



arc magazine

January &
February '22

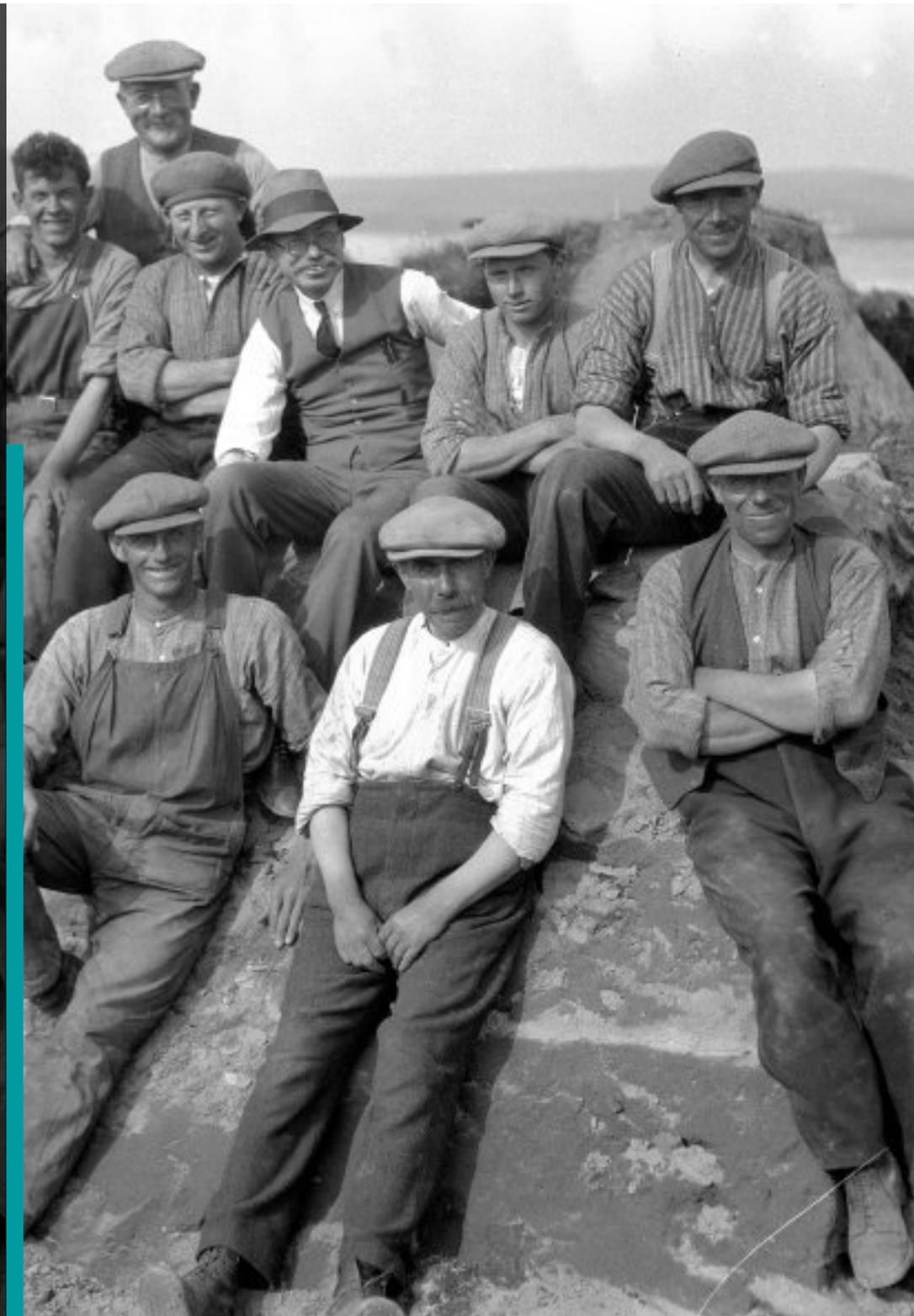
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Welcome

arc magazine

January & February 2022 edition



Welcome to the January/February 2022 edition of *ARC Magazine*. In this edition we have a feature from Anne Cornish who is making the case for prioritising advocacy in Records and Information Management and offering seven tips for how to enhance the profile of RIM in your organisation. Elizabeth Stubbs explains affect theory and how it has been, and can be, used to influence our professional practice, especially in working with communities rather than apart from them. Jonathan Ladd fills us in on the importance of inclusive recruitment practices for the future of the sector, and I speak to Katie Proctor on her career in conservation. We hear from Elizabeth Thompson-MacRae on her experiences of joining the ARA Board and two mentors on their work supporting Bridging the Digital Gap trainees.

Don't forget that the call for papers for the 2022 ARA conference is still open until Friday 14th January so if you have ideas for the themes of Challenge, Change and Choice now is the time to get

them in. Plus there's lots of other ARA, Industry and Community news to catch up on from across the sector.

Thank you to all of our contributors to this edition, it's wonderful to have the different areas of archives, records management and conservation represented so if you have news or feature ideas in any of the three areas please get in touch via arceditors@archives.org.uk.

I hope you've all had a restful winter break and are ready to take on the opportunities 2022 has to offer. Here's hoping it will be a successful year for us all!

Annabel

Annabel Valentine
ARC Editor



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View of Vere Gordon Childe with a group of workmen during the excavations at Skara Brae in 1930 canmore SC00973449. © Courtesy of HES



opening lines

Alan Butler, new Chair of the Community Archives and Heritage Group reflects on how best practice is disseminated in community archives and looks forward to the work still to be done in promoting the wellbeing benefits for those involved with them.



The Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG) is a national group whose remit is to support and promote community archives in the United Kingdom and Ireland. I have been part of the committee since 2014, secretary since 2019 and have recently taken on the role of chair.

The group first came together in 2006 and is now a special interest group of the Archives and Records Association (ARA). This gives us, and ARA, a platform to celebrate some of the amazing work taking place in the community sector.

With a background in queer narratives and archives, I recall that I could instantly relate to both the power and potential of CAHG and its membership. LGBT+ communities have increasingly seen their lives and stories being considered and celebrated in archives and this has impacted on and enhanced a sense of community, a sense of identity and a sense of heritage - along with signifying a place for them in history. It is no surprise that this effect can be applied to many communities of geography, interest and identity.

The CAHG website provides a platform to share and celebrate existing projects and can also help map connections between communities and groups which may be overlooked. Through exposure to one another, as well as a wider audience, it is hoped that these groups can network together and exchange support, advice and best practice.

CAHG finds itself in something of a unique situation when it comes to celebrating best practice.

We principally undertake this work through the presentation of annual awards. There are four categories in total. Two have endured for a number of years and relate to Good Practice and Innovation (with regards to community engagement) and Gathering and Preserving Heritage. Each year, when the awards committee looks at what categories to set, we ask ourselves the question – are these categories judging community archives against the merits of more traditional archives, rather than their own integral merits? Surely the remit and motivation of a community archive is to do things differently? To collect and preserve the lives of those who might otherwise be forgotten. If we judge these archives against the standards and remit of more traditional archives, then are we doing them a disservice? Are we ignoring the very thing that makes them different and unique? At the same time though, those individuals who devote their time and efforts to community archives want them to be taken seriously and for their labours to be seen as comparable to the work of more mainstream archives. Happily, for us, each year, groups come forward that walk this line with skill and innovation. This year the two winners of these categories– Leavesden Hospital History Association and Clements Hall Local History Group – were fine examples of how to combine good practice with fantastic community innovation.

Our other two awards are for Networks of Archives and for Contribution to Wellbeing. Sadly, no entries were received from networks this year, but a focus on wellbeing feels to us like the next step for

community archives. With the National Lottery Heritage Fund now recognising wellbeing as a potential outcome for their funding, the committee has considered something we've always intrinsically known on some level; that involvement in the collection and curation of community heritage aids, extends and amplifies wellbeing. As a sector, we need to consider, explore and test how best to quantify, measure and then share how much good the involvement with these projects can bring into people's lives. This year's Contribution to Wellbeing winner, Age Cymru Dyfed with their West Wales Veterans' Archive, showed how an archive could serve to connect people not only to their own stories, but to families, friends and peers around them.

So, our awards are intended to celebrate the best of what makes a community and the best of what makes an archive. Now, more than ever, we want to create a space where very disparate and individual community archives can share what makes them special and support each other to be better at what they do and help us be better at what we do.

To this end, our website also provides resources for communities and groups around managing their collections, digital preservation, responses to coronavirus and much more. We are very much aware that there is a great deal more to do to connect groups and archives. We have recently piloted regional networks in Scotland and the South West to see if we can create more bespoke local support and connectivity for groups.

This is an exciting time for CAHG. We know we don't have all the answers, but we feel we can be part of asking the right questions in both the community and archival sectors.

