ARA Archives & Records Association

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arc
September & October'21

magazine

No: 382
ISSN: 2632-7171

ARA2022
CONFERENCE
CHESTER

**30th August to
2nd September 2022**

Welcome

arcmagazine

September & October 2021 edition

Welcome to the September/October edition of *ARC Magazine.* By the time the magazine reaches your inboxes summer will be almost behind us. This edition comes packed with news about exciting developments from across the record-keeping sector which we hope you will find of interest. Of particular note is the fact that ARA has now a full Board of trustees, and that a Communications Manager, Deborah Mason, has been appointed.

We also have excellent and thought-provoking features, including Anne Barrett's reflection on the role and value of scientific records, particularly at a time when science has taken and continues to take such a central stage.

Geoffrey Yeo's fascinating exploration of the origins of record-keeping reveals how other cultures and civilisations beyond the Western world developed their own archival practices and systems. On the topic of records, trust and evidence, Laura Millar reflects on the changing nature of documentary evidence over the past century, suggesting actions that can be taken to minimise the risks associated with digital databases and other forms of changeable documentary resources.

Katie Aske discusses the key outcomes of the AEOLIAN network's first workshop held in July 2021 which addressed the ways in which Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence can be leveraged to help organise, search and understand digital collections across the sector. Finally, the impact of COVID-19 on delivering access to records has enabled greater experimentation and innovation in how this could be done virtually, as Matthew MacMurray and Janette Martin explain in a joint feature on the establishment of virtual reading rooms at their institutions.

As part of the new look *ARC,* readers will remember that the last issue of the magazine was delivered via the ISSUU digital platform. This form of delivery responded to calls from our readers to make the publication more accessible and we hope you feel this is a positive new development. If you have other suggestions to make the publication more accessible, please send your suggestions to arceditors@archives.org.uk.

As always, special thanks go to all our contributors for responding to our calls for content, and for providing such topical and informative articles.

Maria

Maria Castrillo
ARA Board, Publications and Promotion

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Cover image: Carol Quinn reviews the employee records now online via Ancestry.com. Image courtesy of Irish Distillers Pernod Ricard

opening lines

Anne Barrett, College Archivist and Corporate Records Manager at Imperial College in London, reflects on how archive services have been proactively collecting the footprint of scientific and medical breakthroughs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

T he *ARC* editorial team invited me to write this piece because they feel that science has delivered over the past 18 months in a way that other sectors of society haven't, and they asked me to reflect on this in the context of the archives and record-keeping sector.

As the College Archivist and Corporate Records Manager at Imperial College, I have been working for one of the institutions at the forefront of the scientific and medical effort throughout the pandemic. The scientific output from Imperial and other UK institutions is part of the vast scale of global scientific intervention which has offered up many collecting opportunities. However, these opportunities have been tempered by the remote working of staff in most institutions, and the workloads of the scientists and academics with whom we might wish to engage for their unpublished work and experiences. The crossover between academics and their clinical work in medical settings and on government advisory bodies must also be considered.

Teaching has been of great concern. Much has appeared in the press about methods of outreach for students and schoolchildren. The technologies involved in this teaching form an interesting area for future research and collecting. The engineering institutions archives may consider a joint scoping exercise around records at risk.

Science has featured in the media very prominently, including work that scientists usually do out of the public domain, which presents another area of potential interest to investigate by recordkeepers.

The above are areas that could be considered for collecting – now or post pandemic. Below are examples of what institutions are already doing.

At Imperial, the Communications Team's Daily News Digest records the relevant media streams while COVID-19 updates, news and guidance are on the webpages and collected in Archivematica, an open-source digital preservation system. In teaching, the Physics Department championed 'multi-mode' teaching by creating a 'Lab in a box', transforming the usual in-person lab experiments into 'at home' experiments. These innovations are exciting and worthy of a place in the College's historical record. In the planning is a joint exercise with the Archives and the Humanities Programme in 'Living History', a managed, student-led oral history project recording the experiences of the student cohort during the pandemic.

In terms of collecting collaboration, when the pandemic began, the Science Museum Group set up a COVID-19 Collecting Project and worked closely with several organisations, including the NHS, Imperial College Medical School, its Human Challenge Trail team and community groups. The key aims of this project were to reflect the

Institutions will no doubt be continually reviewing their records, working collaboratively and responding to the needs of our communities to ensure that those records that are most valuable to society are permanently preserved to make sense of current events.

medical, public health, industrial and scientific responses to the COVID-19 pandemic; revealing social and personal interactions with COVID-19 and its wider impacts on our lives, society and culture; and collecting for future research and potential public display. A wide range of material is being collected, including face masks, diagnostic equipment, signage, sanitation stations, testing kits, artwork and ephemera, such as COVID-19 themed Christmas cards. The first objects have been formally acquired and displayed in the Science Museum: lectern signs from the public briefings at 10 Downing Street, and the vial and syringe used for the first public vaccination in the UK, for example.

The aims of the Wellcome Collection were similar, and on its website is an article titled 'Care creativity and a connected world'. Melanie Grant, Ana Botella and Christine Ro discuss the 'all-hands-on-deck thinking' that has allowed creative and sensitive programming and collecting to continue at Wellcome Collection during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can find the article here.

Other collecting concentrated on ethical and collaborative collecting. Elena Carter discusses these issues in 'Slowing down: ethical contemporary collecting during a global pandemic'. You can find her presentation on the topic at the DCDC2021 Conference here.

At the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, contemporary pandemic collecting was discussed but resources were unavailable. The Slack channel for contemporary collecting was useful on the pros and cons of collecting during the pandemic. Web archiving was investigated to ensure information on the website would be accessible in the future. A more proactive approach may be taken on return to the office with a full team.

UCL's archive is collecting the College's response to the pandemic. Focusing on internal communications and pandemic operational groups, it created a Collection Development outline. UCL itself has already gathered up the ongoing research into COVID-19 and some of this, technology permitting, will be taken into the archives. You can find out more about this project here.

The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) has mainly collected internal records, including the IET's response, any policy documents and press statements. You can find out more about what the IET has been doing at its COVID-19 hub. Members' work on new technologies will be embedded in its company records, which would not necessarily come to the IET.

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) conducted two surveys in 2020 to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on the Scottish record-keeping community. NRS holds the archives of NHS Scotland Special health boards (those with a national remit, depositing their archival records in NRS). The boards immediately reacted to changed circumstances; some adopted a position of ring-fencing records into a dedicated COVID-19 storage area while others retained them within the creating business area and usual management and retention schedules. You can find out more about this initiative here.

All these examples show that despite the ongoing public health crisis and the limitations of remote working, institutions will no doubt be continually reviewing their records, working collaboratively and responding to the needs of our communities to ensure that those records that are most valuable to society are permanently preserved to make sense of current events.

From the ARA Board

David Powell, ARA Honorary Secretary, talks about the key aspects of his role and his contribution to shaping the ARA's new strategy and business plan at a time of significant change in the record-keeping sector.

I was co-opted onto the Board in October 2020 after I put myself forward following the call for a new Honorary Secretary. I wasn't tapped on the shoulder or press-ganged, it just felt like the right time for me to become involved and in a role where I knew I could contribute. Recent conference attendance as well as Archives NRA listserv activity had also made me more aware of the challenges facing the profession – where better to try and make a difference than as a Board member?

I've been involved with the ARA for most of the last 20 years in some capacity or other, starting out as a Training Officer for Scotland and then serving on several of the central ARA committees relating to training and professional development. When starting out on my career path, being actively involved with the ARA built up my skills and experience, but more importantly broadened my knowledge and understanding of the profession. I also got to meet lots of fantastic people, to learn from them and expand my network. I hope I am as supportive to them as they have been to me.

As Secretary, I hold one of the four Honorary posts of the Board, the others being Chair, Vice Chair and Treasurer. At a basic level my role is to facilitate the work of the Board. This ranges from arranging meetings, collating and circulating papers and minute-taking. Working with the other Honorary Officers we drive the work of the Board forward, dealing with issues and work that fall outside the remit of the individual portfolio holders or that span the entire organisation. We also directly support the Chief Executive Officer and other paid employees of the Association. On a weekly basis, this role probably takes between two to six hours of my time – sometimes less and very occasionally more.

Recently, I've been heavily involved in the work around Strategy and Governance, areas I find very interesting. As you'll have read in the pages of *ARC Magazine* and in *ARA Today*, over much of the last six months the Board has been developing the ARA Strategy 2021-2025 and making sense of the Governance Review that was undertaken.

As a new Board member, I was able to look at the draft Strategy with fresh eyes and to then work with the other Honorary Officers to really knock the document into shape before bringing it back to the Board for approval. I'm sure they got fed up with my "What does that mean? Why is that there?" type questions and statements. I collated the Strategy consultation responses and took these back to the Board before reworking the Strategy with the other Honorary Officers for final approval.

The Governance Review has resulted in a five-year Action Plan. This focuses on matters that the Board needs to improve to govern the Association and to work more strategically. Importantly, the Action Plan identifies areas that will, along with the Strategy, directly affect our membership in what we hope will be positive ways. There are

> The Board and all its individual members need to listen to the membership as, ultimately, we are accountable to you – this is your Association and we are elected by you.

some valuable projects coming up with regard to this which I'm looking forward to being directly involved in, and which will require consultation and discussion with members and committees across the Association. This includes reviewing the charitable purposes as stated in the ARA's Articles of Association to ensure they are fit for purpose – currently they feel clunky, antiquated and static. Do they do what we need, or should they be more dynamic and progressive to allow the Association to develop and meet our members' needs?

