bank of information on topics of inclusion for your organisation. The hub gives an introduction to inclusion, homing in on what exactly inclusive practice is and why inclusive practice is important for archives.

The pages also provide a resources collection that features a risk assessment, a series of wellbeing and inclusive language videos, and inclusive artwork for your service to use. In addition, you can also uncover our series of three case studies to find out what archives around the country have been doing to make their services more inclusive. Find out more about our inclusion [resources](#).

Announcing the 2023 Business Archives Council cataloguing grant

BAC is excited to announce this year's cataloguing grant for business archives. This year a single award of £5,000 is available.

The aim of this grant is to fund the cataloguing of a business archive collection(s) in either the private or public sector, and to:

- provide financial support for institutions/businesses that manage business archives
- reach collections that have not yet been prioritised but have academic, socio-historical and wider value
- create opportunities for archivists, paraprofessionals and volunteers to gain experience in cataloguing business collections
- make more business collections accessible

Criteria for the grant and how to apply will be published on the BAC website in due course. Previous applicants are welcome to re-apply. Please note that the BAC will not award a grant to the same institution within three years. The decision on the award of the grant will be made by a Cataloguing Grant Panel established by BAC which consists of two executive committee members and one non-executive member. Panel members will not judge applications where they have a research or employment affiliation.

The Cataloguing Grant for Business Archives (2023) will open on Tuesday 11 April 2023 with the deadline for applications being Friday 23 June 2023. Further information including guidance notes will be made available on [BAC's Website](#). Any questions should be addressed to James Mortlock, Grant Administrator, james.mortlock@hsbc.com

Plowden Medal Conservation Award

Nominations for the 2023 Plowden Medal Conservation Award are open until Friday 19th May 2023. If you know of any talented conservators who deserve recognition for their work, please consider nominating them and sharing the details with your network. An online version of the form is [here](#).

Established in 1999 to commemorate the life and work of the late Hon. Anna Plowden CBE (1938–1997), this medal was endowed by the Royal Warrant Holders Association, of which she was Vice-President. It is awarded annually to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of the conservation profession and whose nomination would be widely welcomed within the conservation community. The award covers all aspects of conservation be they practical, theoretical or managerial – and is open to those working in private practice or institutions.

The deadline for nominations is Friday 19th May 2023 and the medal will be presented to the winner in the Autumn.

Creative Commons Licences toolkit

The National Lottery Heritage Fund are delighted to announce the launch of a new Toolkit "Creative Commons Licences: A Guide to Data Protection & Copyright" to support National Lottery Heritage Fund projects to understand and ethically manage openly licensed materials.

Projects funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund are required to meet the open licensing requirement of a Creative Commons BY 4.0 [licence](#).

However, copyright and data protection obligations can present interrelated complex areas that some projects will need to navigate to fulfil their Creative Commons licensing requirements, particularly if project outputs include personal data or representations of people that could be construed as personal data. Challenges can also include copyright issues associated with content produced by third parties, such as contractors, volunteers and project participants.

The Toolkit, developed by Naomi Korn Associates on behalf of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, provides practical guidance and templates to help projects manage their digital resources in line with legal frameworks and the requirements of the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It focuses on three areas that projects frequently struggle with:

- Commissioning work from contractors, including artists
- Projects that include the voice, image or other potentially identifiable information about members of the public
- Projects that crowd source contributions from the public or from community groups

The Toolkit can be accessed [here](#).

Grants for conservation of manuscripts

The National Manuscripts Conservation Trust, founded in 1990, offers grants for the conservation and preservation of manuscripts and archives. Since 1990 they have awarded grants of over £3.7m towards projects with a total value of over 7.2m. Thanks to their grants many thousands of manuscripts and archives across the UK are accessible to the public and researchers.

The next deadline for the submission of applications is 2nd October 2023.

They welcome grant applications from non-national institutions e.g. county record offices, museums, university archives, cathedral archives and libraries and specialist collecting institutions. The collections to be conserved should



be of local, regional, national or specialist significance. They like projects that include a training element (e.g. conservation placement or internship, training for volunteers etc), but this is not obligatory. Their grants can cover conservation, binding and other preservation measures, including digitisation providing it is part of a wider conservation project.

Application form and FAQs can be found [here](#).

Any queries do contact Nell Hoare, NMCT Secretary: info@nmct.co.uk.

Friends of the National Libraries grants

Founded in 1931, Friends of the National Libraries (FNL) gives acquisition grants to regional and national libraries, archives and museums, and to universities and other specialist collecting institutions. It is the only UK charity focussed solely on supporting acquisitions of manuscripts, archives, rare books and fine bindings.

