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## Conference Issue 2014



# Call for Core Training Co-ordinators

The ARA training group is looking for a number of new members to contribute to the Core Training offer for ARA members. We believe that the provision of quality, inexpensive, accessible training is one of the key roles for ARA. As a group we oversee training across the Association, designing and delivering regional and specialist training events. In the last two years we have developed the new Core Training events.

Can you help us to further develop our training provision? Are you looking to spread your wings and broaden your horizons from your current job? Do you have something to offer?

We are particularly looking for people to take on the roles of Core Training Co-ordinators. These are people who look after specific Core Training courses and take responsibility for their structure and administration. This is an excellent opportunity to develop your skills and show a commitment to your continuing professional development.

We are looking for enthusiastic people who can make a minimum two-year commitment to the role. We meet three times a year with discussions in between by teleconference and email. Travelling, telephone and other expenses are met by ARA. For an informal discussion or to express an interest contact the chair of the training group.

**Lizzy Baker, ARA Training Group Chair**

**Email: [lizzy.aratraining@outlook.com](mailto:lizzy.aratraining@outlook.com)**

The ARA's Core Training programme is supported by Link 51.



**Archives & Records  
Association**  
UK & Ireland

## Welcome to **ARC Magazine** November 2014 - packed with Conferencey goodness!

If you were lucky enough be able to attend this year's ARA conference, this edition of ARC will hopefully reflect some of the many highlights of the three days. And if you couldn't be at this year's conference, I'm hoping that this issue will go some way towards making you feel like you were.

I've tried to include a good complement of pieces by Archivists, Records Managers and Conservators – and in addition to the excellent selection of articles by delegates, this issue boasts a wealth of images of the many speakers about whom there wasn't space to include an article but whose contribution to the Conference simply demanded recognition!

For the many colleagues for whom the conference remains an expense our repositories cannot justify, and therefore an experience we might easily feel excluded from, Ellie Pridgeon's article mentions several virtual ways of participating, including some social media options I'd not even heard of before (but maybe that's just me!). John Chambers' piece, meanwhile, puts the case for the conference being great value for money – maybe use it to convince the powers that be where you work to send you to the one in Dublin next year?



Whether you could attend this year or not, please remember that there's plenty more coverage, in words and pictures, on the ARA website.

**Barbara Versey**  
Editor

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Front cover shows Rebecca Bradley from Newcastle University presenting at the ARA 2014 Conference

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[www.archives.org.uk](http://www.archives.org.uk)

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# opening lines

I'm at the Gateshead Newcastle Hilton holding a green badge with my name on. What does this mean? That it's my first time at an ARA Conference. And a very enjoyable experience it was: thought-provoking; informative; relaxed; a lively Twitter feed; even dancing. Plus the memorable views of the Tyne and its famous bridges from the hotel bedrooms. Alas, I was on the wrong side of the building and overlooking a concrete roof and brick wall.

The conference theme was 'survival of the fittest'. Practically, delegates needed to be in good shape to keep up concentration over three days and personally I'm not sure how fit I was feeling after Thursday night on the dance floor. But aside from that, I saw plenty of evidence that the sector is ready to meet future challenges. Indeed it is clear that we are not sitting around waiting for things to happen, archivists are already out there being activists.

One aspect that I particularly enjoyed was the Twitter activity: informative; relevant; irrelevant; irreverent; amusing. The traffic statistics were impressive with users following #ARA2014 from around the world. I've just been doing the same for #ARANZASA, the joint New Zealand/Australian archives conference. Unsurprisingly, many of the issues are the same.

While Twitter sustains the global archive network and provides virtual conference attendance, let's not underestimate the benefits of actually being there. I've always found conferences to be highly stimulating affairs, with the all-important opportunity to meet people face-to-face, whether old friends or new contacts. Obviously people enjoy getting out of the office (literally underground in my case!), the conference dinner, and even the music and dancing. But more seriously conferences allow us to tell others what we are doing and to keep abreast of the latest developments and issues. Hopefully, employers recognise these benefits and will continue to fund attendance.

The importance of working together was another common theme. Of course, as Chair of the Business Archives Council (BAC) I'm bound to say that promoting special interests is vital, but we all face similar



challenges. This was clear from conversations with delegates from charities and medical archives. Crucially, we all have to be advocates, and advocacy bodies such as ARA and BAC need members to get involved, to champion archives, and to build overlapping and strong networks.

Above all, networks are about people. Those attending the Conference were a microcosm of the sector: friendly; enthusiastic; a great mix of age and experience; and all passionate about archives. I left Newcastle feeling inspired and reassured. Next year, Dublin: I'm just off to practise my ceilidh moves ...

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## Mike Anson

Archive Manager, Bank of England Archive;  
Chair of the Business Archives Council

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A short film of Mike talking about his favourite archive item is on the Explore Your Archive website at [www.exploreyourarchive.org](http://www.exploreyourarchive.org)

# Registration Scheme **news**

Those of you who were able to attend this year's conference may have noticed the Registration Scheme stand. The ARA's Registrar, Tricia Phillips, spoke to a number of delegates about their portfolios and was on hand to answer questions about the forthcoming changes to the Registration Scheme.

One reason why we felt it was important to have a presence at the conference was to reiterate that, for those of you currently working on a portfolio or thinking about enrolling, the end of the existing format for the Registration Scheme is quickly approaching. On 31 December 2014, enrolments for the current Scheme will close and no new enrolments will be taken until 1 January 2016. The last opportunity to apply for Registration with the current style of portfolio will be the 1 October 2017 round of assessments. In other words:

- Existing candidates have slightly less than 3 years (35 months) to submit their portfolio (that's fewer than 3 months per credit!)
- Potential candidates have 2 months to enrol on the Scheme.

Over the coming months we will be doing all we can to support those of you attempting to complete your portfolios. Workshops for current candidates and mentors will be held, and you will be reading regular reminders in this column. If you've been lingering over submission for a little too long, now might be the time to contact your mentor (or the candidates' representatives) and start working towards submission.

Of course the Registration Scheme won't cease to exist in 2017 and, for some of you, waiting for the new Scheme to be introduced may be the best option. Either way, make sure the decision is yours and not made on your behalf by a deadline passing you by.

Finally, thank you to everybody who took a moment to complete the Registration Scheme survey. We are in the process of analysing the results, but it is already possible to see that the comments received will be very helpful as we approach the development of the new Scheme. Please contact me if you would like further information about the survey results.

## Contacts

General Registration Scheme enquiries: [registrar@archives.org.uk](mailto:registrar@archives.org.uk)

Registration Scheme events enquiries: [regschemeevents@archives.org.uk](mailto:regschemeevents@archives.org.uk)

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Tricia Phillips advising on Registration at the ARA Conference

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## Richard Wragg

Communications Officer, Registration Sub-committee

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# Collecting **matters**

## Discovery – Embracing Change

Over the past few years The National Archives has been working to develop its Discovery service.

Since the beginning of September 2014, users of Discovery have been able to search more than 32 million records held by more than 2,500 archives across the country, including The National Archives.

Discovery contains three main data types:

1. The records themselves (Records)
2. Those who made them (Record Creators)
3. Where they are held (Archives)

Discovery enables users to switch easily between these three data types while searching and browsing.

This represents a huge leap forwards for the archives sector by providing a single access point to all this information. In the past this content was accessed via several presentation systems, which often required expertise to use. Discovery, however, has been developed with user needs in mind, and has the potential to streamline research and improve access to online collections information.

In order to keep Discovery as up to date and comprehensive as possible, work has begun on developing tools to enable repositories to contribute catalogue and collections information directly.

Discovery has been developed on a stable and robust platform in order to accommodate and bring to light the huge amount of information that is already available.

Although this represents a major shift in The National Archives' approach to providing this information, engaging with the archives sector and servicing user needs, it is an exciting opportunity to explore the potential of new technologies and really make the most of our data.