From the ARA Board



Elizabeth Thompson-MacRae reflects on how she's been preparing for her new position as a member of the ARA Board and what she's looking forward to working on.

The past couple of years have been a very interesting time for me. Despite completing a post-graduate qualification in Archive and Records Management nearly a decade ago, my first permanent post as an archivist started with The National Records of Scotland in March 2020. Precisely one and a half weeks later I received the call from my manager to turn back and work from home and (at the time of writing this article) have done so ever since.

During this period, I had a lot of time to reflect on how I would like to develop my career and actively contribute to the archival community. With my own lived experience as a person with a disability, I was particularly keen to contribute to greater equality, inclusivity and diversity within the sector. This is an area that has been a subject of discussion by professionals over the years and whilst some work has been made to address these issues, we still have a long way to go to realising an inclusive and equitable sector for all.

When I saw the call for new Board members to volunteer with the ARA Board in the spring of 2021, I fully embraced the mantra 'feel the fear and do it anyway'. With the support of my line manager, I put in an application and was delighted when I was informed that I had been successful. This excitement was then quickly followed by a mild sense of panic and an inner dialogue questioning myself as to what I had done!

However, my doubts were unfounded. After receiving a warm welcome, I then went through the formalities of completing various paperwork to ensure compliance with the Charities Commission of England and Wales, as well as OSCR, the Scottish Charities Regulator. Before formally joining the Board, alongside new Board members Julie Bon and Ruth MacLeod,



With my own lived experience as a person with a disability, I was particularly keen to contribute to greater equality, inclusivity and diversity within the sector.

I underwent a series of Teams induction training sessions with John Chambers to understand my roles and responsibilities as trustee for the ARA.

This suite of training was a new initiative devised as part of the continuous improvements that the Board had highlighted from their recent review. As someone new to the role, I found this to be very helpful in crystallising exactly what was required from me to ensure that I was operating effectively within my role. I felt supported by the Board culture that no question is a daft one. Asking many questions is something that I'm definitely not a stranger to. After spending a couple of years working as an internal auditor I am used to asking many questions, even if the recipient doesn't necessarily want to speak with me (although I find that a friendly smile and the promise of biscuits usually helps)!

Late spring turned into early summer and with it, I was formally announced as trustee for ARA. Working to the current ARA Business Plan (March 2021- September 2022), all Board members were given a skills survey to assess the collective strengths and weaknesses of the Board's knowledge and skills. From this, the ARA Chair, Lisa Snook, was able to plan project resources to meet the objectives set out by the business plan. Through a project/task based approach the Board can work in an effective and agile manner to use the most appropriate members for a given piece of work as well as developing a plan to upskill areas that are potentially weaker.

Although my involvement with the Board is still in its early days, I am looking forward to supporting the diversity work headed by Jenny Moran and using my existing expertise to develop the Board's risk management processes with Andrew Nicoll and the team.

I would encourage anyone thinking of becoming a trustee, 'to feel the fear and do it anyway', as taking a step out of our comfort zone can take us to places that we never expected, and enable us to support work that we feel passionate about.

“
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2021 ARA FARMER Dissertation Prize winner and special commendation unveiled

The ARA FARMER award judging panel met recently to choose the winner for its 2021 dissertation prize. They commended the authors of all the entries on completing engaging, relevant and interesting dissertations in the hardest of circumstances.

The Winner: Leila Ratcliff (Liverpool) for her dissertation 'Displaced archives through the eye of the continuum: theoretical models in the context of the 'Migrated Archives'.

The judges felt that this was a timely and relevant study, well written and with an appropriate

methodology. They thought that Leila took some difficult topics, grounded them in archival theory, and really progressed the research in this area.

Special Commendation: Jennifer Branigan (Dublin) for her dissertation 'Re-animation and Interrogation: Irish Visual and Performing Artists' Encounters with the Archive'.

The judges thought that this was an entertaining piece which really captured the reader and allowed the author's interest to shine through in a scholarly way.



Norma Gregory exploring the archives. Courtesy of The Coal Authority, Nottinghamshire. © Black Miners Museum/Nottingham News Centre

Special Issue of Archives and Records on *Dismantling structural racism in UK archives and record-keeping practices*

The Black Lives Matter protests that followed the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, USA, in May 2020 generated widespread debates and discussions about the impact of structural racism across the world. The UK was no different and the Archives-NRA email list discussions on this matter often became heated and divisive. These difficult and, at times, offensive conversations reflected longstanding conflicts about how to respond to the legacies of racism, slavery and colonialism that are embedded in archival institutions and practices.

While some refused to acknowledge the realities of racism or its wide-ranging impacts, most contributors expressed a desire to self-educate and to work towards a more just archival field. At the same time, the then UK Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden, sent a letter to major cultural institutions and their funders implying that future funding may be predicated on adhering to government-sanctioned narratives. This, along with the rise of a 'culture war' rhetoric, demonstrates growing

constraints on anti-racist and decolonisation work.

The editors of ARA's Archives and Records Journal were spurred on by these events to provide a space for anti-racist research and practice. With the help of the ARA's Diversity fund, [Norma Gregory](#) was brought on board as guest editor. Norma is an historian, broadcaster, curator and director of Nottingham News Centre/Black Miners Museum. The result is a special issue of Archives and Records, due to be published imminently. It pulls together some of the ongoing work being undertaken to expose and dismantle racism in record-keeping practices in the UK and Ireland. With contributions from individuals and organisations that are doing the work of dismantling structural racism on the ground and at grassroots level, this special issue of Archives and Records provides a powerful and thought-provoking insight into the impact and eradication of structural racism in UK record-keeping.

ARA Members can access the issue through the [ARA website](#).



ARA move to a virtual office

At the end of November 2021 we moved out of our offices in Taunton and became a virtual office. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology our telephone numbers remain the same and you can still reach us on 01823 327030 and 01823 327077. Callers to those numbers will get a message telling them to dial extension:

01 for Lorraine Logan - Membership
02 for Karen Harris - Accounts
03 for Deborah Mason - Communications
04 for Chris Sheridan - Professional Registration
05 for John Chambers - Chief Executive

Our postal address also remains the same as we will be maintaining a mailbox service at Prioryfield House. The only thing that has changed is that you won't be able to drop in and see us!



ARA Conference update and Call for Papers

The 2022 ARA Conference will be held in Chester from 31st August to 2nd September and we will be holding it in person. After four years and three conferences as chair of the Conference Committee, Mike Anson has stepped down. His contribution to the success of many past conferences was noted and the ARA Board formally thanked him and the rest of the committee for their contribution. Adrian Steel will be taking on the mantle of Conference Committee chair. Adrian is currently Director of Collections and Programmes for the Royal Institute of British Architects.

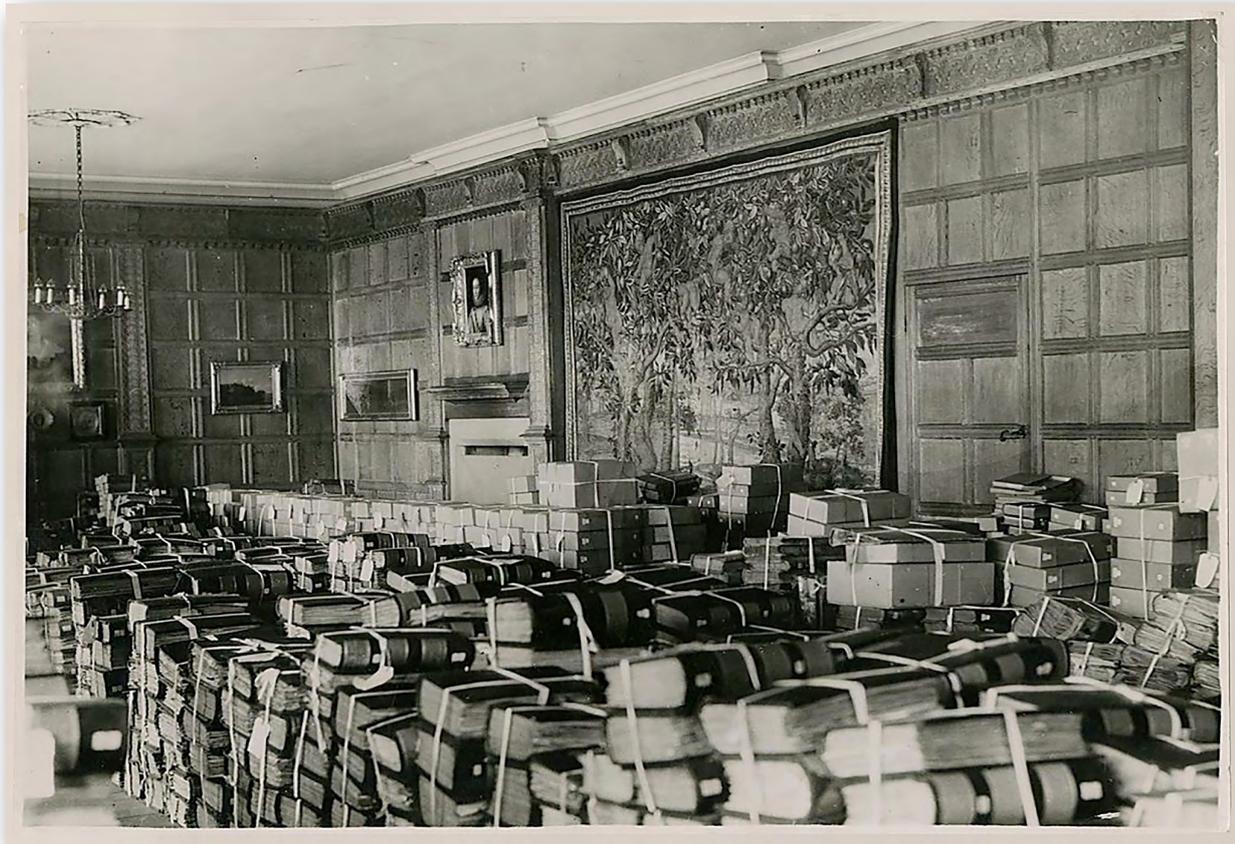
Anthony Oliver who has been curating the conservation stream of the conference programme for some years will also be stepping down and he is handing over to Annie Starkey for the 2022 conference.