FNL has helped save some of the most iconic examples of our written and printed heritage for the nation and they are now accessible to all. They have a simple [online application form](#); grants usually range from £500 to £25,000 and can be for up to 100% of the purchase cost.

If your application is urgent, because an auction or similar deadline is looming, they can make very speedy [decisions](#) (within a few days). If the application is not urgent it will be considered at a Trustees' meeting (apply by 1st March, 1st June, 1st November).

FNL

Friends of the National Libraries | www.fnl.org.uk
Saving the nation's written and printed heritage

FNL's major activity is grant-giving, but in 2021 FNL, exceptionally, raised over £15m to save the [Blavatnik Honresfield Library](#), with its astonishing collection of Brontë, Austen, Burns and Scott manuscripts for the nation. All of the manuscripts and the 1,800 printed books have been donated to nearly 70 institutions across the UK.

They are keen to spread the benefit of their grants, so why not consider applying?

For information about their [grants](#): Any queries, please contact: Nell Hoare: admin@fnlmail.org.uk

The Travelling Museum of Communities

The Travelling Museum of Communities is all about celebrating and sharing the heritage of three communities that are historically underrepresented and underserved by Plymouth's museums and archives. The project seeks to address barriers those communities can face to accessing and sharing their heritage, and to democratise archives. It is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and is led by High View School, supported by Take A Part CIO (TAP) and delivered in partnership with Salisbury Road School and Whitleigh Primary School.

Working with lead heritage engagement facilitator artist Tom Goddard alongside arts organisation Take A Part, children and families from Efford, Whitleigh and St Judes are exploring aspects of their local social and contemporary heritage undertaking the research question "What is your favourite community story?". The question is underpinned by the themes of memory, story, tradition, family and place and is a jumping off point for exploring the heritage of the communities. The project enables people to learn about and discuss their families, community and local history, and allows unheard voices and stories to be shared and celebrated.



Project Assistant Shelley Hodgson at the St Judes Community Hub interviewing George from St Judes about his memories of the community © G Smith for Take a Part



Family art group 'Crazy Glue' at Salisbury Road School admiring their animation work © G Smith for Take a Part

Working with local historians, stories from residents and local groups and interviews with older residents, they are exploring and interpreting the heritage of these communities. From the stories gathered, objects are being created by the children and families, alongside Tom and the TAP team, that represent what is told and collected. The objects are made in clay before then being replicated and 3D scanned using the Fab Lab facility at Arts University Plymouth. The physical museum itself will be a dolls' house / cabinet of curiosities created by a local maker in collaboration with the community members leading the project. It will house all the objects alongside any other materials deemed important: quotes, photographs, oral history recordings, badges, etc. So far the St Judes wellbeing hub, Efford Library, Efford Timebank, Whitleigh wellbeing art group and Porkies cafe (Whitleigh) have all been spaces to connect with community members and gather stories and memories.

The Travelling Museum will have a road show, outside The Box, Plymouth on the weekend of the 20th/21st May, and then on to each of the three communities involved. There will be a digital storytelling element of the work too, sharing the process and heritage found, so it can be widely disseminated and so that these contemporary stories are held and shared for the future. By working with existing networks within the community they can ensure the learning and legacy is retained.

Once completed, the Travelling Museum will be broken back down into the communities and housed in local schools' foyers separately as permanent collections so that residents can interact with their local heritage where they live readily and use it as an asset in future community work and projects.

Family art group Crazy Glue at High View School investigating story objects with Lead Creative Heritage Facilitator Tom Goddard
© G Smith for Take a Part



Pupils from High View School drawing out community narratives from old stories © G Smith for Take a Part



A set of objects created by a Whitleigh family to represent the story of a tradesman that used to visit the community © G Smith for Take a Part



A big exhibition for a big anniversary

Kate Jarman from Barts Health NHS Trust writes about her experience in developing a big exhibition for a big anniversary:

This year, St Bartholomew's Hospital celebrates its 900th anniversary – a long-anticipated celebration following three challenging years for the NHS.

For Barts Health NHS Trust Archives, our priority was to put the Hospital's outstanding collections and St Bartholomew's Hospital Museum at the heart of the celebrations by researching new stories and making them accessible to audiences within and beyond the hospital. With nine centuries of turbulent history to share, on topics from 15th century marginalia to india rubber sheet purchase orders from the 1890s, we were delighted by an invitation to create an outdoor exhibition in partnership with the City of London Corporation. Additional funding allowed us to work with a specialist freelance curator (Emma Shepley) and designers (Northover&Brown).