The National Archives will continue to improve Discovery, and welcomes feedback from all of its users to help with this ambitious project. Please email your comments to: [discovery@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:discovery@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

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### Jonathan Cates

Collections Information & Systems Manager, The National Archives

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[asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)





# ARA Conference 2014 – The Chair's Impressions

Gateshead Newcastle was my first conference in the hot seat, and though I had every confidence in the quality and arrangements put in place by Caroline Brown and her colleagues in the conference organising team, there is a lot for the ARA Chair to do and plenty of places to try to be. I needn't have worried about the atmosphere, though – all those I spoke to enjoyed the events and praised the quality of the papers on offer.

I had an easy task in opening the conference on Wednesday with two great presentations by Rick Prelinger (Archivist, Writer and founder of Prelinger Archives in California) and Jonathan Rhys-Lewis (Consultant in Preservation and Collections Care Management). Rick was as wide-ranging as he promised, and in conversation afterwards we discussed the divergent positions of public and private archives in our two countries. Perhaps there is potential for a two-way conference to explore how we can share our experience involving colleagues at different stages of their careers. Rick and I have promised to give it some thought! Jonathan's presentation on communication was good – and nice to hear that those wretched media-promoted cotton gloves are actually bad for the documents!

There will be at least one talk that is a surprise – mine was the wonderfully named 'Pilots of the Caribbean', Nina Hadaway's session on researching and presenting the

“ *Perhaps there is potential for a two-way conference to explore how we can share our experience involving colleagues at different stages of their careers.* ”

role of Afro-Caribbean people in the RAF. And for entertainment value? Jane Stevenson's story of a piece of data. Information Bites? had both bite and bytes – lots to take away for further thought.

It is always valuable to meet colleagues from abroad, and Martin Berendse, President of the ICA and CEO of Amsterdam Public Library, brought the thoughtful perspective of an outsider to the archive world as well as very good conversation at the lunch table. I was struck by the challenge he faced when becoming National Archivist for the Netherlands of managing the archive on the one hand and simultaneously taking an archive qualification on the other.

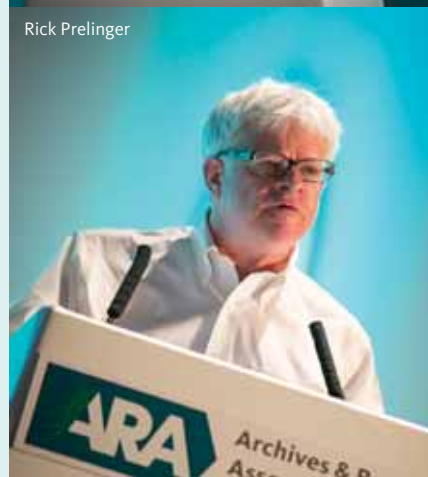
Things I was pleased to have achieved? Presenting the Ellis Prize to Susan Davies (see page 37) at



Caroline Brown and David Mander



Martin Berendse



Rick Prelinger

the drinks reception at the Sage Gateshead and being heard – just. Our first floor space curved round a bar, and with around 160 delegates crammed into the space it was not the easiest of rooms to do the deed. Retrospectively we should have commandeered the bar and halted the flow of drinks – but I am not sure that would have been a good move either. At least the thanks to Caroline Brown for her four years' work as conference organiser went smoothly.

I was also pleased to have got to most of our Information Workplace stallholders. All I spoke to were pleased with the venue and delighted to have spoken to so many delegates. I was pleased to have been able to have a word with ARA stallholders as well. Tricia Phillips, our Registrar, convinced me of the potential value senior members can bring to mentoring – perhaps there is room for a positive approach here?

Regrets? Having promoted the value of both strands of the conference, I tried to follow my own advice, but sadly when I arrived at my chosen conservators' session it was to find they had finished for the afternoon early. So my resolution in Dublin will be try, try, try again. And as I didn't gate-crash enough groups where I don't know people, I shall have to do better in Dublin next year.

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**David Mander**

Chair, ARA

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Jane Stevenson



Nina Hadaway



Jonathan Rhys-Lewis





## The ARA Conference – it's great value

Each year the Archives and Records Association puts on an annual conference for the benefit of its members. We at the ARA want to challenge the notion that it is expensive. It isn't.

We appreciate that conference can seem expensive to some people, but if you stop to consider what is involved and what is offered, it is in fact remarkably cheap.

This is because the conference is budgeted to break even in order to keep the costs to members as low as possible. In fact the Association subsidises the cost of attendance by not passing on the organising committee's costs nor those for the attendance of staff and key personnel. We do not run our conference as a profit centre like other professional bodies.

This means our annual conference is substantially cheaper than those of similar organisations. In 2014 full conference attendance for ARA members cost £550 for early bookers, or £575 for later bookers. This fee included three days' full attendance at conference, two nights' accommodation and all food and drink.

The Information and Records Management Society conference fees in 2014 were £816 for a two-day conference with two nights' accommodation. The Museums Association comparable fees for 2014 for

*“We at the ARA want to challenge the notion that it is expensive. It isn't.”*

their two-day conference are £680 but this excludes evening meals.

CILIP's last two-day conference in 2013 was £408 excluding accommodation and evening meals. I could go on and on. We can't find a better deal than our conference.

Our three-day conference is substantially cheaper than other organisations can offer for two-day conferences.

A few die-hards long for the days of university accommodation under the misunderstanding that universities are cheaper than hotels. A reminder of what university conference accommodation was like can be seen in the photographs of a Southampton University bedroom (2003) and York University lecture room (2008). Compare these to the images of Newcastle in this issue of ARC.

Hotels with conference facilities are now as competitive as universities with their pricing. We were therefore able to move away from the poor accommodation offered by



Southampton University accommodation (2003)

universities and into hotels whilst reducing costs. Joan Smith remembers Southampton: 'actually my shower was very clean as it wouldn't turn off – it actually kept the whole bathroom clean as it was a wet room. Some of the luckier delegates didn't have this problem as they didn't have a bathroom and had to share one at the end of the corridor.'

Our professions must value themselves and members should be proud of who they are and what they do. Do not be afraid to be in good surroundings. You could have university style accommodation if you would prefer – however it will most certainly cost you a higher fee as universities will not negotiate rates.

We constantly work to move forward and improve the annual conference – this includes finding the best accommodation for our conference at the best price.

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**John Chambers**  
Chief Executive ARA

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# Conversation in the Archives

## Reflection on the value of knowledge sharing at the ARA Conference 2014

In the opening speech of the conference, 'The noisy archives', Rick Prelinger stated, 'Archives should be venues for conversation'. Having spent three days at the ARA conference, I believe this to be very true. If we wish to ensure our 'survival' and 'remain the fittest' then we must communicate and work together.

Having attended the conference last year in Cardiff, I was excited to see and hear what the speakers would offer us this year. Being a lone archivist for a large company means that opportunities for archival discussion are limited. Therefore, the conference allows me the chance to engage and network with a myriad of interesting people.

From the outset, I felt that the tone of the conference was set: archives and archivists need to adapt and change in order for us to continue to be relevant in modern society. As the world rapidly changes around us, Rick made the point that 'in years to come some copyright issues will seem quaint.' We will have to consider the right to access from a different perspective. This was followed by Jonathan Rhys-Lewis' talk ('Communicating preservation: come a little closer so you can hear what I am saying') in which we were encouraged to consider what preservation really is. He raised the point that perhaps 'collections care' is a better phrase, as it emphasises that continuous care of archives is necessary in order to preserve them. He highlighted to us that people will not necessarily understand what we do, or have an interest or care. Again, a need to communicate effectively is key. We have to learn to listen well but, in turn, ensure that people take on board our knowledge and not just 'wait for their turn to speak'.



“Being a lone archivist for a large company means that opportunities for archival discussion are limited.”