There is also work in the coming years to look at the make-up of the Association and its structures. Are they meeting members' needs? Do they align with our charitable aims and fit with the agreed strategy? Are they adequately supported to do the important work they undertake? Such a review isn't because it is felt that the committees and structures of ARA are not working – the sterling work the volunteers of the ARA undertake is truly amazing and achievements are significant – but it is a function of any Board to ensure it understands the constituent parts of the organisation it oversees and give it the support that it needs.

Central to all this is consultation and listening. The Board and all its individual members need to listen to the membership as, ultimately, we are accountable to you – this is your Association and we are elected by you. So do drop me a line at david.powell@archives.org.uk. I'll be more than happy to hear from you!

Meet the new ARA Board members

Our readers will remember that in the last issue of *ARC Magazine* we announced that the ARA now has a full Board of Trustees for the first time in a few years. We asked our new Board members to tell us a bit more about themselves...

Lisa Snook,
Chair of the ARA Board
I've been on the Board since September 2019, firstly co-opted as Vice-Chair and then as Chair since September 2020. My previous involvement in ARA was in the National Surveys Group, helping to deliver the two national surveys of archives, and as an Assessor and Mentor on the Professional Development Programme. These are roles that I very much enjoy, and continue alongside my role as Chair, but a role on the Board offered a much wider view of ARA's activities and an opportunity to help shape the current and future direction of the organisation. In my role as Chair, I get to do just that, as well as working with incredibly passionate, supportive and knowledgeable staff and members.

David Powell,
Honorary Secretary of the ARA Board
My day job is as Archive Manager for the Dundee-based publishing and media company DC Thomson, where I have been for almost seven years. I'd previously worked in project-based roles in local government and the university sector. I was co-opted to the Board in Winter 2020 as Honorary Secretary and formally elected at the June 2021 AGM. I volunteered for the ARA Board as I could see the challenges facing the record-keeping sector and felt now was the time for me to step up and actively contribute to the change within the Association that is required for it to stay relevant to its membership. I feel I have a broad range of skills, including change management, strategic thinking and an ability to listen to wider viewpoints – essential at a time of change and uncertainty. I'm looking forward to the next few years and getting stuck in to ensure the ARA meets its members' needs and stays relevant.

Andrew Nicoll,
Vice-Chair of the ARA Board
I'm really pleased to be continuing with the Board and to be elected as Vice Chair. We live in a dynamic and fast changing world, and I firmly believe that we need to further strengthen our foundations for

our members, our profession and the sector. I've always been keen that people see membership of the Association as valuable – both to themselves and also to the wider sector around them. As a professional body, we have core ideals such as education, training and diversity, among others, and these help us to deliver what our members need. We also have a voice, and we use that to support our colleagues and the work that we do in the wider world. I'm pleased to be working with a great Board, drawn from Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. I encourage everyone to follow our work closely over the next few years and get involved where you can – there will be much that supports you, and equally provides stimulation and avenues of involvement to benefit your career.

Stephen Scarth,
Honorary Treasurer of the ARA Board

I am on my second stint as an ARA Board member, having previously been the officer responsible for Nations and Regions. My previous role provided an invaluable grounding and brought me into direct contact with members across the whole of the UK and Ireland. It also meant I was a point of contact for a wide range of queries which has strengthened my knowledge of how charitable sector organisations operate.

I was keen to continue on the Board, but I was looking forward to a new challenge. The role of Treasurer interested me as I am a budget holder in my day job at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), and I felt that the financial and governance skills required would be transferable to other aspects of my career. Having taken up the new post, I was delighted to find that I wasn't left to my own devices but was ably supported by the other three Honorary Officers and by the CEO.

The last few months have been quite an eye opener, with major reviews of all aspects of governance and strategy. I am still very much on a new learning curve, and it never fails to surprise me how much the ARA does.

Julie Bon,
New ARA Board Member

I am delighted to be joining the ARA Board. I am an Accredited Conservator with over 15 years' experience working in the heritage sector. Much of this time was spent working with historic objects and interiors on open display. My move into the world of libraries and archives is a recent one, as I was appointed Head of Collections Care at the National Library of Scotland in 2019.

When the opportunity arose to become more involved with the ARA I jumped at the chance as I see this as a great way for me to learn more about this sector, to broaden my professional network and to try to raise the profile of conservation in the process. I believe that I bring an enquiring mind, enthusiasm and problem-solving skills to the Board. I also bring knowledge and experience of working with a broad cross-section of conservators and heritage professionals. I look forward to meeting ARA members over the next few years and contributing to the work of this fantastic organisation.

Elizabeth Thompson-MacRae,
New ARA Board Member

Although I undertook a Post-Grad Certificate in Archive and Records Management almost a decade ago, my path to becoming an archivist has taken many turns. I come to the Board with a background in internal auditing, which has equipped me to look at the bigger picture and identify key risks and opportunities for an organisation.

My main motivation for becoming a Board Trustee is to support the ongoing work within the sector to create a more diverse and inclusive workforce and advocate the principle that archives are for all.

Ruth McLeod,
New ARA Board Member

I'm really pleased to have joined the ARA Board at the AGM. I've been involved in ARA in a number of ways over the years, as well as other committee work in the archives sector, and am keen to use this experience to work with the Board. The ARA does a lot of great work but members aren't always aware of it, so I'd like to see our communications improve so that we can all see what changes and forward steps are being made in promoting the record-keeping sector and all those involved with it. I'm also looking forward to getting involved in implementing the new ARA strategy.

The newly elected members join Andrea Waterhouse, Jason King, Jenny Moran and Maria Castrillo who had been previously elected to the ARA Board.

Joint winners of the 2021 ARA Archive Volunteer Award are unveiled

The joint winners of this year's ARA Archive Volunteer Award have been announced. The annual award recognises outstanding work involving volunteers in an archive and records service. The award is organised by the Volunteer Committee of ARA and sponsored by the ARA, The National Archives (UK) and sector partners.

After much deliberation, the panel of judges chose this year's joint winning entries: Suffolk Archives' Pride in Suffolk's Past project and Warwickshire County Record Office's Warwickshire Online Volunteer Network's (WOVeN) Mining the Seams project.

Pride in Suffolk's Past, which is part of Suffolk Archives' county-wide Sharing Suffolk Stories initiative, was commended for the way it engaged people who do not traditionally use or interact with archives. The judging panel liked how the project took into consideration ethical issues and that the volunteers were central to the project and took a proactive role in steering its direction. The team succeeded in overcoming the limitations of collecting during the pandemic and still managed to harvest stories to be added to the archive.

Warwickshire County Record Office's WOVeN Mining the Seams project was commended for bringing people together in lockdown and helping people develop their technical skills. The judges felt the project was well thought-through, and that the approach the team took was particularly innovative when it came down to the use of technology to support remote volunteering. The well-being aspect of the project, particularly at a time that was challenging for many people who felt isolated, was particularly impressive and they have managed to create and sustain a community as one of the key legacies of the project.

Sally Bevan, Secretary of the ARA's Volunteer Committee, comments: "These were two excellent projects with little to separate them, so the panel were torn between which to choose as the overall winner. Although we normally only have one overall winner, given the challenging year archive services have endured, we wanted to celebrate and thank as many of our volunteers as possible for continuing to 'stick with us' so we decided to opt for a joint 2021 winner."

Volunteering Award Warwickshire - Mining the Seams.

Pride in Suffolk's Past Volunteers at Suffolk Pride 2019

All this year's award entries were commended for their commitment to their volunteers and how well they adapted to working online during the pandemic.

To find out more about the winning projects, please click here.

ARA appoints Deborah Mason as new communications manager

We are delighted to announce that we have appointed Deborah Mason as Communications Manager for the ARA. In this newly created role, Deborah will be responsible for shaping and delivering our communications strategy. She will work alongside our existing team of member volunteers who support our communications, and our appointed marketing agency, SH Communications.

Deborah is an experienced communications professional, having held a number of communication roles, including as Communications Manager for the UK's leading intergenerational arts organisation, Magic Me for the past four years. In this role, Deborah delivered a new website, generated press coverage, developed social media strategies and wrote content for online delivery. Deborah's previous experience also includes working in communications roles for The Charities Advisory Trust (who run Good Gifts, Card Aid and Knit for Peace), The British Association of Dermatologists and the health research charity, Wellbeing of Women.

Commenting on her new role, Deborah said: "I'm passionate about archives and records and am an avid archives user myself so I'm looking forward to sharing this passion through my new role. In 2018, I organised an event about the value of libraries and archives which featured speakers from Save the 10, Fun Palaces and Black Cultural Archives (BCA). Doreen Foster from BCA really inspired me with her talk about the danger of a single story and the value of the archives.

"I would like to use this role to change the misconception of archives and records as being dusty places filled with old things to places that hold valuable information that can inform how we look at the future. How would we know that our climate was changing if no one had kept records of the weather, and no one had thought to archive those records?"

Deborah will join the ARA on a part time basis in September before moving to full-time hours in October.

Welsh Vital Digital Information Project

Digital storage at the National Library of Wales
Image courtesy of Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru/National Library of Wales

In 2020-21, a partnership of council archive services from across Wales was awarded funding from the Welsh Government's Local Government Digital Transformation Fund to investigate vital digital records in Wales.

The partnership consisted of six archive services who between them represented 15 of the 22 Principal Councils. Following a competitive tender process, archive consultants Kevinjbolton Ltd were appointed to conduct desk-based research and interviews with key stakeholders, to gather information, to report on findings and identify priorities.

Archives and Records Council Wales (ARCW) and the National Library of Wales, supported by Welsh Government, have been working to increase digital preservation capacity for a number of years. While this collaboration has produced valuable outputs, further work was needed on long-term access to records held on council systems, to:
- understand the barriers or issues, strategic, organisational and technological, involved in providing long-term access;
- develop a proposed solution and help to develop the next phase of work required.