Daily themes for the 2022 conference have been agreed as: Challenge, Change and Choice.

But the powerful themes of the 2021 conference: diversity, sustainability and advocacy will also be employed in the programming.

The call for conference papers went out on 29th November and the deadline for submission of proposals is Friday 14th January 2022. Proposers will be notified about their submissions w/c 28th February 2022.

You can find full details of the call for papers [here](#).



Belvoir Castle drawing room, repository for evacuated Public Record Office records. © The National Archives (reference: PRO 18/1)

New pilot Records at Risk Fund launched

On 9th November 2021, The National Archives (UK), the Archives and Records Association (ARA) and the British Records Association (BRA) launched the Records at Risk Fund. This new collaborative pilot fund will support urgent interventions to save physical and digital records facing immediate peril across the UK.

The fund has been created in response to the increased risk of vulnerable collections being lost or dispersed in the wake of the pandemic. In 2020, The National Archives (UK) awarded grants from the government's 'COVID-19 Archives Fund' and this new partnership programme builds on that experience. The Records at Risk Fund will continue to focus on records unprotected by legislation, such as the archives of businesses, charities and individuals, and will help organisations that do not have the resources to respond to collections at immediate risk for any reason.

Limited funding is available, but applicants will be able to apply for funds of up to £5,000, which will help cover the costs of a range of urgent activities needed to transfer vulnerable material to safe custody. These activities could include transporting and temporarily storing the records, purchasing conservation and packaging materials, or emergency conservation work such as decontamination. Successful applicants could also use their grants to carry out an on-site appraisal of the records at risk or to gain expertise from a freelance consultant.

Find out more [here](#). To apply to the Records at Risk Fund, please complete the [online application form](#). The deadline for applications is Friday 28th January 2022.

ARA Board agrees to extend the suspension of face-to-face meetings

Last week the ARA Board reviewed the moratorium on face-to-face events while the COVID-19 pandemic continues. The Board decided to extend the moratorium on face-to-face meetings until 28th February 2022. As before, this is subject to review should the situation improve.

The extension has been done in light of the different situations, regulations and responses to COVID-19 across the five jurisdictions that we operate in. With cases growing again we need to protect members from risk.

TRAINING

Professional Development News

Supporting new career routes: Bridging the Digital Gap

The next generation of digital professionals need support in today's competitive job market. Bridging the Digital Gap (BtDG) trainees are encouraged to apply for ARA Professional Registration, which offers a sector-recognised qualification. Candidates enrol onto our professional development programme and develop their online application. ARA has waived all fees involved.



In this article we speak with Zoe Fullard, Archives Cataloguer with Transport for London (TfL) and Elisabeth Thurlow RMARA, Digital Preservation and Access Manager, University of the Arts London. Zoe and Elisabeth explain how they support BtDG trainees working towards Foundation Membership of the ARA (FMARA).

How did you get involved in supporting BtDG trainees? How many trainees have you helped so far?

"At University of the Arts London we were previously hosts to a Bridging the Digital Gap trainee, and were part of the same active London cohort as Transport for London Corporate Archives", said Elisabeth.

Zoe and Elisabeth both took on supervisory roles to their trainees, "this involved managing projects to improve in-house digital recordkeeping processes and supporting the trainee's professional development, assisting them with acquiring new skills which could support the host organisation's mission and benefit the sector more widely", says Zoe.

"Elisabeth and I were familiar with how the ARA's professional development programme operates and the benefits of professional registration, we knew that the programme's structured and reflective approach to skills development would be valuable to the trainees," said Zoe.



Zoe Fullard, TfL Cataloguing Archivist. © Zoe Fullard



Elisabeth in the UAL Archives and Special Collections Centre. Lucie Pardue for University of the Arts London

Elisabeth discusses the purpose of the workshops as a vehicle to “demystify ARA’s professional development scheme. With the trainees we explored the benefits of the programme and the requirements for completing their applications. We then repeated the workshop in May 2021 with the latest trainee cohort”. So far Elisabeth and Zoe have delivered the workshop to 15 BtDG trainees. “I have also mentored trainees in support of their Foundation Membership applications”, explains Elisabeth, “as a mentor I help them to prepare their written submission, provide feedback during the drafting stages, and write a mentor reference”. Zoe explains that “being a mentor enables you to inspire the candidates and develop their knowledge. We need to be doing this to attract a diverse workforce to archives, advocating the rewards and challenges that a career in recordkeeping brings, particularly in the digital age”.

What skills and approaches do you think trainees will bring to the sector?

“I’ve been continually impressed by the trainees’ willingness to try new technologies and learn through practice”, says Elisabeth. “The trainees I have mentored have readily embraced emerging areas like web archiving with curiosity and enthusiasm”. Zoe adds that “TfL’s trainee developed a python script to extract metadata from a subset of our electronic records, which we have been able to transform into descriptive catalogue metadata. This has reduced the resources required for cataloguing. Technology has presented many challenges for archivists as we develop ways to preserve fragile digital information, however exploiting technology can help us with this, and the trainees seem to embrace it. But it’s important to remember that soft skills are just as important in digital preservation. The traineeship also builds on and aims to develop communication, advocacy and team working skills”.

Many trainees are using their work experience to qualify for Foundation Membership of the ARA. How do you think this will help them progress in the job market?

“Job adverts often ask applicants to demonstrate their commitment to professional development. ARA professional registration is a clear demonstration of this”, explains Elisabeth. “The process to qualify

encourages you to become a reflective practitioner. Being able to clearly reflect on what has gone well, and what has gone less well, will be useful when completing job applications or responding to future interview questions”.

During this year’s workshop, Zoe and Elisabeth were able to use real-life examples where Foundation Membership is specified in job descriptions. This demonstrates the efforts some employers are making to diversify entry routes into the profession. “This has been helpful and encouraging”, says Zoe, “Candidates have the opportunity to start their career using their experiences gained during the traineeship. They can discuss new approaches and outcomes, and reflect on how they can improve their work in the future. Professional registration also demonstrates a strong commitment and enthusiasm to professional development, which is highly valued by potential employers,” added Zoe.

What have you learned from supporting the trainees?

“I have learnt that it is important to get them excited about our mission and the challenges we face as archivists”, explained Zoe. “By helping trainees recognise that their skills can benefit the information sector, both within their host organisation and beyond, we can continue to attract individuals from digital and technical backgrounds”.

“Seeing the trainees progress in their applications also helped motivate me when completing my own application,” added Elisabeth.



ARA 2022 CONFERENCE



CHESTER
31st August to
2nd September 2022

Records and Information Managers - Coming forward and being heard



Anne Cornish has spent the past 35 years on a mission to secure records and information managers the same level of recognition and respect as lawyers or accountants. In this feature, she reflects on her early days in records and information management and highlights her top tips for those in the profession to advocate for their roles and the wider RIM profession.

As a teenager I remember being in a quandary about whether to continue with school or find a job. School gave me plenty of time to socialise, but if I worked there would be money, and, like many teenagers, money became the driver for my decision.

You might be wondering why I mention this, but it was this decision that introduced me to a career in records and information management in Australia in the early 80s. I was lucky to secure a place on a programme for young school leavers wanting to work in government and was assigned to the records department of my local government.