Rebecca Bradley (‘Poetics of the archive: critical interface design in the research archive’) shared her experience of creating user interfaces while trying to capture the creativity of the material and the creators. Rebecca made the point that archives can be explorative and, perhaps at times, we should even encourage ambiguity. One of the outcomes of a project at Newcastle University Special Collections has been the creation of a ‘Marginalia Machine’. This machine recreates marginalia while removing the original information. This takes away the original context but at the same time can add new and different contexts. Our role as archivists can be to help facilitate interpretation of this information. Without having a specific starting point, research can be serendipitous and lead to unconsidered possibilities. Rebecca made the point this although this type of development is not for all archives, it shows that our ability to adapt, communicate and facilitate in new ways will ensure our survival.

On Day 2, Martin Berendse (‘From ARA to ARA – Reach out and touch: make this world a better place if you can!’) highlighted to us again the need for communication and adaptability. He pointed out that our message as archivists is not being heard in boardrooms around the world. However, if we perhaps focus on a clear message, then we will be heard. In this case, to paraphrase Marshall McLuhan, we are ‘the medium’ which carries ‘the message’. By defining a clear goal, such as ensuring the quality of data, then we as archivists can help make an impact on the changing society in which we live.

Jane Stevenson (Manager, the Archives Hub), began Day 3 and told us the wonderful story of data (‘The story of a piece of data’). Her story presented the fact that data, and how it is held and interpreted, is changing due to our increasingly digital world. This digital world is multi-layered,



Rebecca Bradley

Jane Maxwell



“... if we perhaps focus on a clear message, then we will be heard.”

and somewhere within the complex layers is our data. We must be aware of the amount of data which is now created. In order for this data to be useful, then we must consider all the realms it will pass through and how it will be interpreted. When giving a title to a collection, should we perhaps think more along the lines of ‘a succinct description of the archive’? Jane Maxwell (‘Never mind the quality, feel the bits: the effect of the popularity of digitisation projects on the skills [and patience] of the archivist and manuscript curator’) then took us on a different journey, exploring the idea of digital projects and their potential to distort. Jane discussed the idea that there should be justification for digitisation which offers true access, as opposed to digitising for its own sake. She highlighted that archivists can be criticised for not offering universal access to all. However, we must question whether digitisation is the only way of truly communicating the worth of our collections.

After this conference, and as with the previous years, I felt lucky to have been there. The chance to engage with so many talks and speak with so many new colleagues is vital to me as a lone archivist. Overall, the message of the conference is clear: We must communicate, not only between ourselves but outside our archival community. It is essential to make our voices heard to the decision-makers but also to other disciplines and users, too. Rick Prelinger encouraged us to be like scientists and experiment. We need to push boundaries and be part of our ever-changing society.

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**Dawn Sinclair**

Archivist, HarperCollins Publishers

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## Reflections on

I was delighted to be able to attend this year’s thought-provoking conference. With so much change happening within the archives sector, particularly within local authority archives (the sector that I am employed in), I was pleased that this year’s conference theme was ‘Survival of the fittest: strength, skills and priorities for 2014’.

I particularly enjoyed the encouraging keynote address by Rick Prelinger, ‘The Noisy Archives’, and the paper given by Justine Winstanley-Brown, ‘The creative professional: an anti-case study’. Both showed how they capitalised upon new opportunities to experiment and bring creativity to their work through interacting with their users and their cataloguing collections – rather than following the way things have been done before – perhaps an all too easy mind-set to fall into?

One of the strengths of the conference is that it draws a wide range of archivists, records managers and conservators together. I work in a small team, and do not have the pleasure of working closely with a conservator, so I appreciated the opportunity to hear from Jonathan Rhys-Lewis and to be reminded of the importance of preservation and collection care, which can be at risk of being over-looked, especially with greater expectations and demands for archives to be more accessible.

I agree with the ARA: diversity within the profession is important, and I am pleased that Nicola Waddington shared her paper, ‘Different, not less: diversity, inclusion and the wider world’ with us about how we might better support colleagues with disabilities and the strengths that a diverse workforce



# the ARA Conference 2014

offer. This is an issue close to my heart, as a close relative of mine (not working in the profession) has often found it hard to get employers and other people to understand her needs, and what she can and cannot do.

I was particularly pleased that the ARA had dedicated some time to debate and reflect upon professional career development. With the nature of the profession changing quickly, it seems that archives and records professionals need to acquire a greater variety of skills to manage the demands of their jobs, employers and complex needs of their collections. But with limited time, resources and funding opportunities, which skills should we prioritise, and how do we acquire knowledge and skills that we may need in the future, but do not necessarily urgently need to do our job today? These are questions I have been thinking about, and so I appreciated hearing Craig Moore's challenging talk, 'The career lifecycle and continuum of the records professional', which suggested that perhaps taking a pro-active approach to personal career development is the way to go. I was also interested to learn from Dr Andrew Flinn about the ways his department at University College London are adapting the curriculum to prepare students for the profession, particularly with regard to managing electronic records (his paper was entitled, 'Meeting the future: new skills and priorities, the challenges for archival education in the digital age'.)

With thanks to Ancestry for granting me a bursary to be able to attend this year's conference.

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**Zoe Darani**

Lambeth Archives

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Craig Moore





# A View from a Newly

As a newly qualified archivist attending the ARA Annual Conference, I was interested to see how the conference's theme of 'survival of the fittest' and skills for the future would be presented. Would I come away feeling that the Archives and Records Management course I had only just completed had prepared me for the future, or would I go away feeling overwhelmed by current thinking within archive practice?

With this in mind I was particularly keen to hear the speakers in Friday morning's session on 'Skills for the Future', which included a talk by Andrew Flinn, course director at UCL ('Meeting the future: new skills and priorities, the challenges for archival education in the digital age'). Andrew's session highlighted how the formal education providers are continuously working with professionals within and outside of the archive and records management profession to make sure that students continue to go out into the workplace with the necessary skills and theories needed within the workplace. Not an easy task when faced with trying to educate people on 'digital' records and 'traditional' paper-based recordkeeping skills, but as Andrew Flinn sees it, this differentiation will, in a few years' time, be something in the past; 'digital' records will just be records, and course content will develop to match this. Following on from this, Giovanni Michetti's 'Managing the professional skills' gave voice to ideas about the development of an archive sector-wide 'knowledge tree' to assess skills and knowledge gaps in the ever-evolving world of recordkeeping, so course providers can have a great way of assessing and targeting their training, and also enabling qualified professionals to view their own professional development and training needs once formal training within a university setting is complete.

When thinking of ideas that supplemented my learning on the archives course, the thought-provoking introductory speech by keynote speaker Rick Prelinger made for interesting listening. His concept about 'the noisy archives' and the need for more 'babble' surrounding the archive sector highlighted how archivists need to think and work more creatively to remain current and useful to their users; a theme that was picked up on throughout the three days of talks. As someone starting out on their first cataloguing project, I found that Justine Winstanley-Brown's discussion about her more product less process cataloguing method highlights new ways in which I can think about my own project, and the conference setting meant I could hear more about her experiences one to one.

What struck me about talking to other professionals such as Justine between sessions was how much people felt that they could, and were keen to, take the forward-thinking ideas of the speakers back into their workplaces. Looking at new ways of presenting online finding aids, and how we need to think about how our work is presented to an online audience, echoed Rick Prelinger's comments about archivists enabling people to find what they are not looking for, and really brought home the message that the digital age has changed how people want to view and retrieve information.

In recent months there have also been many discussions about the work and roles of volunteers within the archive and other sectors. With the responsibility of managing the work of a small number of volunteers, I was keen to hear the discussions surrounding this topic at the conference. Richard Hunt's 'The many faces of volunteering in archives' looked at the ongoing debate that volunteers



Richard Hunt



# Qualified Archivist

could be seen as a threat to the profession, particularly when service leaders see that much work is being done by volunteers, highlighted that the key to successful projects which combine the work of volunteers and professional archivists is to make the right decisions about what work to give volunteers. This can be achieved by asking the right question: we need to ask ourselves ‘what tasks can we not give volunteers?’ in order to differentiate between professional tasks and more process-based tasks that are appropriate for volunteers.