Records held require long-term retention, but the systems themselves can have a relatively short operational lifespan. As such, without due consideration of retention requirements, these systems can present a critical risk to councils.

The research found that lack of capacity and resources remain critical issues, and lack of recognition of the issues and resource constraints
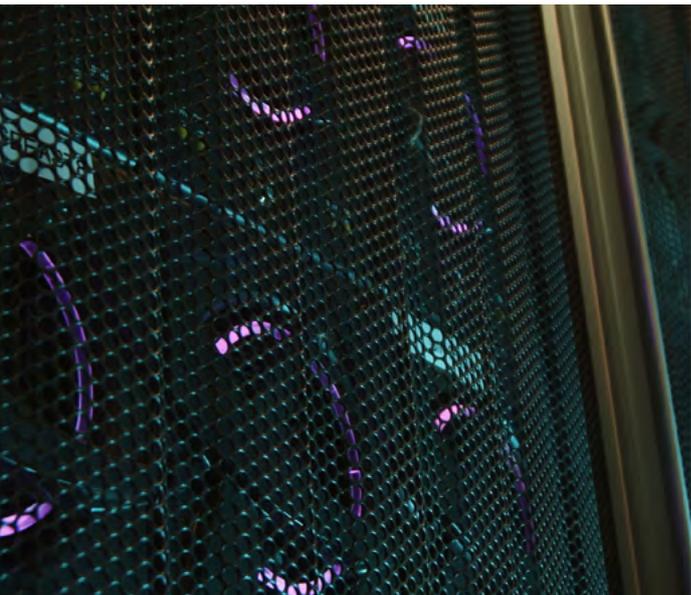
Server at the National Library of Wales. Image courtesy of Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru/National Library of Wales

on developing solutions are inhibiting progress. Behaviour change, policy frameworks and processes and investment in technical solutions are all required to ensure long-term data continuity.

Four key themes were identified in addressing these findings, with a series of detailed recommendations:

● undertaking advocacy with decision-makers, developing advocacy resources and an advocacy plan to deliver and measure this work;
● building relationships within councils, explicitly linking long-term data continuity to existing governance, processes and strategic agendas, and working collaboratively to develop specific use case(s) for the highest risk functions;
● developing practical work and skills within archive services, using existing resources to develop simple workflows, as well as integrating collection development activities with council information management arrangements;
● strengthening the ARCW Digital Preservation Group and system, increasing the engagement with members and moving from the research and development stage into the delivery stage.

The project completed in March 2021 and the Steering Group meets regularly to take forward the recommendations. Involvement has widened to include all local authority archive services in Wales, representing all 22 principal local authorities.

Archiving the 8th Amendment: Call for content for a new online database

Calling all archivists, archive conservators and records managers in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland – are you collecting and/or accepting items relating to the lifespan of the 8th Amendment in your repositories?

Funded by The Wellcome Trust, the School of Art History and Cultural Policy at University College Dublin is currently compiling a comprehensive database documenting the repositories, digital spaces, museums, libraries, arts centres and more who are collecting any materials that relate to the 8th Amendment – from its inception to repeal.

This database will enable people across the spectrum to find the relevant sites (local or national) to donate their diverse catalogue of objects and materials from 1983-2018. Going forward, this database will assist researchers in their studies of this important constitutional, health and cultural moment in Irish history.

We are seeking three distinct pieces of information:

● Description of your holdings
● Are you collecting or accepting donations?
● Relevant contact details

If you are collecting or accepting donations, please get in touch with Dr Maeve O'Brien via email maeve.obrien@ucd.ie to add your information so that it can be stored in the online database. For more information on the Archiving the 8th Project, please follow the Twitter account: @archivingthe8th.

Community Archives training videos available on YouTube

Community Archives has added recorded versions of its recent training sessions to the Norfolk Record Office's YouTube channel. The recordings comprise the new Collections Management and Preservation sessions, as well as updated versions of the Cataloguing, Oral History and Digitisation sessions that Community Archives ran last year.

All of the videos on the Community Archives project playlist can be found here.

Each recording will link to the relevant section on our Community Archives Toolkit, and also has an optional survey for viewers to complete.

Inclusive recruitment advice clinics from The National Archives (UK)

To complement its inclusive recruitment training series, The National Archives (UK) is now offering one-to-one advice clinics to professionals working in a UK archive. These 30-minute conversations with an expert from Creative & Cultural Skills will help build your understanding of recruitment best practices and provide advice tailored to your organisation's circumstances. Topics that you could discuss include apprenticeships, volunteers, workforce development policies or inclusive job descriptions.

Ideally you will have already attended one of The National Archives' inclusive recruitment training sessions, but this isn't a requirement.

Click here to book a 30-minute slot or join the waiting list. New dates will be added regularly, with advice clinics taking place on the first Wednesday of every month.

If you need to speak to someone sooner than the times available, please get in touch via robert.chipperfield@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Inclusive recruitment advice is available via The National Archives (UK). Sourced from free image site: https://unsplash.com/photos/Be5aVKFv9ho.

HSBC History: sharing over 150 years of story, culture and brand heritage

As one of the largest financial organisations in the world, HSBC's purpose is to "open up a world of opportunity" for its 40 million-plus customers worldwide. The company's archives map the journey from the early days of its formation in 1865 to the robust, diverse and trusted financial organisation that it has continued to be since then, bringing with it a far-reaching and fascinating cultural history.

With more than 150 years of unique heritage, HSBC launched its new HSBC History website on 6th July 2021. This website will act as a single point of reference for internal and external stakeholders, facilitating access, research, exploration and discovery of the HSBC story of HSBC.

HSBC's vast digital collection will be managed and shared via the PastView platform, and visitors will be able to uncover a wealth of born-digital and digitised HSBC records and assets in a whole host of new and engaging ways.

In line with HSBC's purpose, this new history website will create an opportunity for customers to engage and connect with the brand through prints, smuggled wartime notes, 360-degree models, modern banking technologies, menus, photographs, annual reports, banknotes and much more, enabling them to digitally immerse themselves in the complete HSBC history.

The PastView platform has been built by TownsWeb Archiving and developed specifically for the needs of the cultural heritage sector, providing tailored solutions and opportunities for the management and showcasing of born digital and digitised collections. Click here to find out more about the platform or follow TownsWeb Archiving on Twitter.

The new HSBC History website has launched. Image courtesy of HSBC Archives.

Opening up 100 years of employee records from the Jameson Distillery

Although the Jameson Distillery archive in Dublin is not open to the public, it contains records of genealogical interest which have recently been made more accessible to the public thanks to a partnership that the corporate archivist, Carol Quinn, established with Ancestry. Ancestry's highly-skilled team worked on-site to digitise the records and took care of all the post digitisation cropping and editing, turning what was in effect a siloed archive into a usable resource, while the originals remained safely stored in the Jameson Distillery repository.

To access the records, people can either sign up with Ancestry (and pay a charge) and view the records along with the context offered by the other resources on the site, or they can (as they have been doing) contact the archivist directly, who now has a searchable database of names and is able to answer enquiries a lot more quickly and efficiently than before.

The digitised records comprised mainly weekly wages books and details of employee names, as well as occupation, hours worked and wages paid, from 1862 to 1969. To comply with GDPR, records holding personal information are only available to view until the year 1937, however the full set was digitised and will be released as time passes.

Corporate records such as these have a crucial importance in Ireland as for many individuals listed in the earlier volumes, there is no other surviving administrative record of their lives. Civil registration of births only began in 1864, so many may not have had birth certificates, and later records were destroyed in the bombing of the Four Courts in 1922.

Detail of Jameson Distillery employee records. Image courtesy of Irish Distillers Pernod Ricard.

Carol Quinn reviews the employee records now online via Ancestry.com. Image courtesy of Irish Distillers Pernod Ricard

Revised Section 46 Code of Practice on the Management of Records

The Government has published a revised Section 46 Code of Practice on the Management of Records, providing up-to-date guidance to relevant authorities on the keeping, management and destruction of their records. The revised code was announced in a ministerial statement on transparency and replaces the 2009 version.

The Information Commissioner, the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Northern Ireland Minister for Communities have been formally consulted by the Secretary of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) prior to publication. The code has also been subject to a Cabinet Committee write round.

The code's guidance to relevant authorities reflects contemporary information management practice and the modern digital working environment. The code also clarifies the basis on which the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives operates. It is a technical document aimed at supporting information management professionals in public authorities to fulfil their duties under Freedom of Information legislation (FOIA).

For more information, please click here.

BRA seminar series: The shock of the record, archives and truth

The British Records Association (BRA) is contributing to the Institute of Historical Research (IHR) Partnership Seminars series in 2021 and 2022.

These seminars, called 'The shock of the record: archives and truth,' cover topics related to trust in archives and records, digital literacy and current scepticism of facts and evidence in our society.

Details of the seminars are now available on the IHR website. The seminars are open to anyone with an interest in records and archives and can be booked online. Attendance is free of charge and the seminars are held on Zoom with live captioning.

'The shock of the record: why archives matter' seminar held on 18th March is now available on YouTube. Click here.

'Who creates the record and why?: evidence under attack' held on 17th June is now available on YouTube. Click here.

Both recordings have fully transcribed captions.

The next event is planned for the 11th November 2021 at 6pm (GMT) and is entitled 'Truth and trust: untruth especially in oppressive regimes.' Click here to book.

Full details and reminders will be posted on the seminar series' Twitter account and on the IHR and BRA websites in the near future.