My direct manager at that time was often asked to attend management meetings to provide advice in relation to new systems, confidential matters and, I assume, records management. He was also one of the few people who was allowed to refer to the Town Clerk as Max whereas most employees were only permitted to call him Mr Watson. Not long after I started, my manager left his role, and the second in charge was appointed as the new Records Manager. I watched on as the profile of records diminished overnight because the relationship with the Town Clerk had gone and records started losing their importance. Although the new Records Manager was an excellent operator in day-to-day functions, they lacked the ability to market our wares to those who made the decisions.

The point of this anecdote is that even at a young age I realised that records practitioners needed to do more than day-to-day operational duties to be heard. The culture of the organisation was old school, and it took the IT wave in the late 80s

to demonstrate how you can increase your profile and value. The introduction of desktops, Windows and Email rocketed IT into being seen as the most essential and respected profession, while records managers sat back and watched it happen.

This lack of initiative has caused the profession angst for the past 30 years and today we are still not looked upon as a solution-based function but rather one that costs the organisation money with no tangible outcomes.

This perception is all wrong and we, as records managers, are the only people who can change this.

At the ripe old age of 19, I set out on a mission to work out how I could increase the profile and demonstrate the value of this vital function. My first step was to communicate with other practitioners to understand whether this problem was unique to me and the organisation I worked for, or rather a general concern among the RIM community. By joining the Records Management Association of Australia – RMAA now known



as the Records and Information Management Professionals Australasia (RIMPA), I was able to open my world to a network of people who were experiencing the same problem.

This network of professionals was passionate and determined to increase the profile of the profession and practitioners. We wanted to be respected as experts whom organisations could turn to for advice on records and information management in the same way that they would turn to lawyers when requiring legal advice or accountants for financial concerns.

This was a great vision, but the real work was in the resources and time required to achieve this future state. I remember thinking we had a hard job ahead of us as RIMs are not always known for being extroverts or marketers of what they do.

The network tried various strategies to achieve this vision, but it was difficult to get the buy in from the majority. We always knew that change could be a lengthy process, but we were unaware that lengthy meant decades!

Never described as a patient person, I decided to focus on how I could influence the organisations I

was involved with and began instigating change in very small chunks.

By then I was working as a consultant in the RIM industry and this role provided an automatic level of respect as organisations are looking to you to assist them in making things different or better. More importantly, my attitude changed as I now needed clients to earn my weekly pay. Believe me, a person's accommodating and empathic skills come into play when you know that not meeting deadlines could lose you your income. These learnings enabled me to lay the foundations and change the future for many records managers who are now being heard and have a seat at the decision-making table.

There is still a long way to go before RIMs achieve the same profile as a lawyer or an accountant, but the wheels are in now in motion. So far, I have spent 35 years on this mission, and I am continuing with this passion in my current role as the CEO of RIMPA.

I wanted to share my top seven tips for enhancing the profile of records management within your organisation.



It is important that you talk with key stakeholders to understand what they do.

1 Know your organisation

Don't assume you know what your colleagues need. Get to know the problems faced each day by business units, managers and individuals.

Understand if senior management believe in an information culture and if they are supportive of change.

Know who the influencers are. Is it the PA to the CEO or the person who has been with the organisation longest?

Being aware of your culture provides you with the knowledge and tools to effect change.

2 Collaborate

Get to know your organisation and its culture. It is important that you talk with key stakeholders to understand what they do. Treat your discussion time with them as you would if you were a consultant. Pretend you know nothing, so they tell you everything.

Expand your collaboration process to include informal meetings and catch ups. Get yourself out from behind your desk and spend time getting to know people – whether that be in satellite offices, in staff canteens or at social events.

Be different and invite your manager for a chat over coffee. Try to overcome any introvert tendencies and invite yourself to meetings and committees that may not be directly related to records management, such as evaluation panels for new software, IT change groups, etc.

3 Gain trust

Remember, every time you provide advice you are being judged or assessed.

Individuals will ask themselves: do you know what you are talking about? Are you approachable and can you be trusted?

So, my advice is only tell the truth, speak passionately about what you know and make sure you use language they understand. Get rid of jargon and empathise with issues, even if you think they are not valid.

Small fixes can be big wins for you and your team. Some of the problems identified by your colleagues will be easy to rectify and along with the fix comes

Benefits
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”

credibility and trust. Repeat business is a sure thing.

4 Educate

When you educate your colleagues in records management, make sure you inspire rather than manipulate.

The last thing you want is to be thought of as a used car salesperson

by using ineffective sales pitches, such as non-compliance and increased productivity.

Always explain the benefits at the individual, team or organisation level.

Importantly, stop trying to make your colleagues into RIMs as you are undervaluing our skill set and enforcing them to do something they don't want to.

5 Create Value

Remember, records management is far more than just a service. It is a specific solution or concept that we provide to our customers which is not currently available.

Benefits equal value, so demonstrate how effective records management can improve the business. Don't try and influence your colleagues to work with specialised records management tools and processes – this is our role and expertise. For example, when applying classification to a record, we sometimes ask our colleagues to use taxonomies that are meaningless to the everyday user. Be flexible by providing an approach that will best suit the business, with agreed terminology and suitable folder structures.

6 Communicate

We have spoken about collaboration, so what is the difference between this and communication?

Communication is about you providing the messages you want people to hear and absorb. Communicate messages by telling stories, especially when they relate to the content. Tell stories of similar organisations where records management is a respected culture and don't be shy to share negative stories either. Natural competition and wanting to be better at what we do can often drive an organisation to improve in areas without too much effort.

Always be truthful and consistent in your messaging. You don't want team members telling one story while you are telling another.

7 Deliver

Where possible, under promise and over deliver. It is easy to say yes to everything, especially if you are trying to impress or gain traction, but this will be your demise if you cannot deliver what you have promised.

Anne Cornish is a highly respected information management practitioner in Australia, with nearly 40 years of experience as a consultant and currently as the CEO of RIMPA. Anne has worked with all levels of government and large private entities to determine and advise on information management issues ranging from opening mail to developing strategic frameworks. Her extensive experience within the industry both as a consultant and now a CEO has embedded a passion for increasing the profile of records and information management globally.



Affect theory, archives and us



Over the past two decades, an increasing number of archival studies have referenced affect theory, leading to growing awareness of the subjective nature of record creation and management. In this feature, archivist **Elizabeth Stubbs** explains what is meant by affect theory and discusses its impact on the sector today.

Affect theory explained

Affect theory originates in philosophy and psychology, linking in both cases to the impact that physical sensations and environments have on the mind. The two strands of thought differ in their perspective on the relationship between emotions and the environment, and scholars have applied affect theory in a variety of ways. Most commonly, affect theory focuses on the exchange of influences and emotions that can emerge when people or objects interact. In summary, that a person's ability to be affected by an object is intrinsic to their ability to consciously feel a nameable emotion associated with that object.

For the sector, the concept emphasises that any given record will uniquely affect those who interact with it and, in turn, that the record will be affected by all those who interact with it. A mundane example could be that a physical record will become more worn when someone uses it, affecting the next user's interaction with that record. On a grander scale, an example could be the way that the perceived value of historical records changes once those records are cited in publications or used in legal cases. For example, the use of the 1666 Fisheries Privilege charter during the Brexit negotiations. Highlighting the subjectivity of value and interactions is the crux of affect theory.

Impact on scholarship

Within record-keeping scholarship, the clearest impact of affect theory on research can be explored in the 2016 edition of *Archival Science*, titled 'Affect and the Archive'. This edition builds upon the lengthier works of Ann Cvetkovich (*An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public*

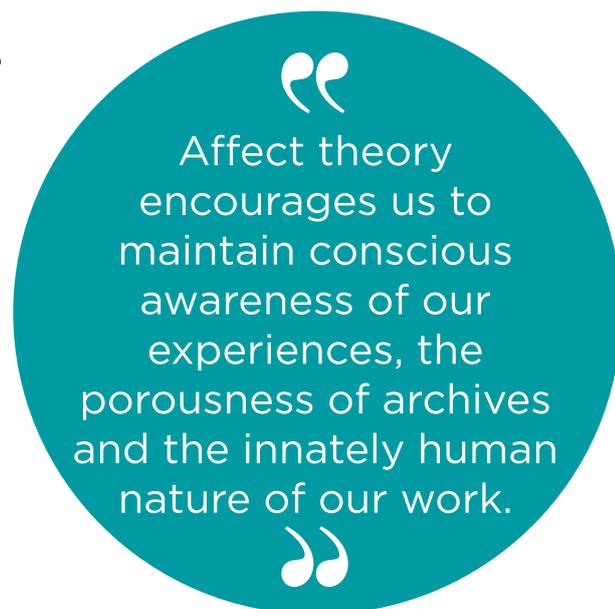
Cultures) and Sara Ahmed (*The Cultural Politics of Emotions*) and provides an important introduction to the topic for any interested readers.