Taking away things that I can build upon in a professional capacity was a real highlight of the conference for me, and discussing topics with colleagues between sessions meant that I was not as overwhelmed by the conference’s themes as I feared I might be. Having a mixture of more experienced and first-time, younger speakers highlighted how views of archivists from all spectrums of the profession are respected. I am very grateful to have received a bursary through the ARA to attend this conference, and I would recommend attending to other newly qualified professionals. It has shown me how important it is to continue my professional development now that I have completed the ARM course, and it has been a great way to keep up with new and emerging ideas and theories about archives and how we can, and need to, develop as a profession to remain relevant to our users and stakeholders in order to survive and thrive.

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**Louise Clarke**

Chatsworth House Trust

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Giovanni Michetti





Richard Nichols

# Going Back to my Roots! (or Coals to Newcastle)

I was extremely honored to be awarded the International Conference Bursary for several reasons. First, I had not attended an ARA conference in a long time, and couldn't have attended without this help. Secondly, I have been working in the American archive conservation field since 2001 (New York City; then Syracuse, in upstate New York) and I felt I really needed to 'touch base' as my American colleagues would say! The conference matched up with so many aspects of my work at Syracuse University Library. Finally, the added bonus was that Newcastle is my home town, and where I embarked on my career!

Both keynote speakers gave very thought-provoking, stimulating and entertaining addresses. I am still chuckling at Jonathon Rhys-Lewis' quote regarding a school boy's definition of a 'manuscript' as 'what Wayne Rooney wears'! Rick Prelinger also gave a wonderful presentation, and I had the pleasure of interviewing him later in the week for the ARA website.

I was excited at the prospect of meeting new people, old friends and colleagues. After Richard Nichols' excellent lecture, 'Conservation or Restoration? Ethical challenges in treatment and binding of archival volumes', I dared to ask a question, and was suddenly

recognized by a fellow conservator from a conference 25 years earlier! It suddenly occurred to me that I am probably now one of the 'old school' – a dubious privilege that brings responsibilities such as teaching, mentoring, advocacy and paying for a round at the bar!

Syracuse University Library has a dis-bound copy of James Audubon's *The Birds of America*. I attended the lecture 'Rebinding Audubon's *The Birds of America* in the Royal Library' knowing fine well that rebinding the 435 double elephant size plates would be a challenge indeed, and I'd need to pay close attention to Megan Gent, Conservator, Royal Collection. It soon became apparent that the project was not only double elephant, but mammoth! Originally bound in four volumes, each with some 285 blind-tooled motifs and countless in gold, I realized early on that I have too many commitments (and not enough resources or physical help!) to think about anything other than continued preservation measures for our \$20 million collection.

Other lectures focused directly on formats, subjects and issues that I deal with almost daily. All were very relevant; the paper and book treatments often feature heavily in my work, and to hear what my peers are doing was invaluable. Ethical dilemmas, treatment



“... paper and book treatments often feature heavily in my work, and to hear what my peers are doing was invaluable.”

variations and diverse use of materials were often the focus of many post-lecture questions, and discussions often continued during coffee breaks and beyond! It was interesting to learn about diverse conservation projects working on specific formats such as parchment, photographs, and even a Police archive. Risk management, volunteers, digitization, mould abatement and treatment documentation also featured, so we had ‘all the bases covered’.

I was particularly enthralled by Roger Barlee’s ‘Leather Manufacture’ lecture, which detailed a skin’s journey through the tannery processes, comparing traditional and modern manufacturing techniques whilst offering an insight into the Hewit & Sons Ltd family business.

Yuki Russell’s lecture ‘Challenging the myths of Japanese paper’ certainly opened up the subject for me. The diversity of materials, manufacture and origin was a little worrying, and I will never take vendors’ descriptions for granted again!

Although a member of the American Institute for Conservation (dealing with multiple formats rather than just archives), I find the ARA more relevant and informative mostly due to the focus on archives but also because of the ability to build and maintain a structured, certified and accredited conservators training scheme. Several years ago (or more than I care to remember) I was a privileged recipient of an apprenticeship with Tyne and Wear Archive Service. My apprenticeship and subsequent training, including this conference, have stood me in great stead throughout my career, enabling me to bring my expertise to the United States. I would therefore like to thank all instructors past and present, and also the conference speakers and organizers for all their hard work and dedication.

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### David J. Stokoe

Associate Librarian, Rare Book & Paper Conservator  
Syracuse University Libraries

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Megan Gent



Roger Barlee



Yuki Russell



# A Tale of Two Conferences

After attending the ARA Conference in Brighton as a day delegate two years ago, I was hopeful that I would find a way of returning and attending a future conference in full. That day in Brighton was packed with fascinating talks and opportunities to learn, and I left with a sense that I was missing out by leaving early. So I was absolutely delighted when I received the news that my application for a bursary to attend the 2014 ARA Conference in Newcastle had been successful. I was especially pleased to attend this year, as the conference programme included sessions and individual papers on themes that were of particular appeal to me and which I knew would help me think more broadly about my professional development.

Some of the talks addressed the need to encourage greater diversity more actively in all aspects of our work. The partnership between the RAF Museum and the Black Cultural Archives to curate an exhibition on RAF volunteers of black African descent ('Pilots of the Caribbean') sounded like a great way to ensure that diverse voices were represented within the archive. It was heartening to hear Andrew Flinn discussing how UCL is planning to encourage students from a greater range of backgrounds onto its archive courses ('Meeting the future'). I was also glad to have the chance to hear about the ARA's approach to diversity: Nicola Waddington, in her talk 'Different, not less' gave an interesting account of how the ethos of the Equality Acts, and the concept of delivery behind them, have developed since the 1970s. It was a useful reminder that many of us have 'hidden disabilities', and her point that the greater the diversity of a team, the greater its creativity and problem-solving ability, was a very valuable one.

As a newly qualified archivist in my first professional-level job, I am keen to use opportunities to catch up with some of the wider archives-sector developments and debates beyond my own daily activities. Having had very little experience of managing digital records, I am particularly keen to keep up with developments in this fast-moving field. So I was excited to learn how UCL is planning to help students develop their skills in this area during the transition period



between traditional and digital records. I hope there will be opportunities for everyone to play in the 'sand pits' UCL are designing to practise their records management skills virtually - they sound great fun!

Being the sole archivist in my institution, I can feel somewhat isolated from other information professionals, and often wish I had more opportunities to discuss my daily practices and ideas for development with others. Attending events like the conference are invaluable in helping me to overcome that sense of isolation. Catching up with

“*I often wish I had more opportunities to discuss my daily practices and ideas for development with others. Attending events like the conference is invaluable.*”

former colleagues and fellow students, meeting other professionals, and generally finding out what other archivists are up to helps me feel connected and a part of the body of archives professionals. The conference is also a chance to put a face to the names of people I only know of from written communications, including some of my former tutors. It was also a good opportunity to discuss with those in charge of the accreditation scheme some concerns about the preparation of my institution's application. I also feel more confident about taking part in the Explore Your Archive campaign having talked over the social media plans with an ARA representative. The standard of the presentations was altogether extremely high, and I have reflected further on my personal highlights since returning to work. Jane Stevenson's entertaining talk 'The story of a piece of data' drove home an important message about cataloguing: that as carriers of data multiply and become more sophisticated, the need for clarity of data input is even greater. Since attending the break-out session 'Basic Conservation Techniques for Archivists', which included practical demonstrations, I have felt more confident about carrying out some of the preservation techniques I use.

Finally, perhaps the key message from the Conference, referred to in many of the talks, was the imperative for archivists to promote their profession more actively and creatively, and communicate the importance of archives. This really struck a chord with me, and I have returned to my day-to-day work with a greater resolve to put this into practice.

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#### Clare George

Institute of Modern Language Research  
University of London

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# Beyond the Conference: The perspective of a remote follower

Whether or not you are a fan of social media, you have to admit that engaging with the ARA Conference from the opposite side of the country – from the comfort of your own home – has numerous benefits. This year I was able to do just that by means of a variety of social media tools and platforms, many of which archivists, record managers and conservators will find invaluable when managing – or virtually following – future events and conferences.