The National Archives' (UK) Data Protection toolkit for archive services

The National Archives (UK) has commissioned a new Data Protection Toolkit for Archive Services by Naomi Korn. The toolkit provides a structured approach to decision-making when providing access to personal data held in archives. Throughout, the toolkit helps archive professionals to move away from the idea that there is a single 'correct answer', in favour of a deeper and broader understanding of the factors to be considered.

Click here to find out more and request free access to the toolkit.

The 'New Jerusalems': post-war new town archives in Britain and Ireland

West Sussex Record Office has been awarded a grant of £427,809 from the Wellcome Trust to catalogue, conserve and increase accessibility to eleven new town collections: Basildon, Bracknell, Crawley, Cwmbran, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Redditch, Runcorn, Shannon, Stevenage and Warrington.

West Sussex was awarded the grant on behalf of a network of archive services comprising Berkshire Record Office, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Durham County Record Office, Essex Record Office, Gwent Record Office, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service and the University of Limerick.

The records are mainly from the new town development corporations – public bodies given wide-ranging powers to build new towns between the 1940s and 1960s. Included in the records are early designs, residents' surveys and tens of thousands of photographs.

This project will see these collections catalogued and conserved, creating a fundamental change in the evidence base currently available for research into the new town movement and resulting in a significant new resource for researching the impact of housing and urban design on public health. More information about the West Sussex Record Office can be found here.

Queensway Store in Queens Square, Crawley, 1960s (AM 967/9/12). Image courtesy of West Sussex Record Office.

Crawley Official Guide, 1973 (AM 967/7/4). Image courtesy of West Sussex Record Office.

Digitisation: TownsWeb Archiving free resources round-up

TownsWeb Archiving has been working hard recently to identify and create the resources, information and guidance that it feels the industry most needs right now. This content has been positively received and many seem to be finding it helpful as we cautiously emerge from the current pandemic and start to think about those current and future digitisation projects. For ease of reference, the following is a bit of a round-up of what we've created so far:

'How to Write When You've Got a Need' - Funding expert, Debbie Cooper, tells us exactly what funders are looking for in a successful funding bid. Click here.

'Funding Resource Pack' - A downloadable pack of resources focused on securing funding, to include top tips from industry experts and a range of comprehensive guides. Click here.

'Digitisation: In-house vs Outsourcing' - A neat and thorough analysis by Abby Matthews, Centre Manager, and Julia Parks, Project Manager, on the options available when it comes to digitisation. Click here.

'Top Tips for Digitisation: In-house vs Outsourced' - A downloadable PDF resource containing Abby and Julia's 10 top tips for inhouse and outsourced digitisation projects. Click here.

UNESCO UK Memory of the World 2022 launch

The Call for Nominations to the UNESCO UK Memory of the World Register for 2022 is now open. All individuals, private or public institutions, organisations and communities are invited to consider putting forward a nomination.

Click here to apply to become a UNESCO UK Memory of the World inscription. Read more about the UNESCO UK Memory of the World Programme here.

The UNESCO UK Memory of the World (MoW) programme seeks to help protect, preserve and make permanently accessible to all, the UK's distinct, disparate and diverse documentary heritage. Through the UK MoW Register, our aim is to champion and raise awareness of lesser-known and overlooked material of national significance, placing them alongside better known to truly highlight, represent and celebrate the contribution and impact of individuals, groups and communities to our collective national life.

Nominations are assessed against, and include reflection and context on:
- time: does it evoke a particularly significant or tumultuous period in time?
- place: does it highlight the features, nature or community of the place where the documentary heritage was created?
- people: does it illustrate a significant aspect of human social, industrial or artistic development?
- subject and theme: does it represent a particular historical or intellectual development?
- form and style: is it an outstanding or aesthetically beautiful example of its type?
- social/spiritual/community significance: does it possess a certain emotional attachment for the community or contribute to that community's identity and social cohesion?

UK MoW nominations can be made by anyone, not just institutions, and can include documentary heritage on any subject, place, person, or community. They can come in any format from physical to digital, manuscripts to printed material, and big data to audio-visual formats.

Help us celebrate and recognise the rich cultural, scientific and artistic achievements of the UK by continuing to add to the UNESCO UK Memory of the World Register, enabling us all to learn and understand the lessons of the past to inform our future.

Click here to access the handbook for nomination and guidance on assessing significance.

Unlocking our sound heritage training for South West England

The 'Unlocking our Sound Heritage' project team has announced the forthcoming dates for its two-day audio archive care, preservation and use training as follows:

- 6th and 7th October: Kresen Kernow, Redruth, Cornwall
- 12th and 13th October: Gloucestershire Heritage Hub, Gloucester
- 21st and 22nd October: Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter
- 1st and 2nd November: Somerset Archives and Heritage Centre, Taunton
- 8th and 9th November: Bristol Archives
- 15th and 16th November: Bristol Archives

Click here for full details and booking.

The training will take place in small groups (15 people maximum) and in rooms that will allow for social distancing for people's comfort. The sessions are aimed at workers and volunteers who care for audio archives.

Please ask anyone who books to indicate where they work or volunteer when registering, as preference will be given to people actively working with archives (as opposed to interested members of the public).

If you have any questions, please email Katie Scaife, Project Manager at Unlocking our Sound Heritage. katie.scaife@bristol.gov.uk

New guidance on working with mixed collections from The National Archives (UK)

In June 2021, The National Archives (UK) held a launch event for its Managing Mixed Collections Guidance for Archive Services. The guidance has been born out of an increasing realisation that many archivists are responsible for managing museum collections alongside archival and current records.

The establishment of the ARA Section for Archives and Museums (SAM), and our ever-increasing membership, goes to highlight how many archivists, and indeed conservators and curators, are working across traditional curatorial boundaries. In response to this, The National Archives (UK) commissioned this guidance, which for the first time brings together standards of practice for museum collections to support archivists who are working with these materials. The guidance was produced by archive and museum professionals and following extensive industry consultation, including with the SAM Committee.

The extensive guidance aims to support archivists and service managers to effectively manage mixed collections, providing links and sources for advice and guidance on a wide range of collection types, signposting best practice and providing an in-depth introduction to the SPECTRUM 5.0 standard. Each section follows the structure of the Archive Service Accreditation Standard, with general management of collections, ethics, collections development, care and conservation and access and interpretation guidance.

The aim of this guidance is not to replace existing guidance but to act as a starting point. It empowers users to learn and understand about the care of object collections and to ensure the best outcomes for all collections in our care. SAM was pleased to be invited to contribute to this important piece of work.

You can find the guidance here.

To join SAM, please email sam@archives.org.uk and keep up to date with news and events by following SAM on Twitter.

How did record-keeping begin?

Archives practitioner, educator and researcher **Geoffrey Yeo** takes a fascinating look at the origins of record-keeping and highlights the ways in which societies first developed their own forms of archives.

How, when and where did people first keep records? This seems an important question, but the answer may not be as easy to establish as archivists have sometimes believed.

Archival historians have often assumed that the story of record-keeping began with the invention of writing in Mesopotamia and Egypt in the fourth millennium BC. In both of these societies, writing was widely used for keeping administrative records. In Mesopotamia, about 90% of surviving writings from the early and middle years of the third millennium are of an administrative nature. Repositories for records in the form of clay tablets have been identified at several fourth-millennium and third-millennium sites in Iran and Iraq.

Writing also emerged in China in the second millennium BC, and later in Mesoamerica. Chinese writing is often thought to have developed independently of Mesopotamian and Egyptian practice, but this is uncertain; pre-colonial Mesoamerica offers firmer evidence that writing was invented more than once, at different times and in different places. It seems that, in every society where writing techniques were adopted, they were used for record-keeping purposes. In China, the earliest writing was used to record divination procedures conducted on behalf of the Shang kings. In Mesoamerica, officials of the Aztec empire used pictographic writing to record imperial revenues.