The experience of developing the exhibition's content with the team has been a joy, and a real learning experience for me. It is wonderful to share not only our famous alumni with a feature on William Harvey's scurvy grass recipe of 1640 but to find less-known stories; like the Hospital's first barber, Barbara Adams, dismissed for improper conduct in 1772; Derek Jarman's impassioned front-page letter protesting against Barts' closure in 1993 while he was treated on the AIDS wards; or Maisie Holt - a pioneer in dyslexia treatment for children in the 1950s. Intriguing images were essential when reproduced on boards over 2m high and I have learnt (against my archivist's instincts!) that strong design and surprising text can be more engaging at large scale than full references and detailed captions!

Life and death in the archives, 1123-2023 – at outdoor locations in the City of London, May-July 2023. For more info, [visit](#).

Barts Health NHS Trust Archivist
Kate Jarman and project Curator
Emma Shepley working on the
exhibition
© John Chase.



Black and Gifted

Hope Fulton, archivist at Riverside Studios writes about the first-large scale exhibition of material from the Riverside Studios' archive:

"Black And Gifted", the first large-scale exhibition of material from Riverside Studios' archive, was opened Monday 13th March 2023. The night saw the return of some of those whose work inspired the exhibition, including actor and director Trevor Laird and playwright Farrukh Dhondy, both of whom gave speeches remembering their time here.

The genesis of this exhibition can be traced back to 2019, when our Heritage Project Manager, Daniel Thurman, interviewed writer and musician Benjamin Zephaniah. Zephaniah, who had developed work at Riverside Studios in the mid-1980s, described the venue as a "home from home" and a safe space for Black creatives. An idea was formed that this would be an exciting aspect of our history to explore.

In 2014, when the original Riverside Studios closed for redevelopment, our archive had been saved from soggy

boxes stored in a leaky cupboard. Thanks to funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, it was cleaned and repackaged, and later transferred to a new environment-controlled store in our new building. The contents of the boxes remained, however, largely a mystery to the heritage team.

When appointed as the archivist, I decided that to be able to facilitate the exciting projects we wanted to achieve, the quickest way to make the archive useable would be to box list all four hundred or so boxes. While completing this work, our team of volunteers and I found even more material centring around Black creatives than expected; press cuttings, press releases, scripts, actors CVs, flyers, programmes, and posters. Amongst our discoveries were dozens of beautiful photographs of many productions developed by and featuring Black performers from companies including Talawa and the Black Theatre Co-operative.

Seeing that there was more than enough material to create a powerful

exhibition, we appointed a Creative Associate, film-maker Reuben Esson-Parkes. I brought out relevant material for Reuben, and he brought the exhibition to life.

Inspired by the joy, passion and creativity emanating from many of the photos found in the archive, Reuben selected a series of greyscale images, which were then sent for digitisation by Max Communications, whose high-quality capture allowed us to create imposing larger-than-life reproductions.

I created a bolt-on display of archive material, featuring press cuttings relating to the productions featured in the exhibition and other events, and photographs featuring our diverse local community. A section dedicated to Benjamin Zephaniah's work here was particularly enjoyed by the man himself when he visited Riverside Studios for a Q&A as part of our ongoing programme of heritage-related events.



L:R: archivist Hope Fulton, community ambassador Ang Lucas and Dr Benjamin Zephaniah
© Daniel Thurman.



Black and Gifted exhibition opening night
© Claudine Derkson

The Yerusha Project

Dr Gabor Kadar, Director of the Yerusha Project provides an update:

The [Yerusha Project](#) is a digital humanities initiative of the [Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe](#) to create a comprehensive online catalogue regarding European Jewish archival heritage.

Jewish archival and tangible heritage is unprecedentedly scattered all around the world. Millions of pages of Jewish and Jewish-related documents written in dozens of languages lie in thousands of locations. The online environment enables us to unify this vast cultural heritage. A series of digital projects are built on this conviction, examples being the [Friedberg Genizah Project](#), YIVO's Vilna Collections Project, the

National Library of Israel's [Ktiv Project](#) and Sefaria. Yerusha is part of these efforts.

At this stage, we do not plan to digitise documents, but we collect and publish information regarding the collections in the form of archival descriptions. Using existing online and offline finding aids as well as our own research, our experts author these descriptions along the lines of the Yerusha Data Set, which is based on the General International Standard Archival Description ISAD(G). Therefore, we do not display an image of the actual document for the user, but we provide a plethora of detailed and precise information on the whereabouts and content of the

records of their research interest. Yerusha is available to anyone with internet access and an interest in Jewish history. In practice, mainly academic researchers use the portal. Our key aim has been to create a research tool for the scholarly community while remaining flexible and open to the needs of others.