#### Twitter

Remote Twitter users can receive live updates about Conference lectures, discussions and social events by following the #ARA2014 hashtag feed, the official @ARAconf Twitter account, and users such as @ARAPubAffairs (Marie Owens), @ARABusinessrec (ARA Business Records), and @AngelaOwusu1 (Explore Your Archive). These and many other delegates helpfully posted photographs, Instagram images, video links and hyperlinks to websites and blogs relevant to speaker presentations. @LCDArchive (Leonard Cheshire Disability Archive) for instance, tweeted the URL for the RAF Museum exhibition discussed by Nina Hadaway (RAF Museum) in her paper "'Pilots of the Caribbean': Volunteers of African Heritage in the Royal Air Force": [www.rafmuseum.org.uk/london/whats-going-on/events/exhibition-opening-pilots-of-the-caribbean-volu/](http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/london/whats-going-on/events/exhibition-opening-pilots-of-the-caribbean-volu/) Thus we could view the RAF Museum collections online and get a sense of the exhibition content.

Twitter also allows you to 'go beyond' the Conference and engage in discussion and information-sharing with non-delegates. The 'Information Bites?: The Impact of the Information Revolution on the Profession' session

produced a heated online discussion, with Stephanie Davidson (West Yorkshire Archive Service) throwing additional hyperlinks into the mix – including a thought-provoking blog about why we should stop digitising! [www.avpreserve.com/blog/for-gods-sake-stop-digitizing-paper-2/](http://www.avpreserve.com/blog/for-gods-sake-stop-digitizing-paper-2/).

Similarly, virtual discussions continued long after the delegates had gone home, thereby extending the conversations initiated in Newcastle. A case in point is the debate which took place between Andrew Flinn (UCL), @ARAnewprofs and @consulararchivist (me) about how archives and records management graduates can use their skills in alternative sectors.

<https://twitter.com/hashtag/ara2014>

### Eventifier

Eventifier is a tool which aggregates social media content. By capturing scattered event data, conversations and ideas, it not only saves on the process of finding information such as tweets, but also stores data. The tool arranges data by medium, which allows users to search for photos, videos, tweets, blogs and contributors. Glancing quickly through the ARA Conference photograph stream, I can see ARA President Caroline Williams' glamorous gala dinner shoes and bag, the Don't Risk it: Know Your Records team, and a vast array of snapshots depicting PowerPoint slides, packed lecture theatres, and panoramic views of Newcastle.

More importantly, Eventifier also provides statistics. Hence we know that the ARA Conference Twitter feed generated some 2,843 tweets, 80 photos, 2 videos and 3 blogs links. There were 296 Twitter users contributing to the online discussions.

<http://eventifier.com/event/ara2014/popular>

### SlideShare

SlideShare is the world's largest community for sharing professional presentations, and it allows users to upload and share PowerPoint, documents, videos, PDFs and webinars for free. The tool can be embedded into websites and blogs, and is easily shareable on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms. Thanks to Slideshare, remote users can still view the ARA Conference PowerPoint slides and accompanying notes of keynote speaker Rick Prelinger (Prelinger Archives). I am now aware that in his lecture 'The noisy archives', Rick persuasively argued that we must ensure that archives thrive in an uncertain climate, and that we must shout about our collections.

<http://www.slideshare.net/footage/the-noisy-archives>



### ARA website

Check out the ARA website for up-to-date information about and photographs of Conference speakers, sessions, social events, the gala dinner, and the Information Marketplace. There are also interviews with speakers and delegates.

Many of the presentations from the ARA Conference in Cardiff (2013) are now online, and it is likely that the 2014 Conference slides will appear in the near future. [www.archives.org.uk/ara-conference/the-ara-conference.html](http://www.archives.org.uk/ara-conference/the-ara-conference.html)

### For the future

Twitter discussions resulted in some recommendations for future ARA conferences. We would like to see:

- More tweets from the conservation stream. We are really keen to hear more about your talks, lectures and discussions.
- The (optional) inclusion of Twitter ID on delegate badges. This would help to identify fellow tweeters in the 'real world'.

### Dr Ellie Pridgeon

Consultant Archivist Ltd

Twitter: @consulararchivist



# Conference 2014

Gateshead Newcastle Hilton 27-29 August 2014 - Photographs Richard Kenworthy for the ARA







Ann Attwood, Collections Care Manager, Gloucestershire Archives



Alexandra Duggan, Trainee Archive Conservator, Lancashire Archives



Becky May, MA Conservation of Fine Art student, Northumbria University



Rachel Braha, Archivist, World ORT



Craig Fees, Archivist, Planned Environment Therapy Trust



Francis Garaba, Archivist, Lutheran Theological Institute



Rhiannon Griffiths, Trainee Conservator, Gwent Archives



Matthew Hancock, Conservator, Royal Armouries





Antony Oliver



Friday morning speakers



Lee Pretlove, Senior Information Specialist, TWI



Jagjit Singh, Director, Environmental Building Solutions



Isobel Hunter, Head of Engagement, The National Archives



Laura Hynds, Assistant Corporate Records Manager, Barts Health NHS Trust



David Mander, ARA Chair



Sue McKenzie and Ted Rogers, Brent and Hackney Libraries, Arts and Heritage



Elspeth Millar, Archivist, Oral History, The British Library



Daniel Scott-Davies, Corporate Records Manager, Barts Health NHS Trust



Sarah Oliver, Preservation Assistant, Sheffield Archives



Antony Oliver, Conservator, Sheffield Archives



Annie Starkey, Trainee Archive Conservator, Lancashire Archives



Vicky Stretch, Archivist, Network Rail



Ela Gorska-Wiklo, Preservation Manager, University of Glasgow Archives



# The Experience of an (almost) First-time Delegate

I have been working and volunteering in archives for over five years and have never been to the entire three days of the ARA Conference. I went as a day delegate on the Friday when the conference was in Brighton in 2012, and couldn't help feeling that I'd missed out by not going to the full three days.

The title of this year's conference, 'Survival of the Fittest: strengths, skills and priorities for 2014 and beyond' appealed to me, as it seemed very relevant to the increased competition that there is for funds and jobs. Attending the full three-day conference was draining but I felt inspired by the work and ideas of the colleagues who presented papers.

One of the recurring themes of the papers presented was the varying and creative ways that different search functions have been added to catalogues and how the results were being presented. An example of this was the paper presented by Rhian James, 'Welsh Wills Online as a digital research resource: communicating the content of historical documents in a digital environment'. By using different functionalities, such as geo-referencing, the user is able to group records in new ways, and it also allows the information to be analysed differently.

The paper presented by Melissa Downing and Joanna Loxton, who work for the British Council, entitled 'Finders or keepers?', was an interesting insight into the role of information professionals in a post-custodial era. The British Council has offices all over the world. It does not have a central store for their historical records, so Joanna's and Melissa's job includes locating the British Council's records in a variety of different repositories. By creating a catalogue of these records, they were able to give the British Council a better understanding of its own history. The records can also be used to inspire and support the current employees of the British Council.

Another recurring theme was that co-operation between different organisations and individuals can lead to everyone involved benefitting from different expertise. This mutual benefit was

Joanna Loxton



Melissa Downing





highlighted in Leonard Foreman, Terence Pepper and Patricia Whatley's paper on the Peto photographic Collection, and Nina Hadaway's paper 'Pilots of the Caribbean'. Some of the photographic prints from the Peto Collection have been exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery, which raised the profile of Michael Peto the artist and of the University of Dundee Archive, which looks after the Collection. The National Portrait Gallery also benefitted from the partnership, as they were gifted the prints after the exhibition. In Nina's paper, 'Pilots of the Caribbean', the Royal Air Force Museum worked with the Black Cultural Archives to create an exhibition that told a previously neglected story of volunteers of African heritage who served with the Royal Air Force during the World Wars. Both these projects meant that the archives reached new audiences which they would not have done working on their own.