But it is clear that in the pre-colonial Americas,
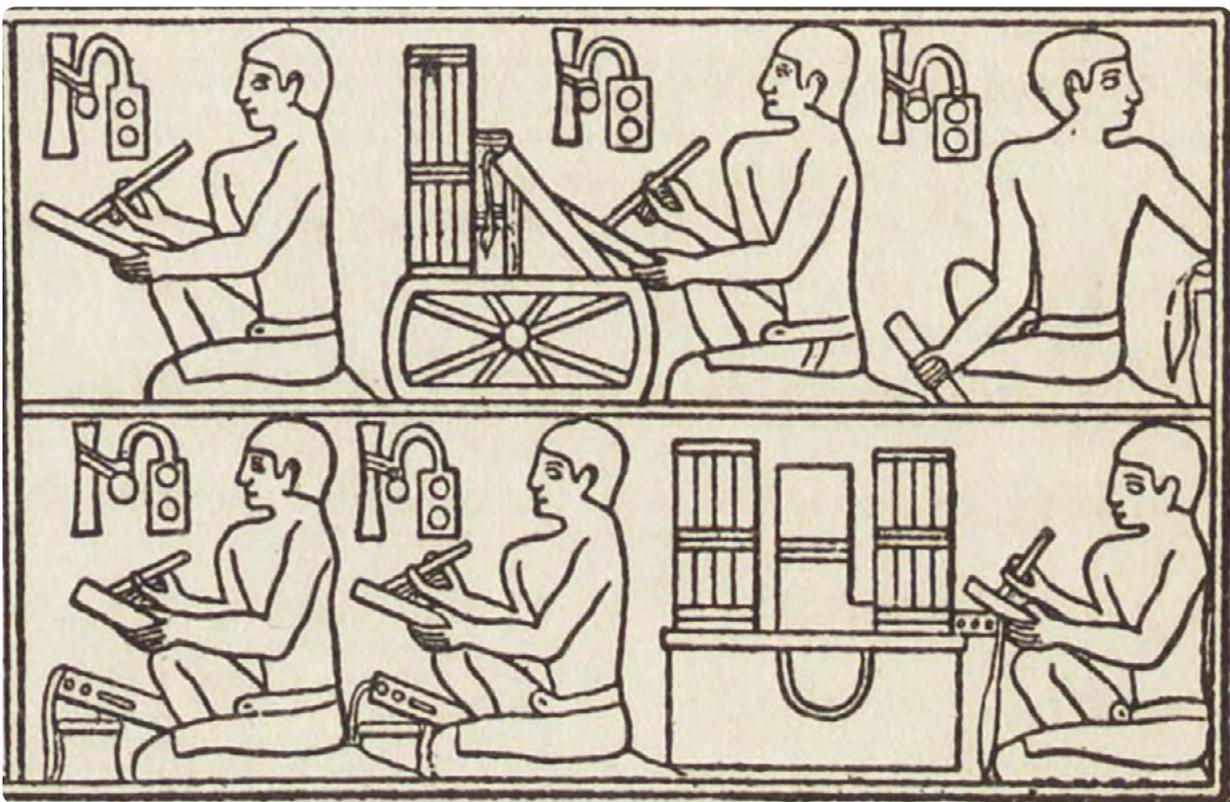
Making and keeping written records in ancient Egypt; from a tomb at Saqqara. Source: Karl Baedeker, Egypt and the Sudan, 1908. Public domain image
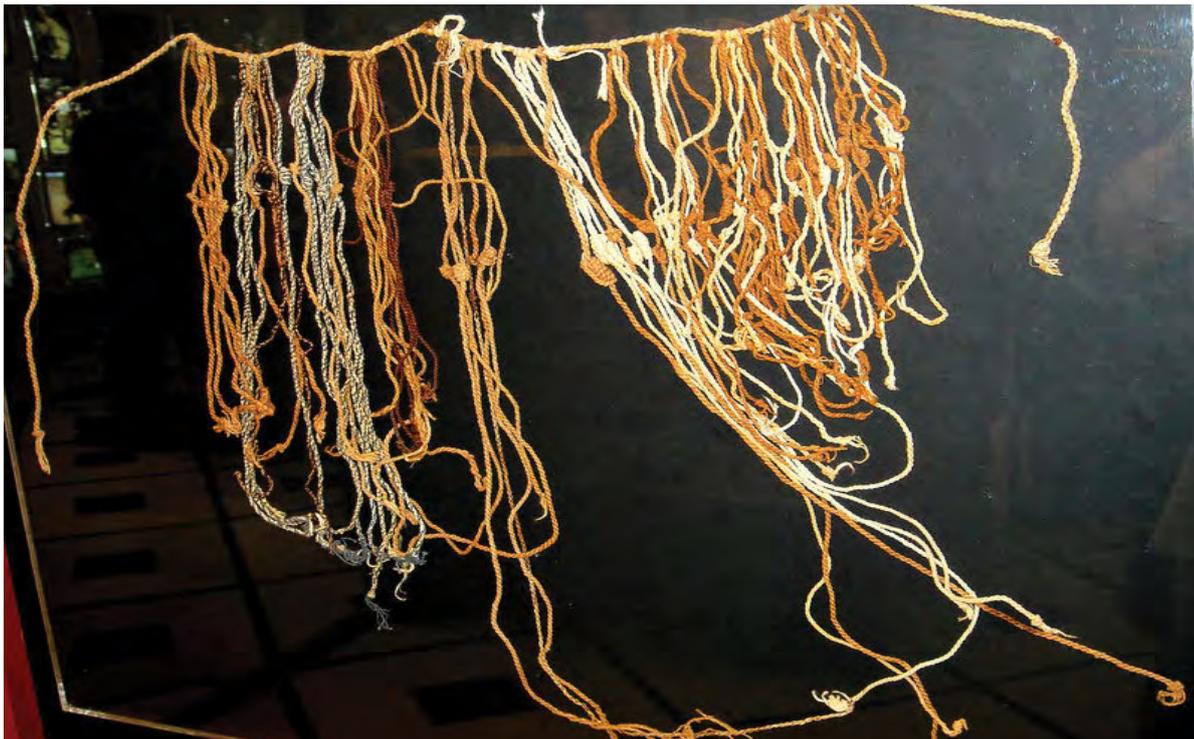
A South American khipu. Source: public domain image.

records were also maintained in the Inka empire, a society where writing was unknown. Inka officials created records of censuses, tribute payments and the flow of goods to and from storehouses, using complex systems of knotted cords known as 'khipus'. To create a khipu, Inka administrators used cords of cotton or wool. Pendant cords were attached to a primary cord, which could be several metres long, and different kinds of knots were made in different locations on the cords. People in the Andes had employed devices resembling khipus long before the Inka era, but these earlier devices used much simpler knots. Knotted threads and threaded wooden batons between 1,300 and 3,000 years old have been found in South America, and scholars have tentatively identified them as early forms of record.

It has also become evident that writing was preceded by non-written forms of record in Mesopotamia and other early societies of the 'Old World'. For example, notched bone tallies were used in south-west Asia more than 10,000 years ago, almost certainly to help people to track agricultural produce entering or leaving storehouses. Seals were also used before the invention of writing, as a means of identifying participants in transactions. These non-written devices performed a similar function to the first written records: they allowed people to preserve information about the production, storage and distribution of resources. The story of record-keeping began long before writing came into use.

Italian archivist Elio Lodolini once wrote that, in societies such as ancient Rome, 'management of

power and management of records were closely linked'. The same can be said of record-keeping in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China and pre-colonial Mesoamerica, and of the khipu records of the Inka empire. In every instance, ruling elites employed records as instruments of power. This may not have been true of the earliest devices used when agriculture was first introduced, but as societies became increasingly hierarchical, rulers found that record-keeping enabled them to manipulate economic resources to their own advantage.

In societies where social divisions and hierarchies were established, records helped powerful individuals to maintain supremacy by controlling the actions of workers and the movement of foodstuffs and other essential goods. In Mesopotamia, at the end of the third millennium, records could regulate operations involving thousands of people, while at the same time the loss of a single item of goods could be discovered and accounted for. In Egypt, too, record-keeping enabled powerful administrations to monitor the transmission of goods in a way that ensured control of large numbers of economic units.

The accountability offered by early record-keeping was only the accountability of the field-worker or junior official to the dignitaries of the temple or palace. Accountability in the modern sense of governments and officers of state being held accountable to their peoples was wholly absent. Mesopotamian society was not democratic, and notions that records could support transparent rule or provide evidence of responsible government were unknown.

A Mesopotamian clay tablet. Source: public domain image.
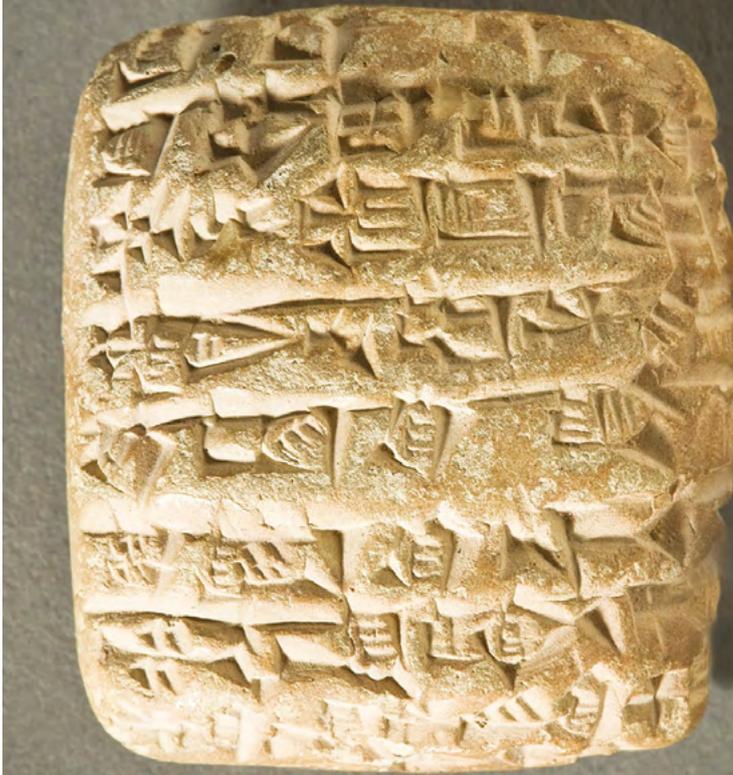
> "
> It seems that, in every society where writing techniques were adopted, they were used for record-keeping purposes.

Nevertheless, others besides the ruling elite eventually found ways to benefit from record-keeping. Temples, palaces and royal governments continued to be the most prolific creators of records throughout Mesopotamian history; but about 400 years after the invention of writing, private individuals in Mesopotamia began to use written texts to record sales and purchases of fields and houses. Some of these texts were inscribed on stone, but many were on clay tablets. They were the earliest written records created by individuals in a private capacity.

In the pre-colonial Americas, as far as we know, records were never used for private purposes; their use was confined to central and local administration. But in Mesopotamia, as the use of writing became more widespread, it enabled merchants to keep letters and accounts that supported the expansion of their business, and householders to keep title deeds. How far down the social hierarchy these advantages were felt is less clear; to the poorest and least educated, written records must have remained alien. But the benefits of writing were not restricted to members of the elite. In Assyria in the first millennium BC, many artisans kept records of the property they owned. Private individuals usually kept records in their houses rather than in formal archival repositories, but they sometimes preserved records that were 200 years old.