More generally, the impact of affect theory has led to a substantial broadening of research topics over the last two decades.

For example, the ongoing impact of colonial and displaced records is under increased scrutiny. The damage caused when coloniser countries restrict access to records – and the resulting undermining of national self-determination – is repeatedly demonstrated in scholarship. Another example is the growing research into the role of community archives, leading to greater acknowledgement that traditional archival establishments are rarely best placed to determine which records are of community value.

Impact on professional practice

Some of the greatest changes in professional practices can be seen when considering research into care leaver records. For example, the [MIRRA Project](#) led to the creation of [Family Connect](#), a



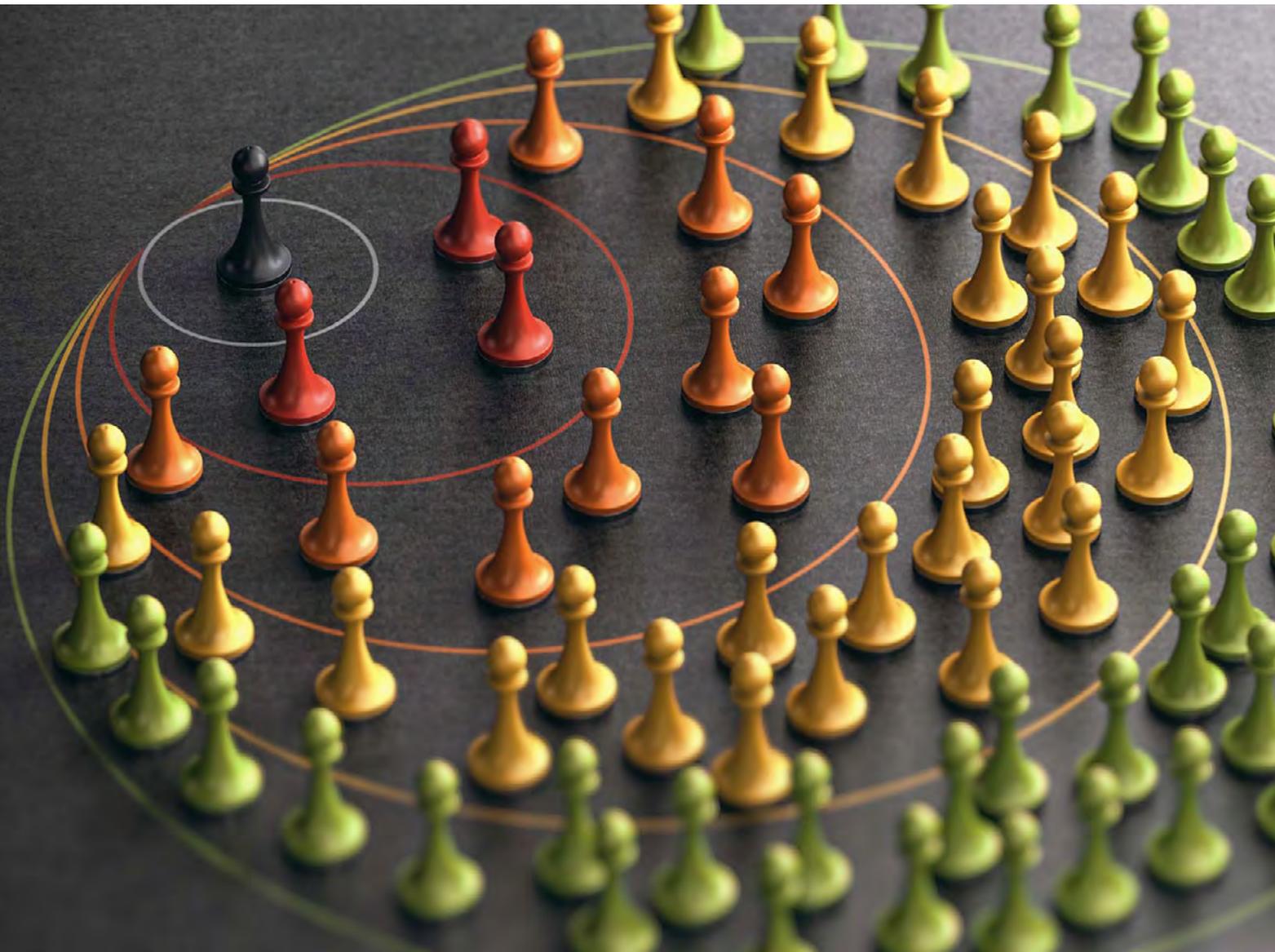
website designed to support care leavers seeking their personal history, and also resulted in changes to recommended best practice, as outlined by the publication of Top Tips: Recording in Children's Social Work Guide by the British Association of Social Workers. Internationally, the number of articles published on the subject from 2012 to 2018 repeatedly demonstrated the inefficacy of record-keeping practices in the care sector, prompting changes across the board.

Similarly, the work of the ARA's Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG) is indicative of the increased recognition for subjectivity in record keeping. Since the adoption of its formal constitution in June 2009, the group has gone on to support a wide array of local archive groups, and the projects and presentations that have resulted demonstrate what can be achieved when record-keeping professionals support, rather than attempt to subsume, community archives. The

Affect theory has broadened research on records and record-keeping in recent years.

work of the Black Cultural Archives, in particular, should be mentioned here, as well as the work of organisations such as The Bishopsgate Institute which, through building relationships with community groups, has been able to position itself as a hub for LGBT+ archives in London.

In literature, the increased interest in colonial and post-colonial record-keeping practices has highlighted a number of ongoing struggles that may otherwise have remained unrecognised. The UK and other countries continue to withhold thousands of colonial records, often relating to some of our darkest acts as colonisers or would-be colonisers. Moreover, the UK's refusal to digitise or share colonial records – meaning that full countries are missing chunks of their pre-independence history – is something that has come to the fore primarily through sector-specific research, despite the international implications. That said, it is important to stress that this particular issue is



“
Highlighting
the subjectivity
of value is the crux
of affect theory.
”

largely tied to governmental decision-making and funding.

What's next?

Despite the successes and increased awareness, there is still much work to be done. The sector as a whole consistently grapples with the management, cataloguing and presentation of the overt racism displayed in an unfortunate number of the UK's historical records while, at the same time, many working in the sector lack the necessary lived experience to fully assess the impact such material may have. While attending discussions and talks may boost awareness and standards, the work of CAHG, as well as the projects mentioned above, highlights the need for record-keeping professionals to work in

collaboration with communities and individuals, rather than attempt to operate alone.

Records are intrinsically linked to people – to their experiences, their views and their personalities. Record creators will unintentionally impose their values on their work; record keepers will inevitably have diverse approaches to the management of material; and record users will, by necessity, value certain parts of a record over others. To that extent, affect theory encourages us to maintain conscious awareness of our experiences, the porousness of archives and the innately human nature of our work.

Elizabeth Stubbs works in the Special Collections at Oxford Brookes University, having joined the university to work on the Paul Oliver Archive of African American Music (POAAAM). She is currently Publicity Officer for the ARA's New Professionals Section and has worked in a wide range of educational and charity archives. Her interests lie in exploring the cultural and educational use of records, as well as in the intersections of archiving and librarianship. Elizabeth can be contacted via LinkedIn under the same name.

Collaborative work between record keepers, communities and individuals is essential, as records are linked to people and their experiences.



Historic Environment Scotland is awarded CoreTrustSeal accreditation

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) was awarded CoreTrustSeal (CTS) certification in October 2021. Certification is based on requirements established by the World Data Systems (WDS) and the Data Seal of Approval (DSA), reflecting the core characteristics of trustworthy data repositories.

HES is the accredited digital repository for heritage data in Scotland and, along with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), one of only two accredited repositories for heritage data in the UK. CTS certification provides both depositors and funding agencies with the reassurance that data deposited with HES is preserved and remains accessible for future generations.

HES and its predecessor bodies have been committed to the preservation of Scotland's architectural, archaeological, maritime and industrial history for decades, beginning in August 1908 when Alexander Ormiston Curle, the first secretary to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), set off on his bicycle to inspect and record 'all the ancient monuments of Scotland'.

A lot has changed since then and the amount of digital material deposited with, and curated by, HES has increased significantly in the last two decades, with a wholesale move away from the creation of traditional paper or photographic based records, and born-digital material becoming the norm.