In the past years, Yerusha has implemented archival survey projects in close to 700 archives of 27 countries with the participation of 150 researchers and 28 institutions of [academic excellence](#). We are working in all types of holding institutions, from large state archives like the [Belgian National Archives](#).



Minutes of meetings of the Pest Jewish Community from the 19th century (Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives)
© Grego

Jameson and Ancestry partner to publish historical publican agreements that reveal a vanished Ireland

Irish Distillers, producer of some of the world's best loved Irish whiskeys, and Ancestry®, the global leader in family history, have partnered once again to deliver more than fifty years of historical Jameson publicans' agreements.

The Publican Agreements, which comprise 37 digitised volumes, each containing approximately 1,500 individual contracts, are legal agreements between John Jameson & Son and publicans who bought whiskey in bulk in Ireland in the first half of the 20th century.

Traditionally, Jameson had two routes to market. One was to bottle in-house and sell directly to the consumer, while the second was to sell by the barrel to publicans. With the latter, labels were supplied to the individual publicans by the Bow Steet Distillery and publicans would bottle the whiskey in-house and add their name to the label.

To ensure that the whiskey was not tampered with in any way, publicans were required to sign an annual legal agreement which had to be witnessed, and often signed, by a customer on the premises. The records contain the name and address of every publican who purchased Jameson in bulk at that time in addition to the name and occupation of witnesses, thus providing a unique insight into the role of the Irish pub in the community at that time.

The records belong to Irish Distillers but the digitisation project with Ancestry will make them accessible to the public for the first time and support genealogical mapping.

Close up of
Publican's
Agreements
© IDL Archives



Carol Quinn at the IDL Archive © IDL Archives

In 2021, Irish Distillers and Ancestry partnered to publish more than one million Jameson employee records containing detailed weekly wages books with employee names, as well as occupation, hours worked,

and wages paid, spanning over 100 years from 1862 to 1969. The collection has been viewed thousands of times since it was launched on Ancestry.

To access the records please [visit](#).





Backchat



Ally McConnell interviews **Arthur Green**, an independent book conservator and bookbinding historian who owns Green's Books Ltd, near Malvern in the West Midlands. Arthur teaches and has published widely on the subject. greensbooks.co.uk

Could you tell us about your background in conservation work on books and documents?

This September will mark the 20th anniversary of my first job as a bookbinder; I worked in the basement of a small bindery on Ludgate Circus next to St. Paul's Cathedral in London where I mainly undertook thesis binding. It wasn't the most glamorous or exciting work, but it piqued my interest and gave me an opening into the craft and, after five years' working in a number of London trade binderies, I went back to college to complete a Diploma in Conservation at Camberwell. I have been lucky to have worked at some of our most prestigious institutions such as the Leather Conservation Centre, the British Library and the Oxford Conservation Consortium, but it was my time at Oxford University's Bodleian Library that was perhaps most influential in forming my approach to conserving historic library and archive material.

I'm sure many of our readers will be familiar with craft book binding, but could you tell us a bit about how your work crosses the barrier between book conservation and book binding?

In the UK the relationship between bookbinders, designer binders, book artists, and book conservators etc. can be complex; sometimes these different job titles can be worlds apart but often they overlap and influence each other in a very positive way. Throughout my career, I've always sought to be non-partisan and learn all I can from each area. Most of the work I undertake at my studio is repair of some sort; the majority is conservation for national libraries, archives, and museums so first and foremost I am a book conservator. However, I also draw on my time as a bookbinder where I honed many of my craft skills. At Green's Books we also specialise in making new bindings that are historically accurate; this is a task I particularly enjoy as it draws on a multitude of

Arthur Green,
Independent Book
Conservator.
© Arthur Green



Before conservation: Clavis Graecae
Linguae.../ Eilardo Lubino. Londini: in
officina Edwardi Griffini, sumptibus Ioan.
Partridge, 1640 © Arthur Green



skills and experience. These days I'm proud of my dual job title of Book Conservator and Bookbinder as it's a good reflection of the breadth of work that passes through the studio.