As I explain in my book *Record-Making and Record-Keeping in Early Societies*, institutional archives in Mesopotamia did not extend over such long spans of years – most known examples extend over fewer than 50 years – but, as might be expected, they were often considerably larger than the archives of private individuals. The largest archive surviving from ancient Mesopotamia is the archive of the Ebabbar temple, which comprises more than 30,000 clay tablets. By the time this archive was assembled, in the middle years of the first millennium BC, the creation, maintenance and use of records in Mesopotamia were matters of daily routine.

*Geoffrey Yeo has more than 40 years' experience in the field of archives as a practitioner, educator and researcher. He has also worked as a freelance consultant on records-related projects in the UK and Africa, and he is now an Honorary Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Information Studies at University College London. Besides his latest book, **Record-Making and Record-Keeping in Early Societies** (Routledge, 2021), he is the author of **Records, Information and Data: Exploring the Role of Record-Keeping in an Information Culture** (Facet, 2018) and of several other books and numerous articles. In 2013, his published work was awarded the Hugh A. Taylor Prize.*

Professional Development News

Bridging the Digital Gap traineeship programme opens up new career routes

The Bridging the Digital Gap (BtDG) traineeship programme aims to increase digital skills in archives by bringing in new people from different backgrounds to create a more diverse, inclusive and skilled workforce. Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the programme is one strand of The National Archives' (UK) workforce development strategy. ARA is also playing its role in this initiative that actively promotes new routes into a career in recordkeeping through the provision of mentors for BtDG trainees, and waiving enrolment and assessment fees for candidates who apply for registration.

Since 2018, three cohorts of eight trainees have been employed by The National Archives (UK) and seconded for 15 months to host archive services in Yorkshire, Norfolk, London and the South West. At their host organisations, trainees receive on-the-job training in standard archive practices and digital-specific areas, while working on projects that further their hosts' digital capabilities. The National Archives provides a variety of training opportunities and an allowance so that trainees can pursue workshops and conferences in areas of particular interest to them.

Chris Jones, BtDG Project Manager, says, "The National Archives is grateful for ARA's partnership in the BDtG programme. So far, every trainee who has submitted an application has successfully achieved Foundation Member of ARA status".

In this article we meet Ash Ullah FMARA, a programme trainee, and Laura Yeoman RMARA, a mentor for the BtDG programme and an ARA assessor.

The BtDG trainee:
Ash Ullah FMARA
Ash completed his BtDG traineeship in December 2020 and qualified as a Foundation Member of the ARA in March 2021.

What attracted you to the traineeship?
I enjoy working with digital systems and technology, and I was looking for an on-the-job training experience. The opportunity to play a part in preserving the nation's heritage really interested me.

What key insights did you gain from the BtDG traineeship?
The importance of keeping a record of my work and learning achievements. I now have a valuable record of my traineeship, which was especially beneficial when it came to completing my application for ARA Foundation Membership.

> " Foundation membership demonstrates that I have the competencies and behaviours valued by employers, and this should enhance my employability within the archive sector.

Ash Ullah, Bridging the Digital Gap trainee. Image courtesy of Roz Munn

What skills, ideas and approaches do you feel you brought to the archives and records sector?

Working with three other London-based trainees, I helped develop a series of workshops focusing on DIY approaches to personal digital archiving. It was incredibly rewarding to have the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) host our blog and link to our presentation slides on World Digital Preservation Day (as part of their 'Digits for Good' series). I would like to thank my fellow trainees on this joint project: Erin Liu FMARA, Jacob Bickford FMARA and Ellie Peng.

What motivated you to apply for Foundation Membership? How did your mentor support you with your application?

At first I wasn't sure if I had enough practical experience but after speaking with my mentor and the BtDG Project Manager, I felt more confident about my abilities. I am very grateful to them for their support.

I have now qualified as a Foundation Member of the ARA (FMARA) and feel a great sense of achievement. Foundation membership demonstrates that I have the competencies and behaviours valued by employers, and this should enhance my employability within the archive sector. The application process was a great learning experience for me, helping me reflect on how I have progressed during the traineeship. It has also provided me with excellent answers for job applications and interviews. The competencies I chose for my application are as follows:

- Competency A2 Developing and using policies and procedures
- Competency A4 Working with people
- Competency A8 Contributing to/understanding internal/external professional environments
- Competency A9 Developing self and others - Level 2
- Competency B3 Organising and describing records - Level 2
- Competency C5 Providing (intellectual) access to the content of records and archives on-site and on-line

What do you plan to do next?

Completing The National Archives' BtDG traineeship and gaining Foundation Membership has given me the confidence and knowledge to apply for roles within the sector. I will review my skill set, think about the tasks that I enjoyed or excelled in during my traineeship, and then target roles where I can put these to use.

The BtDG mentor:
Laura Yeoman

Laura Yeoman RMARA is a mentor on the BtDG traineeship and is an assessor of applications for ARA professional registration.

How did you get involved with BtDG?

My employer at the time was about to embark on digital preservation, so the traineeship was a great fit for us. Mentoring a BtDG trainee towards Foundation status helped me actively support initiatives to diversify the workforce. It was also a great opportunity for me to learn more about digital preservation best practice, as well as practical skills and processes from our trainee, while supporting her through the traineeship.

Laura Yeoman, mentor on the Bridging the Digital Gap traineeship and ARA Assessor. Image courtesy of Laura Yeoman.

What do you think are the benefits of ARA professional registration?

We all know that front-line staff running our reading rooms, our digitisation service and our education programmes have a huge array of knowledge and skills. It is right that their work is recognised by ARA professional registration, which proves to

> " I am even more of an advocate for the continuing professional development scheme than I was before. I can really see the value of it to candidates, employers and the sector as a whole.

employers that they have been assessed against ARA professional standards. It also shows a commitment to continuing professional development and reflective learning; that you can work independently to timescales, write pieces of work within an agreed word limit and that you can set your own goals. These are all 'soft skills' employers are looking for and you can also use the programme as a way of supporting your career. Many employers have an internal annual personal review or appraisal process. ARA professional registration encourages you to think about how you want to develop and how your employer can support you in that development.

As an ARA assessor and mentor for the BtDG traineeship, what have you learnt about professional standards, their attainment and reward? What insights can you share?

This was the first time I'd mentored a staff member through the ARA's professional registration programme and so I gained a better understanding of how Foundation Membership of ARA can recognise their work achievements. I had some great conversations with our trainee about benchmarking her skills and experience against the competency framework.

As an ARA assessor and a mentor on BtDG I have a deeper understanding of the development of professional standards and their implementation. I am even more of an advocate for the continuing professional development scheme than I was before. I can really see the value of it to candidates, employers and the sector as a whole. Professional registration is a great way to have your work experience and personal development recognised, whatever stage you are at in your career. It's an ideal opportunity to showcase your talents, and gaining registration is something to be celebrated, whether you're at Foundation, Registration or Fellowship level. It's a real achievement!

For more information on ARA professional registration visit our website. To find out more about the BtDG programme visit The National Archives' website.

Better Together: AEOLIAN Network's first workshop

Dr Katie Aske, Research Assistant for the AEOLIAN Network at Loughborough University, discusses the key outcomes of the network's first workshop which addressed the ways in which Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence can be leveraged to help organise, search and understand digital collections across the sector.

Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) applied to data in libraries and other cultural institutions are at the centre of current debates concerning access to digitised materials across the US and the UK. The AEOLIAN (Artificial Intelligence for Cultural Organisations) Network is a collaborative UK/US project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The network's objective is to investigate the use of AI in cultural organisations by bringing together digital humanists, computer scientists, stakeholders and GLAM industry professionals to find innovative solutions to this shared challenge.

On Wednesday 7th July 2021, AEOLIAN held its first online workshop, 'Employing Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence in Cultural Institutions'. Hosted by the project's UK Principal Investigator, Dr Lise Jaillant, and the international Co-Investigator, Annalina Caputo, the online event welcomed more than 100 participants from all over the world. With guest speakers from the UK and US, the workshop addressed the ways in which ML and AI can be leveraged to help organise, search and understand digital collections across the sector. The presentations covered a wide range of projects and issues in heritage institutions, but particularly focused on approaches to visual AI and using collections as data.

Machine learning and visual AI
Discussing image recognition and categorisation, presentations from Giles Bergel (University of Oxford), and John McQuaid (Frick Collection), Vardan Papyan (University of Toronto), and X.Y. Han (Cornell University)

A selection of chapbook illustrations from the National Library of Scotland. Image by Giles Bergel, courtesy of the National Library of Scotland

highlighted the need for expert knowledge and human input when developing visual AI and ML models. Bergel shared his insight into the current image recognition project 'Chapbooks printed in Scotland' examining the illustrations of digitised 17th to 19th century chapbooks (small, cheap books) held by the National Library of Scotland. Using EfficientDet, the Library's team tailored personalised ML models to find, sort and match images, successfully identifying 3,864 illustrations in 43,000 images. Bergel stressed that AI software requires well-curated data, and that the overall project benefitted from end-to-end use cases.

McQuaid, Papyan and Han discussed photo archiving using the Frick Art Reference Library's 500 existing numerical classifiers. Applying the deep-learning tools PyTorch and ResNet152, the project assigned descriptive tags to unclassified images. By developing an app with Zooniverse, the 'Henry Clay Tinder App', they enabled library staff to quickly review the automated tags of 8,661 images by swiping left (incorrect) or right (correct), finding that 67% were completely correct. However, while ML models can offer increased efficiency, the team emphasised the importance of human expertise.