In the days and weeks after the conference I found myself referring to two particular nuggets of information that were mentioned at the conference. The first was from Martin Berendse ('From ARA to ARA') when he said, 'Don't pay twice,' referring to the longevity of software. If we pay for software to store our information, longevity should be built in. Wanting to access this information after five or ten years should not be an additional expense. The other was from Jane Maxwell ('Never mind the quality, feel the bits') and her warning over the negative impacts of ad hoc digitisation, resulting in a 'Greatest Hits' archive collection being available, without proper metadata and at the expense of other, more worthy, projects.

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#### Penny McMahon

Archive/Record Assistant  
British Postal Museum & Archive

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# Current ARA Advocacy

Marie Owens (ARA Head of Public Affairs) shares some of what she and John Chambers (ARA Chief Executive) said about ARA Advocacy during the Conference presentation.

**T**his year at conference, John Chambers and I decided to concentrate our presentation on Advocacy, which is right at the heart of ARA priorities.

Advocacy is about making people listen to your point of view, hopefully agreeing with you and then acting in a useful way.

John and I both believe: that advocacy for the sector is more important than it ever has been; that the ARA is doing more of it than ever before; and we think we're doing it better than we ever have.

There was a live lobbying issue to talk about: the draft European Data Protection Regulation, which had been approved by the European Parliament. John explained that, if the sector could not make changes further on in the process, there would be significant problems for most UK and Irish archives in the current wording. Exemptions for archive services within the draft Regulation only covered those archives subject to freedom of information acts. Any archive not subject to FOI almost certainly had a big problem and its activities could become outside the law. And even archives which are subject to FOI would face problems.

John reported how our attempts to lobby British MEPs on the relevant European Parliament committee – Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee known as LIBE – had largely been ignored. On the positive side, the draft regulation was opposed by many sectors and organisations that were better resourced and making much more noise than we can.

Many months before, we had lobbied the UK Ministry of Justice to ask them to take our concerns into the negotiations with the Council of Ministers.

At some point we felt sure that everyone in the sector would have to lobby, when the legislation returned to Parliament.

There was good news to come in late September, with a significant breakthrough. It became clear that the Ministry of Justice has taken our concerns into the negotiations and that most of the changes we had asked for had been actioned. We shall continue to lobby for outstanding items, but for the moment we do not need to lobby MEPs. We can also take pride in the fact that the ARA played a significant role in achieving a good outcome.

Campaigns are a key part of advocacy. There are currently two awareness campaigns that ARA is either leading – or joint leading. Explore Your Archive is led by ARA and The National Archives. Don't Risk It! Know Your Records is led by the ARA's Section for Record Management and Information Governance. Both campaigns have support and buy in from the wider sector.

Explore Your Archive is targeted at the public. We need members of the public to understand more about archives, believe they are a good thing and possibly visit and use an archive. It's been important from the beginning of our planning to remember that not all archives want an influx of users (they couldn't cope). But if people read about archives in their local paper/hear about them on their radio – or hear their friends talking about them – well, the next time someone asks them if they think archives are a good thing – or even if there IS an archive near them - they might say yes.

The second year of Explore Your Archive is shaping up very well to have more archives taking part than in 2013, a more proactive social media hit, and some well-known archive users joining the celebration. The Explore toolkit has been refreshed with new material at [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/yourtoolkit](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/yourtoolkit)

Don't Risk It! Know Your Records! is very different. It is aimed at employers and all about selling the importance of good records management. The key messages to employers are: if you haven't got a professional in charge of your records, you are running big risks. Even if you do employ a records management professional you may not be using her or his skills to benefit your organisation. There's another message – records managers are friendly and there to help – talk to them.

These two campaigns operate in similar ways: we put as much material, guidance, advice and planning into the sector to enable as many as people as possible to join in. If there are artwork downloads, messages, draft advice, cheap training, then hopefully the sector can use it. And as well as getting messages across, we all hopefully improve our skills too.

The first visible Don't Risk It! Know Your Records action was in September, when a letter and a leaflet was mailed to around 1,500 leaders in public and private sectors in the UK and Ireland. These letters encourage leaders to think about the risk of not doing records



management well and the benefits of getting it right. While these letters are being received, read, maybe passed around the organisation.... we are asking records managers to undertake internal advocacy. A toolkit is available with lots of tips and advice.

In the early months of 2015 there will be a Bring the Boss day – a prestigious occasion when records managers can accompany their decision makers to hear good presentations in an attractive venue about the importance of good records management.

Read more about Don't Risk It! Know Your Records at [www.archives.org.uk/campaigns/knowyourrecords.html](http://www.archives.org.uk/campaigns/knowyourrecords.html)

Lobbying and advocacy is about big statements sometimes and conversations all the time. In the past year we have communicated with many organisations on behalf of our members about a number of important issues including: staffing levels; threats to services; threats to materials within services; proposed legislation; international agreements; and National Occupational Standards. We have a decent level of success in being heard.

All good advocacy rests on good contacts, constant conversations and mutual understanding. John Chambers talks to other organisations all the time both within and outside the sector to make sure we have the right information and can move quickly, with friends and partners, when needed.

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#### Marie Owens

ARA Head of Public Affairs

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# Conservation Matters at the ARA Conference

This year I was very fortunate to attend the ARA conference in Gateshead Newcastle after receiving a bursary from the ARA.

Upon arriving in the beautiful city of Newcastle it was just a short walk to the Hilton Gateshead hotel, located on the Gateshead Quays overlooking the River Tyne. I was initially struck upon arrival at the impressive number of people attending, not only the conference as a whole but also the conservation strand of the conference. It's impressive that in these austere times for many of us, we find that the conference offers such value for money.

On Wednesday the conservation strand kicked off with a talk from Susan Sandford and Sara Brown from Cardiff University entitled 'Raiders of the Lost Arc(ive)', focusing on the benefits of a partnership between Cardiff University and Aberdulais Tinworks National Trust property, where a digital record has been established for the collection. Richard Nichols gave a talk ('Conservation or Restoration?') on the ethical challenges all conservators face in their work, and how ethics plays a large part in the decisions we make as conservators. Are aqueous treatments ethical because, after all, they are not reversible? How do we hit the balance?

On Thursday morning Shirley Jones from West Yorkshire Archive Service talked about volunteers in the conservation studio. This was also complemented with a talk given by Margaret Brooks, trainee conservator at Pembrokeshire Archives, on health and safety for volunteers in the conservation studio. Shirley talked of the benefits seen from having volunteers at the archive service and the broader issues surrounding the culture of volunteers in the heritage sector. Margaret focused on the need for appropriate health and safety in the conservation studio, drawing upon current legislation and risk assessments aimed at protecting people in the workplace.

Antoinette Curtis, conservator at Norfolk Record Office, talked about a project to conserve a Manor Court roll dating from 1509. Antoinette shared with us the conservation process she devised to treat the court roll and some of the findings from her scientific research into the original item.





Sara Brown



Margaret Brooks



Fay Humphreys



Susan Sandford



Antoinette Curtis



Corinne Henderson



Shirley Jones



Zoe Kennington



Gala Dinner

After coffee the conservation strand was treated to a very interesting talk by Yuki Russell, also from Norfolk Record Office, on 'Challenging the myths of Japanese paper, what do we really need to know?' We all make use of Japanese paper in our conservation studio, but how much do we really know about these papers? Yuki talked of the meanings of the paper names and how they can be somewhat misleading. We also learned about the fibre types and manufacturing processes of different papers and what information is applicable to conservation practice.

At the end of the day a talk was given by Roger Barlee, a sixth-generation leather tanner from J. Hewit & Sons. Roger briefly talked on the different types of leather tanning processes and how these can affect the resulting archival properties of the leather. Roger also talked upon what went wrong between 1850 and 1930, and how this has affected volumes bound in these leathers. Roger has carried out a lot of research over the last 30 years, along with the Leather Conservation Centre, to develop an archival-quality bookbinding leather.