Digital data is far more vulnerable to irrecoverable damage than physical drawings or photographs. Digital media (CDs, DVDs, memory sticks, etc.) must be transferred into a preservation system within a relatively short period of time otherwise important archives about the historic environment could be lost. The rapid pace of technological change means that hardware, software and storage media can become obsolete and inaccessible within a short period, posing a significant threat to the survival of this resource for future generations.

To meet preservation standards, HES undertook a large-scale data cleaning exercise, auditing its entire digital archive to enforce new rules for appropriate



View of Vere Gordon Childe with a group of workmen during the excavations at Skara Brae in 1930 canmore SC00973449 © Courtesy of HES

standards conformance. HES has also developed new guidance for depositors, including recommendations for file formats for long-term preservation and access. This guidance can be found [here](#).

HES has greatly improved its backup infrastructure and resilience. Adding a Forensic Recovery of Evidence Device or FRED to its 'off network' quarantine workstation allows HES to view and create copies of digital media without damage or alteration of the original media.

By integrating Preservica (specialist preservation software) into its own repository service tools and catalogue, the continued accuracy and integrity of HES' digital records are ensured. More of HES' processes are automated to achieve greater value from existing resources. Preservica's suite of migration pathways enables HES to automatically generate dissemination copies upon ingest, making more content from its existing archive holdings publicly available for the first time and significantly reducing the manual effort required by archive staff.

HES Archives currently holds more than 1.2 million catalogued digital items which equates to around 52 terabytes (TB) of archived data.

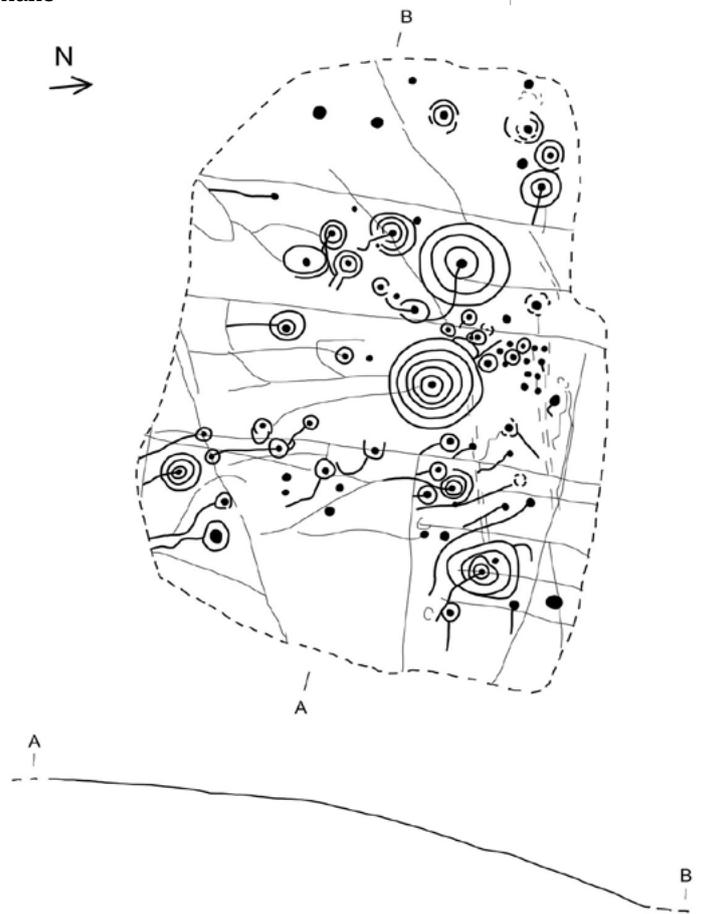
Archiving Scotland's rock art

Scotland has over 3,000 examples of prehistoric rock art, formed mainly from abstract circular motifs carved into natural rock surfaces in the landscape. These carvings are thought to have been created between around 6,000 and 4,000 years ago during the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, and they represent an important part of our historic environment. Over the last five years, Scotland's [Rock Art Project](#) has been working with local communities across the country to gather detailed records of these prehistoric carvings and make this information publicly accessible.

Scotland's Rock Art Project archive has recently been catalogued and made available to view on Canmore [<https://canmore.org.uk/>]. This archive contains photographs, 3D model snapshots and sketches of prehistoric rock art, co-produced by the Scotland's Rock Art team and trained community teams over the last five years. The records show details of 1,125 individual carved rocks (panels) from across Scotland, including over 250 panels discovered during the project. On Canmore you can view over 16,000 images, including digital photographs, digitised sketches, and snapshots of 3D photogrammetry models. You can also request the 3D photogrammetry data for 965 rock art panels, including 3D models, metadata reports, and raw photogrammetry photographs.

Scotland's Rock Art Project has provided invaluable insights into Scotland's prehistoric story. The project archive will be an invaluable resource for future users to discover, enjoy and learn about Scotland's past. It will also be crucial for informing the management and protection of rock art. This is especially true with the growing impact of our climate crisis on vulnerable rock surfaces. With increasingly more extreme weather predicted for the future, Scotland's many rock art panels are a diminishing resource as rain, wind and frost continue to take their toll. The Scotland's Rock Art Project couldn't have been more timely, ensuring that there is a much more thorough record of these important elements of Scotland's heritage. The 3D rock art models are particularly important in this respect as they provide precise benchmark data which can be used to measure and monitor deterioration over time.

Achnabreck 3
Panel Sketch
23.07.2019



Scanned image of rock art panel sketch, Scotland's Rock Art Project, Achnabreck 3, Kilmartin, Argyll and Bute [SC 2178343]. © Historic Environment Scotland

Gertrude Bell Archive Project: Bell and the Kingdom of Iraq at 100

Newcastle University has received a donation of more than £100,000 from the Harry and Alice Stillman Family Foundation to fully catalogue and digitise the UNESCO Memory of the World registered Gertrude Bell Archive. The donation, which has funded both a Digitisation Assistant and Project Archivist, was received this year, coinciding with the centenary of the establishment of the Kingdom of Iraq, in which Bell played a pivotal role as an expert in the geography and people of the region and an envoy to the colonial British government. The project, titled *Bell and the Kingdom of Iraq*, will allow for greater access to the archive - which contains diaries, letters and photographs documenting Bell's travels across the Middle East and the world - through newly described and digitised content, and an updated and refreshed dedicated website,

currently accessed by a global audience of over 250,000 a year.

The project also aims to attract collaboration and discussion within the University and across the wider community on the legacy and impact of Bell and her work. This will allow for deeper consideration of how people interact with the archive, which includes many photographs of historic and archaeological

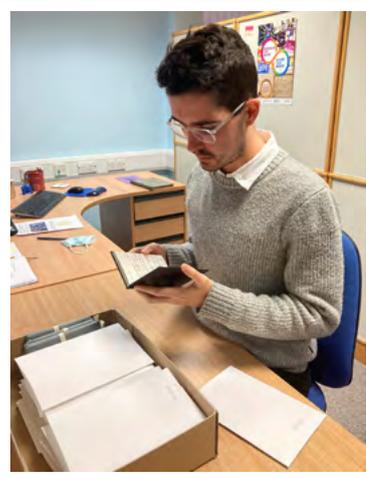
sites which have either changed dramatically over time or no longer exist. The project aims to encourage greater use, access and engagement with the archive, and will include workshops, exhibitions, and artistic and scholarly collaborations which will highlight the ongoing relevance of the material and the multifaceted nature of this unique heritage.



"Looking N from Expeditionhaus" - Panorama taken by Bell from Expeditionhaus (archaeological expeditions base) in Assur, Iraq, looking North towards the banks of the river Tigris (1909) [GB/Photo/1/L/168] © Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University

Archivist traineeship at Anglesey Archives

Sam Sorahan.
© Archifau
Ynys Môn/
Anglesey
Archives



Anglesey Archives has recently appointed Sam Sorahan to the role of Trainee Archivist as part of Anglesey County Council's 'officer of the future' scheme. Sam explains, "As a graduate from

Liverpool University with a keen passion for history, I'm delighted to have taken up this position. I have been given the flexibility to design a programme that will support my future ambitions, while helping the service meet its aims and objectives".

The traineeship will run for two years and will cover the cost of studying for a recognised archival qualification. There is a strong focus on supporting the community in Anglesey Archives and for Sam this has translated into pushing the social media and reaching out to communities across the island. With COVID-19 restrictions still in place, it's important for the service to

find new and engaging ways to interact with their community and reach out to new audiences. Sam is also working closely with volunteers to learn from them and share his recently-acquired knowledge to help develop their skills.