Furthering the discussion by addressing the potential of ML to use image categorisation descriptions, John Stack (Science Museum) explained the approach used in Heritage Connector,

a linked-data project between the Science Museum Group and the V&A Museum. Drawing on Wikidata to identify connections between digitised images with basic descriptions, Stack highlighted the ability to use existing ML tools to build links between the museums' collections, creating clusters and categorisations to expand their knowledge graph and enable researchers to search records more holistically.

Accessing historical collections

Prioritising the user-experience in the application of ML, Einion Gruffudd (National Library of Wales) and Amanda Henley (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) addressed the current issues and processes involved in providing access to historical materials. Gruffudd shared the approaches to data-processing and digitising the Welsh National Broadcast Archive at the National Library of Wales. As the collection contains a vast number of audio-visual and textual materials in need of processing,
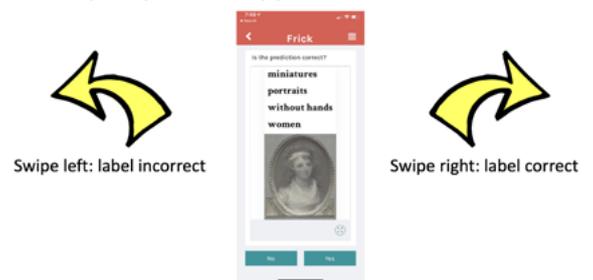
The 'Henry Clay Tinder' App. Image by John McQuaid, Vardan Papyan and X.Y. Han for the Frick Art Reference Library
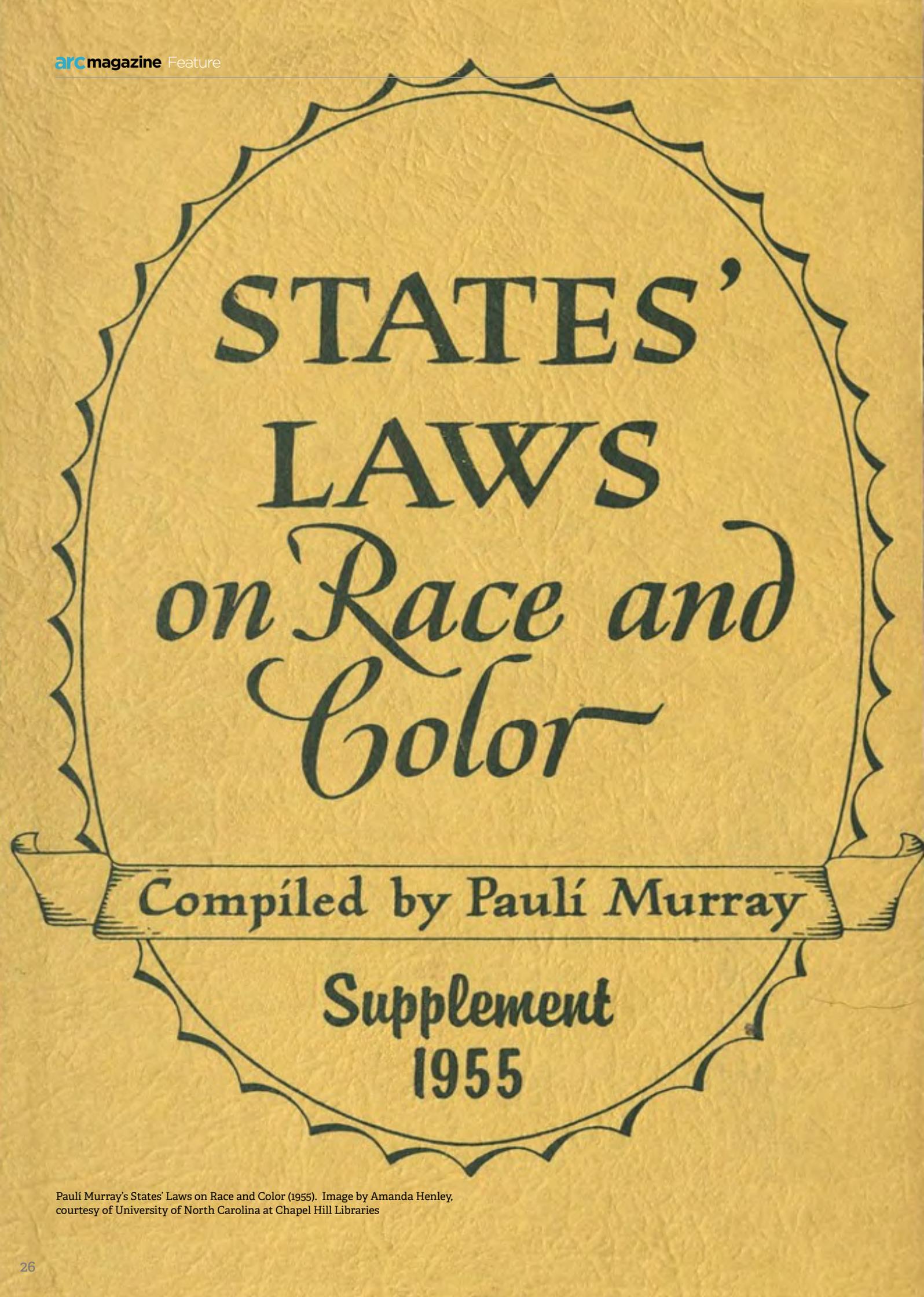
STATES'
LAWS
on Race and
Color

Compiled by Pauli Murray

Supplement
1955

Pauli Murray's States' Laws on Race and Color (1955). Image by Amanda Henley,
courtesy of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries

> AI and ML are opening up new opportunities and allowing cultural heritage organisations to be more productive and efficient, but at the same time, there must be a space for collective reflection.

automatically identify Welsh-language keywords and hopes to use volunteer crowdsourcing from Welsh-speakers to transfer data from the AI application, voice2text. Gruffudd stressed that as the contents are still being discovered these models are being employed cautiously to ensure the contextualisation of the collection and a positive user experience.

Henley outlined the processes, multiple expertise and ML training sets that go into making digitised materials searchable, using the On the Books project at the University of North Carolina's Chapel Hill Libraries as an example. The project uses text mining to list and contextualise racial segregation laws enacted in North Carolina during the Jim Crow period (1866-1967). Using character recognition software (OCR) and ML algorithms, the project team was able to identify 905 laws; 141 by experts, 411 by the model only and 353 confirmed by experts from the model. Henley stressed that the algorithms would not be capable of identifying racial discrimination in modern materials, but the team is developing a training set to identify Jim Crow laws in other US states.

While the ultimate goal of these projects is to employ ML and AI to make collections more available, the discussions highlighted the huge amount of work, time and money that goes into making specifically tailored models. Though the reproducibility of these models can present several issues, including data-protection and differing archival classifications, the overarching issue was a need to share methodologies and approaches across the sector.

Maintenance as innovation

This need was the main focus of the workshop's keynote presentation from Thomas Padilla, Director of Information Systems and Technology

Strategy at the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) in Chicago, Illinois. Padilla noted that "GLAMs have an opportunity to distinguish themselves in AI", and while the community differs in its approaches, it shares a common "set of contemporary commitments that seek to advance equity in the communities we serve". He offered three strategies to guide AI engagement: non-scalability, ethical AI and maintenance. Citing anthropologist Anna Tsing (University of California), Padilla stressed that non-scalability "supports the illusion of scalability", and he emphasised a need to acknowledge the variability of the world and non-scalable processes when employing AI and ML.

Addressing ethical values, and the need for legislation governing AI in the US, he suggested that positive and equitable AI depends on collective action because individualised attempts to do the right thing are ultimately unproductive. However, Padilla's key message came in his view of maintenance as innovation. He believes innovation in AI and ML should not be thought of as the creation of new technologies, but rather the alteration, restoration and renewal of information maintenance.

Overall, the workshop emphasised a need for closer collaboration across the GLAM sector. AI and ML are opening up new opportunities and allowing cultural heritage organisations to be more productive and efficient, but at the same time, there must be a space for collective reflection. Stephen Downie (University of Illinois) closed the workshop with a call for action to standardise existing ML models and features in order to save time, money and effort across the GLAM sector.

Dr Katie Aske is the Research Assistant for the AEOLIAN Network at Loughborough University, a UK/US project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities, investigating the uses of AI in cultural organisations. She is a literature academic and has worked on digital humanities projects with the Cambridge Digital Library and the DIGITENS Encyclopaedia.

Backchat

Maria Castrillo interviews Jonathan Ladd, Digital Impact and Communications Officer at The National Archives (UK) for this edition's Backchat.

1. Can you tell me about your background and your journey into the record-keeping sector?

I've always worked in communications but in different sectors before I started at The National Archives (UK). By joining the archives after an art auction house and an architecture school, you could accuse me of moving between organisations alphabetically! Jokes aside though, I was very keen to join the heritage sector and I've now been in post for three years. I've enjoyed trying to introduce some of the effective practices that I've seen elsewhere while learning lots from archives, too.

2. How would you describe your role at The National Archives (UK)?

In a nutshell, I look after the various channels that connect the archives sector to The National Archives (UK), allowing us to spread the word about how we can help and allowing archive professionals to share their thoughts, suggestions and needs with us in return. I work alongside my colleagues in the Archive Sector Development department and I manage our Twitter channel and the archive sector section of The National Archives' (UK) website.

3. What has been your greatest work achievement so far?

I'm not sure what my 'greatest' achievement is, but 2019 was the 150th anniversary of the Historical Manuscripts Commission (whose sector support role we continue

Jonathan Ladd, Digital Impact and Communications Officer at The National Archives (UK)

to this day). We hosted an event at the House of Lords to mark the occasion and to advocate for archives. I led on the creation of a brochure that promoted our history and ongoing work, and it was a proud moment to have my publication handed out at the House of Lords.