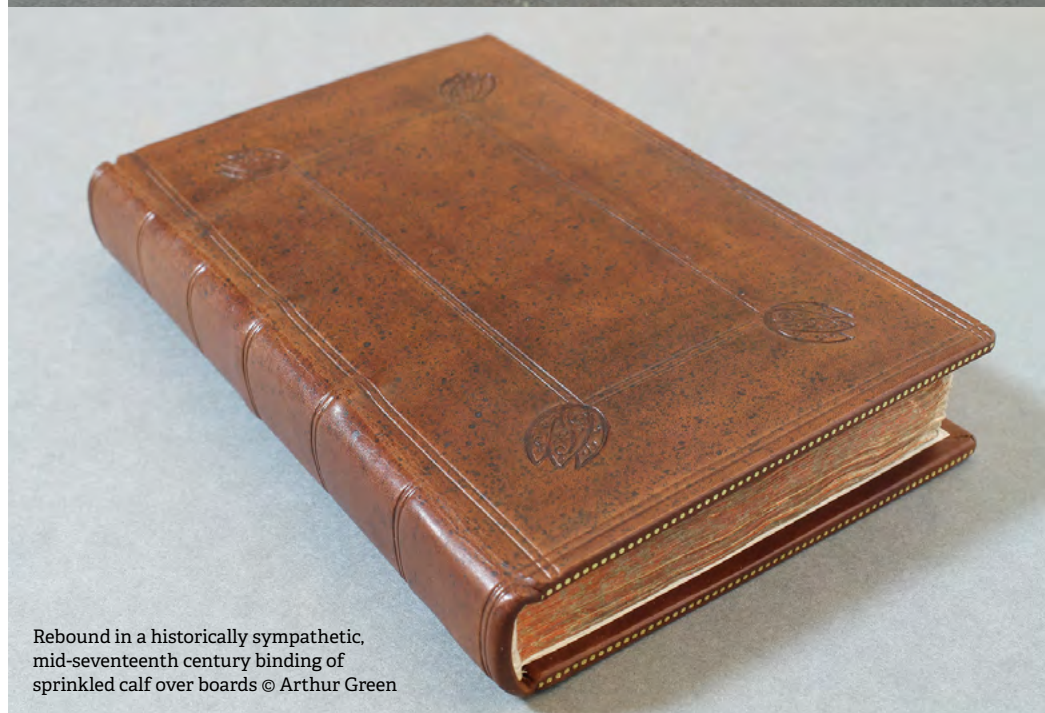
At the moment you are running training for archivists, conservators and any other interested people about book binding. Tell us about these sessions and how archivists and conservators can benefit from this more specialist knowledge.

I have been teaching and lecturing on the subject of bookbinding since 2012, but more recently I've focused on the history of bookbinding. Although there is much discussion in the conservation profession about the lack of craft skills, I feel strongly that there is an equal gap in our collective knowledge of the history of bookbinding which gets less recognition. It is not possible to repair something well if you do not have a full understanding of how, when, and where it was made. *Understanding Bookbindings* is a two day seminar that I devised to fill this gap. My approach is very hands-on which enables those from a variety of backgrounds (not just conservators) to quickly engage in the subject. It's also unashamedly middle-ground: it's what I wanted as a graduate to help me rationalise the different types and styles of bookbindings and to understand the development of the codex over the last millennium. It focuses very much on structure rather than decoration (which has been the area of attention for so many years) and looks at the book from the perspective of the bookbinder – an object built up by hand in incremental layers.

Many archivists are lone archivists without either support from other archivists or conservators in house. What advice do you have for people who struggle to find the time, money or skills to ensure their



After conservation with paper repairs to the title page. © Arthur Green



Rebound in a historically sympathetic, mid-seventeenth century binding of sprinkled calf over boards © Arthur Green

collections are properly looked after?

Possibly the most useful advice I could give any custodian of books, or anyone called upon to commission a book conservator is to understand as fully as possible the binding as a material object. I appreciate that this can be overwhelming but as soon as you start to see a book as an object constructed by hand, the easier it is to make decisions about

its preservation. Certainly as a conservator, it's a much more engaging and productive process working with knowledgeable clients.



And finally **arc**magazine

Our next edition of the **ARC Magazine** is due out in July / August 2023 so look out for it in your inboxes. If you have any content suggestions for future editions, please email ARC Magazine arceditors@archives.org.uk



All our back issues are now on our new TownsWeb hosting platform [here](#)

aratoday

Meanwhile, ARA Today, our electronic members' bulletin which contains all the latest ARA and industry news, is circulated on the first Wednesday of each month. Please send any content suggestions for future editions of ARA Today to deborah.mason@archives.org.uk.



ARA2023 **CONFERENCE**

BELFAST
30th August to
1st September 2023