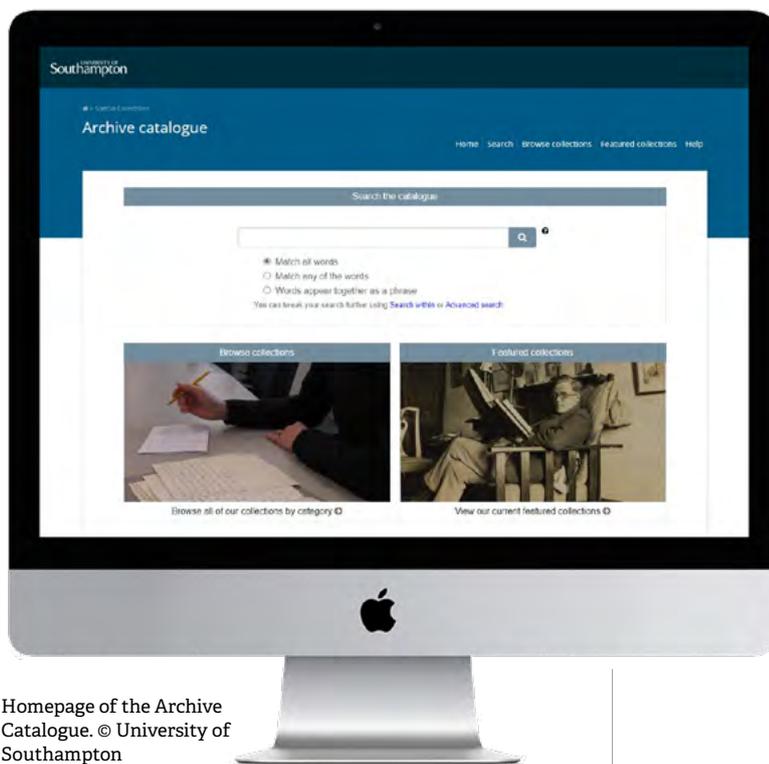
With a guaranteed six months of employment after completion, the scheme aims to keep applicants local. It is hoped that retaining professionals and graduates in the area will benefit future generations. Sam is looking forward to the challenges of the next few years and to assisting Anglesey Archives in its service to the community.

Preserving the data: the University of Southampton's transition to a new archive catalogue

In October 2021, the Archives and Special Collections at the University of Southampton launched its new Epexio [Archive Catalogue](#); an archival discovery platform that brings together all catalogue descriptions in one integrated online system for the first time.

Southampton has been involved in automated archive catalogues since the 1980s. Its Wellington Papers Database, which used STATUS software and was made available in pre-World Wide Web days by the Joint Academic Network (JANET) and the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), could claim to be one of the earliest online catalogues in the UK.¹

In procuring a new archive system, one of the university's key requirements was its ability to preserve and incorporate legacy data, particularly extensive item level catalogues as part of the Wellington, Palmerston and Mountbatten Papers databases. Although this data followed a very specific template that could be mapped across to the new system template, the sheer volume and size of records presented their own challenges. The transition of some older handlists that significantly



Homepage of the Archive Catalogue. © University of Southampton



predate the General International Standard Archival Description (ISAD(G)) into the automated system has presented a different set of challenges which are still being worked on. Dealing with legacy referencing systems, including one created by a former Special Collections librarian for university material, has tested ingenuity at times.

Sarah Maspero, archivist at the University of Southampton, comments: "There have certainly been some hurdles along the way and there's still a fair amount of work to be done. On the aesthetic side, for example, work is underway to add a thumbnail image for each collection, and working with index terms is going to be another big piece of work.

"As we all know, we're in archives for the long term and we start some projects knowing we will pass them on to our successors. We feel incredibly proud of what we've achieved so far".

¹ For more details please see C.M. Woolgar Chris's 1988 article "The Wellington Papers Database: An Interim Report." *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 9, no. 1 (1988): 1-20

National Heritage Memorial Fund's COVID-19 Response funding stream

Launched in June 2021, the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF's) COVID-19 Response funding stream offers project grants to support any heritage asset which is of outstanding importance to the national heritage and at risk due to the impact of COVID-19. Here are some questions answered for those considering applying to the fund.

Is this the same as the Cultural Assets Fund and/or the COVID-19 Response Fund?

The National Heritage Memorial Fund is distributing a total of £40 million via the COVID-19 Response Fund. This is made up of two lots of £20 million:

- £20m from the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF), which is available to applicants from across the UK.
- A further £20m Cultural Assets Fund, which has been made available by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) as part of the Government's wider Culture Recovery Fund. This funding will safeguard nationally important heritage assets within England.

What is the funding for?

To provide support for any heritage asset which is of outstanding importance to the national heritage and at risk due to the impact of COVID-19, through a project grant.

Does it have to be a memorial or have a memorial character?

No, but assets which do have a memorial character are given special consideration.

Are archives specifically included?

Yes.

Is there a deadline to apply?

No, there is no deadline to apply although the fund closes in April 2023. Funding applications will normally receive a response within six months, but shorter timescales are available where necessary.

What is the application process?

There is a two-stage process. In the first instance, applicants should complete an [Expression of Interest Form](#).

Information on the questions on these two application forms can be found in the [guidance notes](#) and the NMFH encourages potential applicants to get in touch via email NHMF-Enquiries@heritagefund.org.uk for a preliminary discussion if they require advice.

Do I need match funding to apply?

No, but as the NHMF is a fund of last-resort you do need to demonstrate that you have exhausted all other possible avenues for funding as part of your application.

Where can I find more detailed information?

You can find summary information on the [webpage](#) and detailed information on the [Guidance notes pdf](#).



Community Archives & Heritage Group Award winners announced

The ARA's Community Archives & Heritage Group (CAHG) has announced its 2021 award winners. They are:

- Gathering & Preserving Heritage Award winner: Leavesden Hospitals History Association
- Community Engagement Award winner: Clements Hall Local History Group, York
- Contribution to Wellbeing Award: Age Cymru Dyfed - West Wales Veterans Archive
- Overall winner of the Best Community Archive and Heritage Group of 2021: Leavesden Hospitals History Association

Jane Golding, Chair of CAHG, comments: "We would like to congratulate this year's award winners who have all demonstrated best practice and innovation in their different approaches to community archiving. The judging process for the overall winner was a lively debate as all were worthy winners!"

"We would also like to encourage community groups in the UK and Ireland that are CAHG members (i.e. community archives, community heritage groups, community museums and community archaeology groups) to consider entering our 2022 awards. If you represent a group that is not already a member of CAHG why not sign up? It's free to join and makes you part of a much wider network. Perhaps you could be collecting an award later this year!"

[Click here](#) to find out more about the winners and their work.



LHHA East Lane cemetery project © Stephen Danzig for LHHA



Leavesden Hospital History Association Volunteers during the archaeological survey of East Lane Cemetery, January 2019 © Stephen Danzig for LHHA

Bishopsteignton Heritage Community Archive Project

The village of Bishopsteignton in South Devon preserves many relics of its rich and long history – from a medieval Bishop’s Palace to the Cottage Orné homes of Nelson’s Admirals. These relics and their stories have inspired locals to create an exciting community archive project called Bishopsteignton Heritage (BH). BH’s origins lie in Bishopsteignton Museum of Rural Life which thrived on loans and donations of items of local interest throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Sadly, the Museum closed, but not before local lady Molly Coombe made a significant donation upon her death in 2007!

The bequest has been invested in perpetuity on behalf of the community and funds, first and foremost, the Heritage Hub, including the base operations, archive store and community access space. Over the last three years, BH has been futureproofing the project by standardising collections processes centred around the Online Data INterface (ODIN), a custom collection management software created by local software developer James Hooper and archivist Imogen Smith. The first version of ODIN facilitates an item catalogue based on professional standards for cataloguing, access and preservation and makes archives accessible online via the BH [website](#).

Alongside developing processes for a post-custodial approach to collecting, the team has catalogued and digitised Molly Coombe’s family archive, parts of the museum collection and items on short-term loan. Valuable archive material that would otherwise have stayed inaccessible under beds and in attics can be brought to the Hub, catalogued, digitised, returned to the owner and made discoverable through ODIN. The dream for ODIN is to link small pieces of data, such as a person’s name, a business’s address, or an object. Upon searching, a unique mix of linked data is presented to a visitor and each searcher will take a unique journey through the story of Bishopsteignton.

If you would like to know more or get involved, please email info@bishopsteigntonheritage.co.uk.



Some items from the Coombe family archive including a portrait of Molly aged 8.
© Bishopsteignton Heritage community archive

Bishopsteignton Community Centre, home to the new Heritage Hub and former museum..
© Bishopsteignton Heritage community archive





Backchat

Annabel Valentine talks to **Katie Proctor** about her career in conservation, the ARA's Archive Conservation Training Course and her love of maps.