Thursday night allowed us to let our hair down a little at the Gala Dinner. A wonderful three-course meal was provided, and entertainment came from the local party band Storm. Rhiannon Griffiths, trainee conservator from Gwent Archives, won a raffle prize and was the lucky recipient of a two-night stay in the next conference location, Dublin.

On Friday morning Zoe Kennington from Lancashire Archives gave a very interesting talk on emergency planning and the lengths she had to go to in order to get her disaster plan together, in preparation for Archive Accreditation. It seems after some mock disaster meetings with County Council employees, Zoe is a strong advocate of a multi-skilled approach to creating a disaster plan.

Fay Humphreys and Corinne Henderson both gave talks on their final projects for the MA Conservation course at Camberwell College of Arts. Fay talked on the rebinding of a 17th-century bound manuscript to ensure stability and durability to encourage future access to a privately owned volume. Corinne gave a talk on conserving a 19th-century fashion plate scrapbook which involved her in overcoming challenges of heavily

laden pages and multiple plates being guarded into a stationary binding.

It was fantastic to see such a full and varied programme, and I really enjoyed the opportunity to meet conservators from all over the country. We conservators, it seems, are requiring a wider range of skills as we are necessitated to diversify to suit larger workloads. I feel that sharing our newly developed skills, tips and experiences is extremely important, and the conference is an ideal place to do this.

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#### Katie Proctor

Conservator, West Yorkshire Archive Service

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## ENVIRONMENTAL MONITOR and LOGGER



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Furthering our work to improve the website our latest addition is our new online application, booking and payment system. Covering conference registration, training event bookings, membership applications, membership renewals and the ARA Shop this new facility is available 24/7 and is ready for you to use.





# An Information Marketplace Tale

## Or, confessions of a semi-detached attendee ...

I was pleased to be present for the Information Marketplace on Conference Thursday, but unlike the delegates, I spent the entire day in the Marketplace itself. I offered a series of one-to-one surgeries for Archive Service Accreditation applicants, and also a workshop on the same subject last thing. I didn't set foot in a talk or workshop apart from my own. But I still got a lot out of Conference – and I'm very grateful to ARA for offering me a free speaker place as part of their contribution to making Archive Service Accreditation a success.

My conference experience didn't start on Thursday. I travelled up to Newcastle the day before, and my journey let me catch up with the conference tweets. Following a conference on Twitter is not the same as being there, of course, but I really like the way Twitter keeps you in the loop, albeit at a distance. I was especially pleased to hear that Vicky Stretch had done a great job pitching the value of Archive Service Accreditation to her employer (Network Rail). The twittersphere made sure I knew that nobody in the audience claimed they had never heard of Accreditation. Phase One of our long-running communications plan is definitely working!

Bright and early on Thursday, I arrived at the conference venue carrying a bunch of leaflets and a poster for

The National Archives' stand. If you've never been an exhibitor at the Information Marketplace, you may never have wondered what it's like. Quiet, to start with. Delegates are in session, and the Marketplace is setting up, waiting for visitors. The Marketplace is a mix of commercial vendors and professional stands, including several from ARA (Training, Registration, Diversity, Know Your Records). Exhibitors get an opportunity to wander around and visit the other stalls before the delegates arrive, eyeing each other's offers and gimmicks. Some sweets, this year, which is a tried-and-true way of enticing people to visit your stand, but also some puzzles, which seemed to get people talking for longer when the delegates joined us.

I talked with people throughout the day as I popped into the Marketplace between surgeries. We usually talked about Archive Service Accreditation, because people now associate me with it so strongly! But it's always good to hear from elsewhere in the sector, too, to catch up with the reality of what's happening in a range of archive services, and to discuss how The National Archives is able to help.

Mostly, though, I was in Room 2 in the basement, talking one-to-one with people interested in Accreditation. I was a bit worried nobody would find us, but in fact we were fully booked

10.30-3 – I was glad to have my colleague Jane Shillaker with me to share the load, and to be able to escape for the odd cup of tea.

We dealt with a mixture of questions, from services who are near to submitting an Accreditation application and who wanted to check some details about the process, to some who had barely heard of the programme and wanted to talk about how it could meet their needs. We talked to people who were looking at Accreditation as a framework for the complex developments needed to bring several services together. We also discussed with several services how they should timetable applications around other major events, like moving to a new building or governance model. This has to be decided case by case, but it is always productive to look at and consider how you will aim to meet Accreditation as you're planning any major change, even if you need to delay completing the application itself. Accreditation should support planning towards change, rather than being the next thing on the list once you're done!

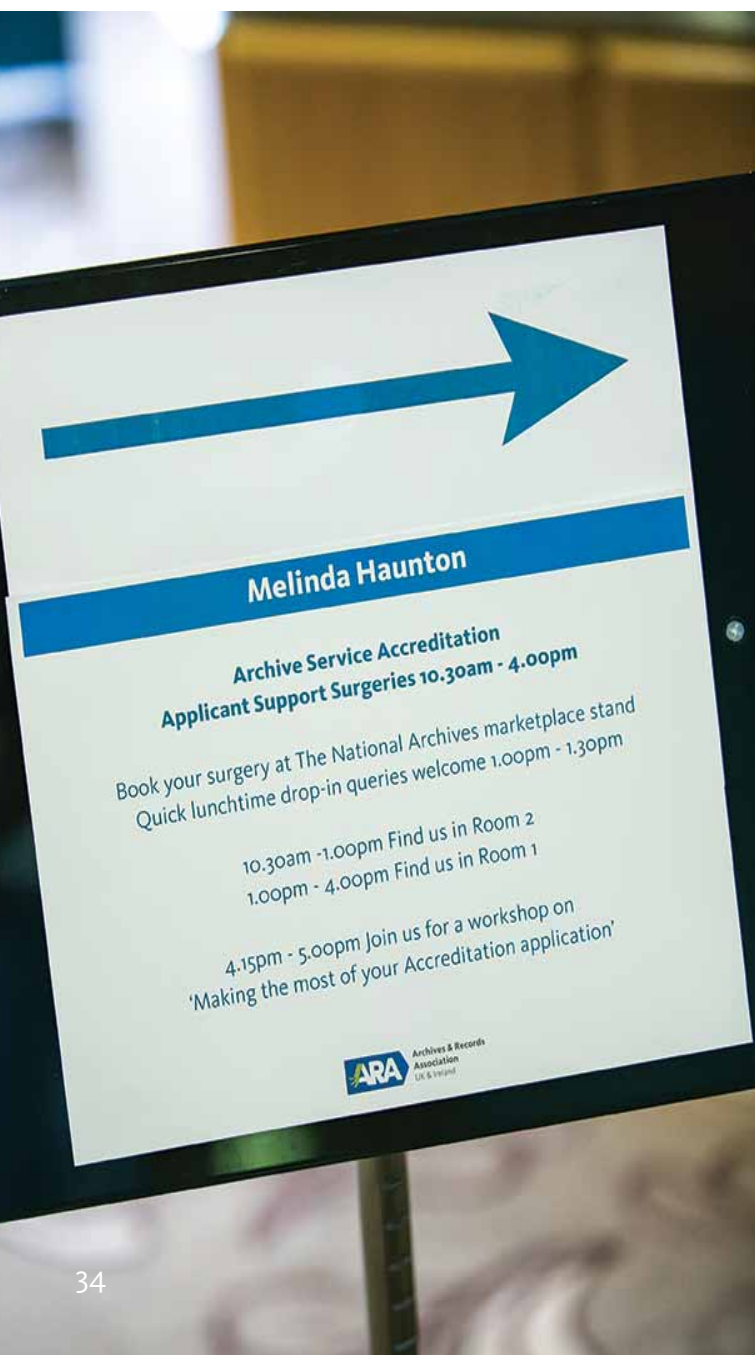
We finished the day with a workshop on how to use Accreditation in advocacy and raising the profile of your archive service. Marketplace day is tiring for everyone, and as the very last of the available workshops I wasn't surprised we had quite a small

turnout. But it was a good chance for all our participants to get actively involved. We worked through how different stakeholders need to know and understand (and do) more or less during the whole process of applying for Accreditation. Your users and Chief Executive will probably be most interested and involved at the moment when you get an award; but Friends groups, consultative bodies and your direct reporting line need to be more involved, and at an earlier stage.

That was the end of my on-site participation. But as I pulled out of Newcastle station, I sent a farewell #ARA2014 tweet to those at the Hilton. And of course I read all of Friday's tweets when I was back in the office!

**Melinda Haunton**

The National Archives



# Did you know this?



**Know Your Records**

**ARCHIVE**  
EXPLORED  
DISCOVERED  
FOUND  
DETECTED  
CONNECTED  
ENGAGED  
UNEARTHED  
LEARNT  
IMAGINED  
CREATED  
UNLOCKED  
OPENED  
REVEALED  
CELEBRATED

The ARA now runs two campaign: Explore Your Archive is run in partnership with The National Archives; Don't Risk It! Know Your Records is run by the ARA and led by the Section for Records Management and Information Governance.

This year's Explore Your Archive campaign week runs from 10 November.

For the Don't Risk It! Know Your Records campaign a toolkit has been produced to help records managers – and all who care about records management – to make the case in their organisations.

The ARA has successfully lobbied for changes to the EU Data Protection Regulation.

The first of millions of School Records to 1914, made possible by the National Digitisation Consortium, have been released by findmypast

If you didn't know any of this, then you haven't read ARA Today, the fortnightly email newsletter from the ARA.

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# Creative Solutions in a Digital Age

## Reinventing the way we provide access

**B**eing an archivist in the digital age is often considered a challenge. We're having to grapple with preserving and processing digital records; we have to demonstrate our relevance in a world where anybody can find information at their fingertips simply by turning on a computer; and users increasingly expect the information they need to be available online.

The conference theme – 'Survival of the Fittest' – really makes this challenge apparent. Is there a risk that, if we don't deal with digital records, if we don't give users what they want, if we don't continually demonstrate that archives are a unique and valuable source of information, we'll become irrelevant and dispensable?

Fortunately, the digital age is not just a challenge. Over the course of the conference, I was really impressed that so many of the speakers saw the digital age as an opportunity to reinvent the way we provide access to our collections.

Cataloguing was one area which was shown to be a challenge, as we begin to think about how best

to catalogue digital archives. Geoffrey Yeo from UCL ('Constructing digital orders') suggested that we should challenge traditional principles such as original order, and trial different approaches. He advocated for an item-level approach to managing digital records, because we needn't restrict ourselves to a single, 'original' order in the digital realm. As Geoffrey pointed out, the digital archives of the future won't be created in fixed aggregations, and now that we aren't restricted to paper catalogues, we don't have to present them as such.

Another challenge facing archivists is that we live in a world where information is abundant and readily accessible. So we need to make sure people see the value of archives and are encouraged to use them. Several speakers touched on the idea that in the digital realm, we can provide each user with a personalised experience of undertaking archival research. Geoffrey's item-level approach could facilitate this, as users would be able to construct their own groups of records to match their individual needs. As explained by Polly Christie, an example of a personalised approach is being developed at the Tate, where visitors to



the website will be able to use the ‘My Tate’ area to gather together records and artworks of interest to them, becoming curators of their own digital collections. Archive users wanting to create their own collections based on their specific research interests is nothing new, but a personalised research experience is something we are able to offer with greater ease in the digital age. And by placing users at the heart of what we do, we will ensure that we remain relevant, and our services valued.

Other speakers showed how they were using technology to interpret their catalogue data in different ways and extract new information from the records. Rebecca Bradley from the Special Collections at Newcastle University spoke about its collaboration with Culture Lab to develop creative interfaces which visualise its archive collections (‘Poetics of the archive’). Rather than looking like a traditional archives catalogue, these visualisations enable users to explore the collections in a more leisurely way, encouraging serendipitous discovery of material which they might not otherwise have been aware of.

In the same session, PhD student Rhian James showed how crowdsourcing the transcription and mark-up of Welsh Wills could be used to create a pool of data. This data can then be analysed, enabling new patterns and trends to be seen within the documents. Archives are becoming increasingly important for research in the digital age because we are able to interrogate the information they contain in ways that haven’t been possible before. The conference was a great forum for archivists, records managers and conservators to share their latest ideas and projects. The digital age does pose new challenges, but if we embrace it – and share our ideas – we’ll be better placed to find creative solutions to the problems it presents.

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**Stephanie Rolt**

The Theatres Trust

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“by placing users at the heart of what we do, we will ensure that we remain relevant, and our services valued”





# The Ellis Prize 2014

The Ellis Prize is given, usually every three years, to recognise excellent work in the sector and 'significant contribution to archive theory and practice'. The Ellis Trophy for 2014 reads: 'Awarded to Dr Susan J Davies for excellence as an educator and provider of expert advice on archives.'

Dr Davies taught at Aberystwyth University from 1979 to 2008 in the Department of History and Welsh History. She was also attached to the Department of Information Studies from 1998 to 2008 and was Director of the MSc Econ programmes in Archive Administration and Records Management. She established an MA in Heritage Studies.

In presenting Dr Davies with the award, David Mander praised the 'substantial contribution' she has made to the sector and to the profession. Here, Dr Davies takes the opportunity to express some of her impressions on having been awarded the Ellis Prize for 2014.

'First, I must thank you for the honour of being awarded this prize. I am proud to accept and am touched by its association with Roger Ellis, who was Secretary of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts during a key period of development in the archive landscape post-Second World War. Not only was I a member of the Commission for nine years, representing Wales, but I also share his interests in all kinds of records, seals, and the crucial importance of archive preservation.

At the same time, this award reminds me of everybody I have worked with in the common endeavour of enabling archives and manuscripts to be well cared for and accessible for use – including all my students! These many activities have been a pleasure, and I cannot think of a better way to have focused my energies. It has been a particular delight to observe my students prospering in the professional field and their continuing commitment to it.



This occasion also provides an opportunity to share thoughts that are relevant to current professional concerns. Time spent teaching my area of expertise – Palaeography and Diplomatic, or ‘reading and understanding’ historical documents – and dealing with ongoing related requests for assistance from researchers and PhD students both near and far, has allowed me to see today’s role for ‘Pal & Dip’ in a new context. Most requests seek help in reading and understanding specific items of documentary evidence which are crucial to the particular research, and vary widely from medieval accounts and surveys through early modern, estate, court and Church records to late 19th-century Cabinet papers, but I also ‘do’ literary and historical texts.

Given that today’s archive trainers and professionals are troubled by how to give sufficient attention to ‘modern’ skills in digital record-keeping and tools while also retaining ‘traditional’ skills, and where the priorities should lie, I suggest that the concept of ‘modern v. traditional’ is unhelpful as the basis for consideration. It is more helpful to use terminology from today’s information world and recognise that the retrieval of information from obsolete formats, whether analogue or digital, is a common goal for all professionals in our field, and that all data retrieval requires the appropriate technical skills and critical judgement. We are therefore ‘all in it together’, regardless of individual skills sets, and not in competition. Jonathan Rhys-Lewis’s presentation to this conference highlighted similar ‘listening and hearing’ issues in relation to preservation, as part of his concern to communicate effectively with managers and decision-makers.

The comparative time span of digital and analogue material is also relevant when considering the skills and knowledge required by archivists and record-keepers: while digital data currently spans decades rather than centuries but is increasing at a formidable pace, written document production in Britain spans about a thousand years, resulting in the longest continuous and surviving documentary heritage in

the western world and one of the finest in Europe. The obvious conclusion is that both formats require appropriate skills if their unique content is to remain retrievable and accessible for future users while also retaining integrity and validity.

I cannot close without thanking ARA again for the honour of being awarded the Ellis Prize, and for all your kind thoughts on this special occasion.’

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**Marie Owens**

ARA Head of Public Affairs

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