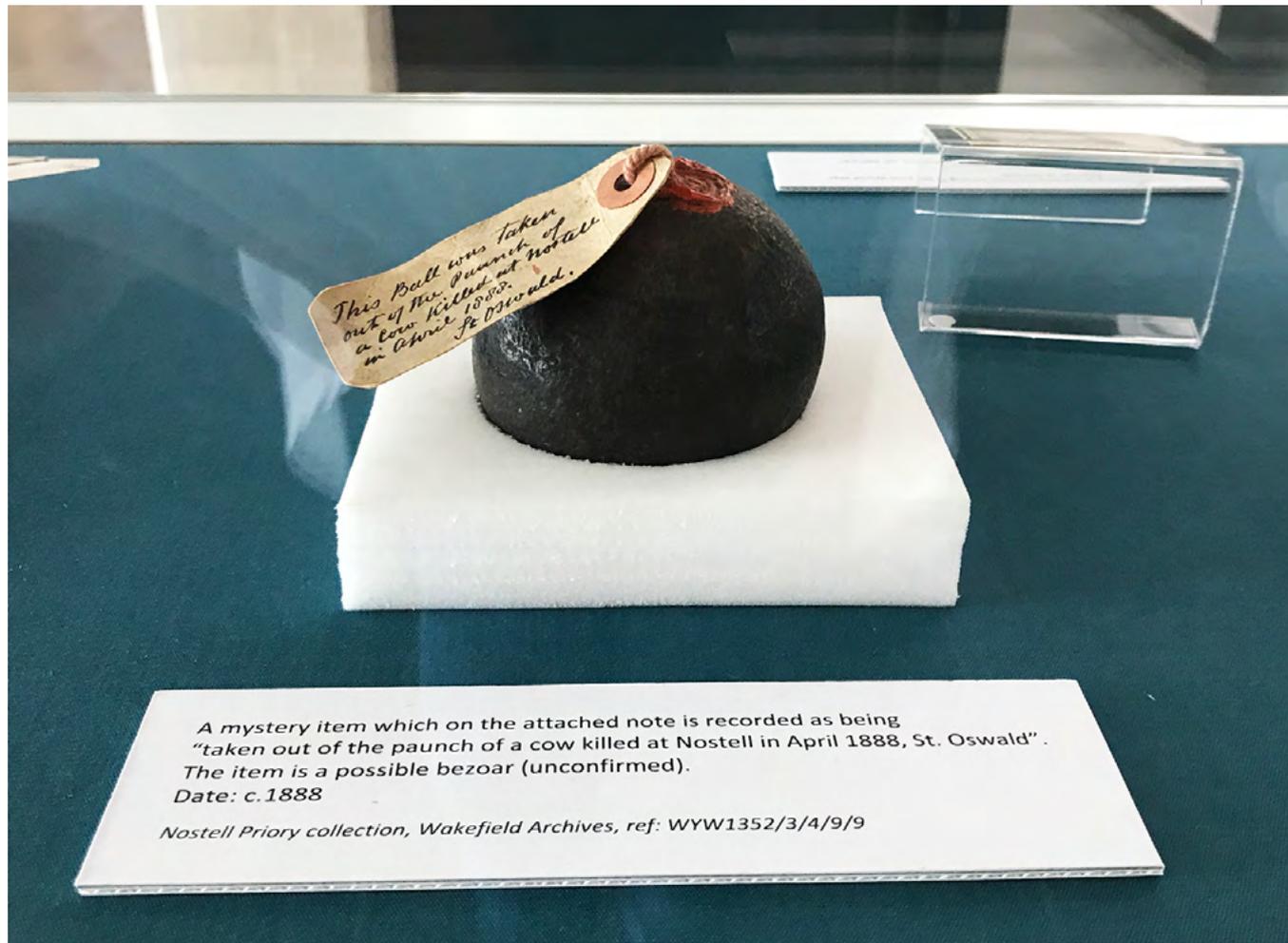
Can you tell me a bit about your work and how you decided on a career in conservation?

I have a degree in Archaeological Sciences and volunteered at West Yorkshire Archaeological Advisory Service throughout my undergraduate studies. While working there, I saw a job advertisement for a trainee conservator at West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS), who were located on the floor below. I'd always been interested in what they did so I applied, thinking the job sounded amazing. I got the job and started as a trainee before progressing through the ARA's Archive Conservation Training Scheme. I qualified as a conservator and have worked for the service ever since. I love my job! It's very varied and there's always something new to do and so many fantastic skills to pick up. I feel like I'm always learning and developing in my role. As WYAS conservators, we care for a huge collection across the district and have six storage environments across the county, so there is plenty to keep us busy.

As well as your day job, you are also the Registrar of the ARA's Archive Conservation Training Scheme. What does this role involve?

As Registrar, I help with the everyday running of the course. I answer enquiries that come through and help people decide if the training scheme is the right thing for them. Once enrolled, I will help trainees begin their training by putting them in





The bezoar that was identified following a post on Twitter. © West Yorkshire Archive Service

touch with our instructors. I also keep all our documentation up to date, including our extensive reading list. I work with a team of committee members arranging events such as our lecture week and chemistry weeks, as well as arranging training for the instructors on the scheme. With help from the committee, we also set examinations for the students and organise their portfolio assessments at the end of their training. As a former trainee myself, I really enjoy helping others work their way through the training. It's such a pleasure to see the trainees develop into fantastic professional archive conservators.

What makes the course a good option for new professionals wanting to develop their conservation skills?

The great thing about the training scheme is the in-depth one-to-one training students receive. During training placements, students can spend up to eight weeks training with an instructor on a particular module. The modules provide intensive practical training and development, whereas the self-directed learning and the lecture and chemistry weeks provide the essential theory behind the practice. I believe it's a fantastic balance and offers a great way to allow students to put their learning into practice at their place of work.

You've used social media with great effect to raise the profile of the conservation team at WYAS. Can you tell me more about what you shared and what the most popular posts were?

We have been learning a lot about social media as we develop our strategy. We have found that short videos have always captured people's attention. We also learned that our followers like more personal posts – they enjoy finding out who we are and what we are doing, so we always try our best to keep it friendly and accessible. We post as a service and realise that not all of our followers are interested specifically in conservation, so we always try to make our posts enjoyable and accessible to all our followers. Collecting and analysing the social media analytics has also been invaluable and has helped us tailor our posts to what people are enjoying. That's all thanks to Liz, the conservation technician at WYAS, who has developed a great eye for understanding the analytics!

Were there any unexpected responses to sharing your work?

I shared a post about installing an exhibition at the West Yorkshire History Centre where I was making a stand for something that was described in the catalogue as a 'Gall Stone'. It was one of those things in the collection we were fairly certain had been



Katie and Richard Aitken working together on the Hawksworth Tithe Map. © West Yorkshire Archive Service

incorrectly identified, but we had no idea what it was. After posting the photograph, I received a fair few responses telling me that it was in fact a bezoar. A Google search established that these can be incredibly valuable and used as decorative items as well as, in the past, being used as an antidote after being poisoned! It certainly was quite unexpected.

Do you feel there are any pitfalls to using social media in this way?

I think one of the biggest pitfalls is time. It does take up a lot of time curating posts for social media. There's a lot to think about: what message do we want to get across and how do we make it accessible and interesting? We also have to think about data protection and copyright. Do we have permission to share images, for example? It certainly helps that we work as a team at WYAS. We have a social media working group that meets regularly to discuss themes and campaigns, which is a great help as it guides our thoughts and posts.

I also like to ensure I post regularly on the ACTS' Twitter feed so that the training scheme's presence on Twitter doesn't dwindle, but again, this takes up a lot of time so the effort that is put in needs to be worth it.

What is the most interesting or challenging conservation project you've worked on?

That's a difficult one. I have to say that I find everything interesting, even cleaning a mouldy collection! I just love how varied the job is. There's always something different to do and focus on, and I'm always learning.

One of my favourite projects was a tithe map project I was involved with while I was still a trainee. The conservation team was working on a collection of 32 tithe maps from our Leeds Archives with a view to digitising the collection and making it accessible online. The tithe maps came in various sizes and materials – some were coloured, some were on parchment and some had iron gall ink degradation. The maps were in varying conditions so I found the condition surveying, treatment decisions and the subsequent work really interesting. I enjoyed working on these maps so much that my passion for map and plan conservation has continued and I am now working towards becoming an instructor on the maps and plans module of the training scheme.

And finally...

arc magazine

Our next edition of the **ARC Magazine** is due out in March/April 2022 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



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.



Our **ARA Together** Online Community calls also continue on Discord, with regular calls hosted by representatives from across the sector covering a wide range of topical content. If you haven't yet joined the community, it's free and very easy to do so. Simply click [here](#) to sign up. Once registered, you will be able to access a number of different content channels covering topics such as sustainability, digital record-keeping, diversity, keeping connected and professional registration - among others.