4. What has been the greatest work challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic?

I was very lucky that I could continue my role remotely without too much difficulty when the pandemic started. However, when it came to creating our annual printed publication 'A Year in Archives' with my colleagues we realised that COVID-19 was going

to prevent anyone from picking the leaflet up at events or receiving it at their offices. We needed to move the publication entirely online and this required a lot of re-thinking. However, I'm delighted to say that A Year in Archives 2020 did go ahead and you can still read all about the archive sector's fantastic achievements during a challenging year.

5. How do you think The National Archives (UK) can continue to lead and support the sector at this particular time when there is still so much uncertainty in the world around us?

It's undoubtedly a tough time for archives and many other organisations but we're trying

The National Archives (UK), Kew, Richmond @Shutterstock

to do everything we can to continue supporting the sector. We're regularly updating the COVID-19 guidance on our website and last year we created a COVID-19 Archives Fund to help save vulnerable analogue and digital records from being lost or dispersed. We're now building on this work by planning for a more permanent Records at Risk fund so that archives continue to receive the support they need. Whether you have a question about funding or another archives matter, our Regional Development Managers are always on hand for a call.

6. In your view, what is the greatest challenge facing the record-keeping sector at present?
I think the most important challenge is making sure that both the archive profession and archives in general are as welcoming to all as possible. The National Archives' (UK) strategy is called 'Archives for Everyone', which we in Archive Sector Development embrace, too. We're currently running a series of training sessions with Creative & Cultural Skills on inclusive recruitment. These events cover a wide range of topics, from

apprenticeships and volunteers to workforce development policies and working with freelancers.

7. And what is the greatest opportunity or opportunities?
I would definitely say digital. Despite the initial challenges (as I mentioned in my story about 'A Year in Archives') digital presents incredible opportunities for archives once you get going. Online events felt very unfamiliar in March 2020 but now far more archive professionals – from all over the country and overseas – can attend our events in a way that was previously impossible. As well as connecting people, we can now connect collections digitally. Our Manage Your Collections tool allows archives of all sizes to upload their collections data to our catalogue Discovery, making records everywhere easier to find and explore.

8. If you had to pick three favourite items from The National Archives' collection, what would they be and why?
This is a great question but such a tricky one, especially when we hold over 11 million records!

While I couldn't pick a favourite, I've definitely been fascinated by the records that my colleagues have selected for our 'With Love' exhibition. Personal love letters aren't something that you'd necessarily expect to find in a national archive but there are some incredible records from both famous individuals and people like you and me, especially as the criminalisation of homosexuality in the past meant that some private correspondence was seized as evidence.

9. We have been faced with an unprecedented crisis, what do you think is the most important contribution record keepers can make to a sustainable recovery in years to come?
Archives have been doing an incredible job continuing to look after their collections during the pandemic and this in itself will be essential to our long-term recovery. Some archives have even gone above and beyond, collecting new records relating to the pandemic, which will be invaluable to research and even everyone's general understanding of this period in years to come.

# Virtual reading rooms: a tale of two institutions

Thoughts from Matthew McMurray and Dr Janette Martin

The closure of archives to researchers during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the ability of anyone to conduct research and, by the summer of 2020, it was clear that 'in person' visits to reading rooms were not going to happen for some time. Even with the partial easing of restrictions and limited reopening of services it was obvious that for some people, physical visits were not an option, whether due to personal health vulnerabilities or being in countries still in lockdown. A technical solution was needed – and fast. What follows is a discussion of how staff at the Royal Voluntary Service Heritage Collection, Devizes and the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, Manchester, two vastly differing organisations, independently and in parallel, approached the challenge of live 'virtual' appointments.

At Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) what we lack in resources we make up for in ingenuity – and have done ever since we were founded in 1938. We only have one part-time member of staff and just a small, dedicated team of volunteers, but this has never held us back. In June 2020, we started scratching our heads trying to work out how to offer live remote viewings of documents in our collections. We had two main requirements. Firstly, that users could clearly read a full foolscap page of fuzzy carbon copy typescript on screen. And secondly, that we could add a watermark to the live broadcast to discourage sharing of copyrighted
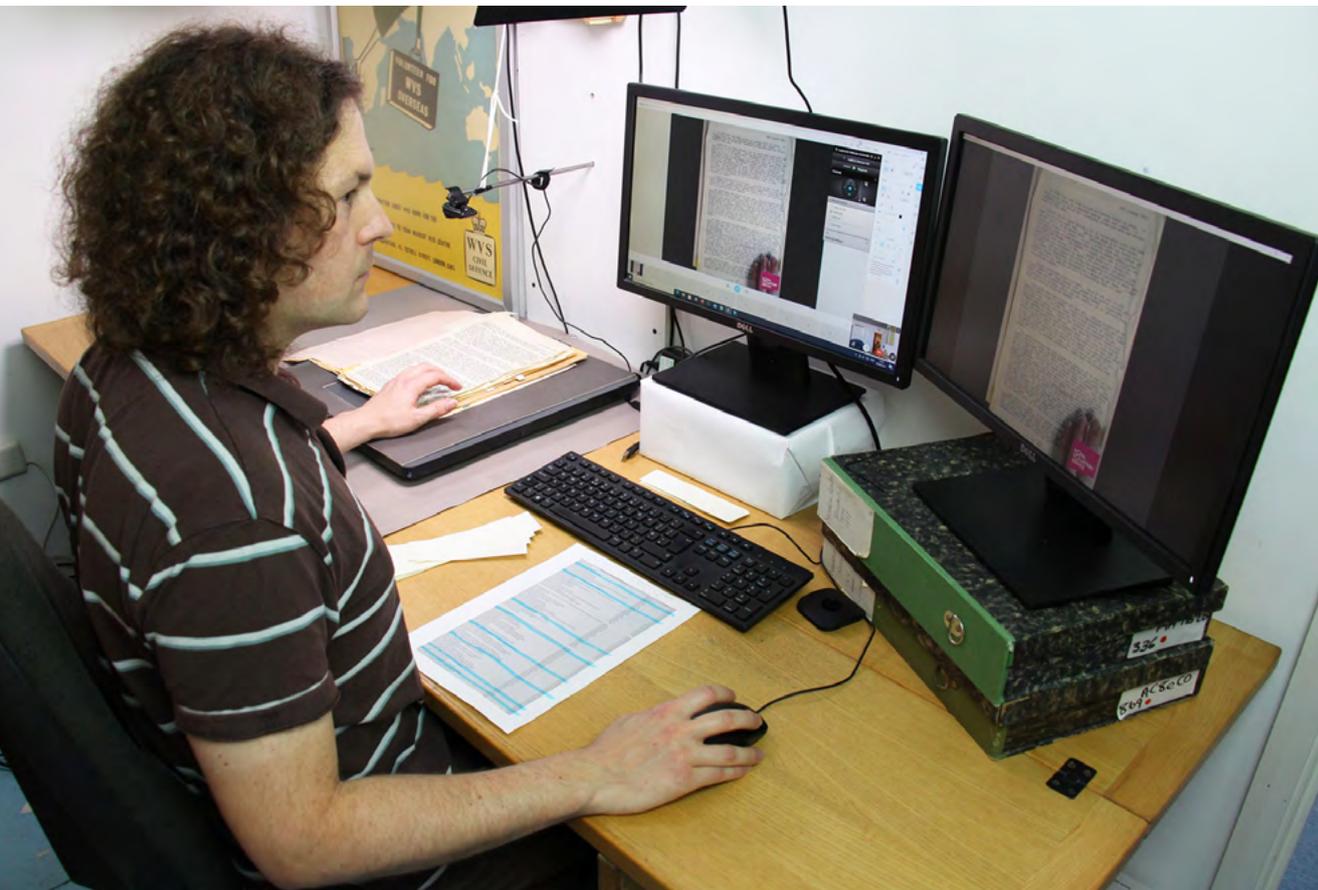
Setting up a virtual reading room appointment at the John Rylands Library. Image courtesy of the John Rylands Library.

material. We only had a budget of £100 to make this happen and figured the cheapest solution would be to use a webcam and a free video conferencing (VC) platform. We ended up gathering various webcams from friends, colleagues, and relatives to try them out with different VC platforms. Our initial attempts were far from successful, especially as compression artifacts on the VC platforms often made the text illegible.

After much frustration, one solution led to another. We found we needed a webcam with at least 1080p resolution which we found in a cupboard where it had been since 2008. We also realised that to get a good quality image across the VC platform we needed to use screen sharing rather than a direct feed from the webcam. We managed this by using an application called Manycam (£25 for an annual subscription), designed for YouTube content creators. It enabled us to view a full screen feed from the webcam on the computer monitor (which we could share) and to add a watermark and branding onto the live feed.

For our VC platform we ended up using Skype as it was the most universally used platform by the public and one of only a few to offer a reliable connection and free 1080p resolution transmission. Once the technical problem had been resolved, we then had to deal with whether it was in fact legal and here we need to thank The National Archives (UK) for advice on how virtual reading rooms fitted into existing copyright exemptions. All in all, this was a slow iterative process which had to be fitted in between our day jobs. With testing, and writing policies and guidance, it took us six months to get our system up and running. We launched in January 2021.

Meanwhile, staff at the John Rylands Research Institute and Library in Manchester were battling with the very same issues. We were particularly concerned for our internal researchers on time-sensitive projects, many of whom were unable to progress without access to special collections. The solution was gathering dust in a cupboard! About four years ago, we bought a visualiser to show

A reader's eye view of the Royal Voluntary Service Virtual Reading Room session. Image courtesy of Royal Voluntary Service
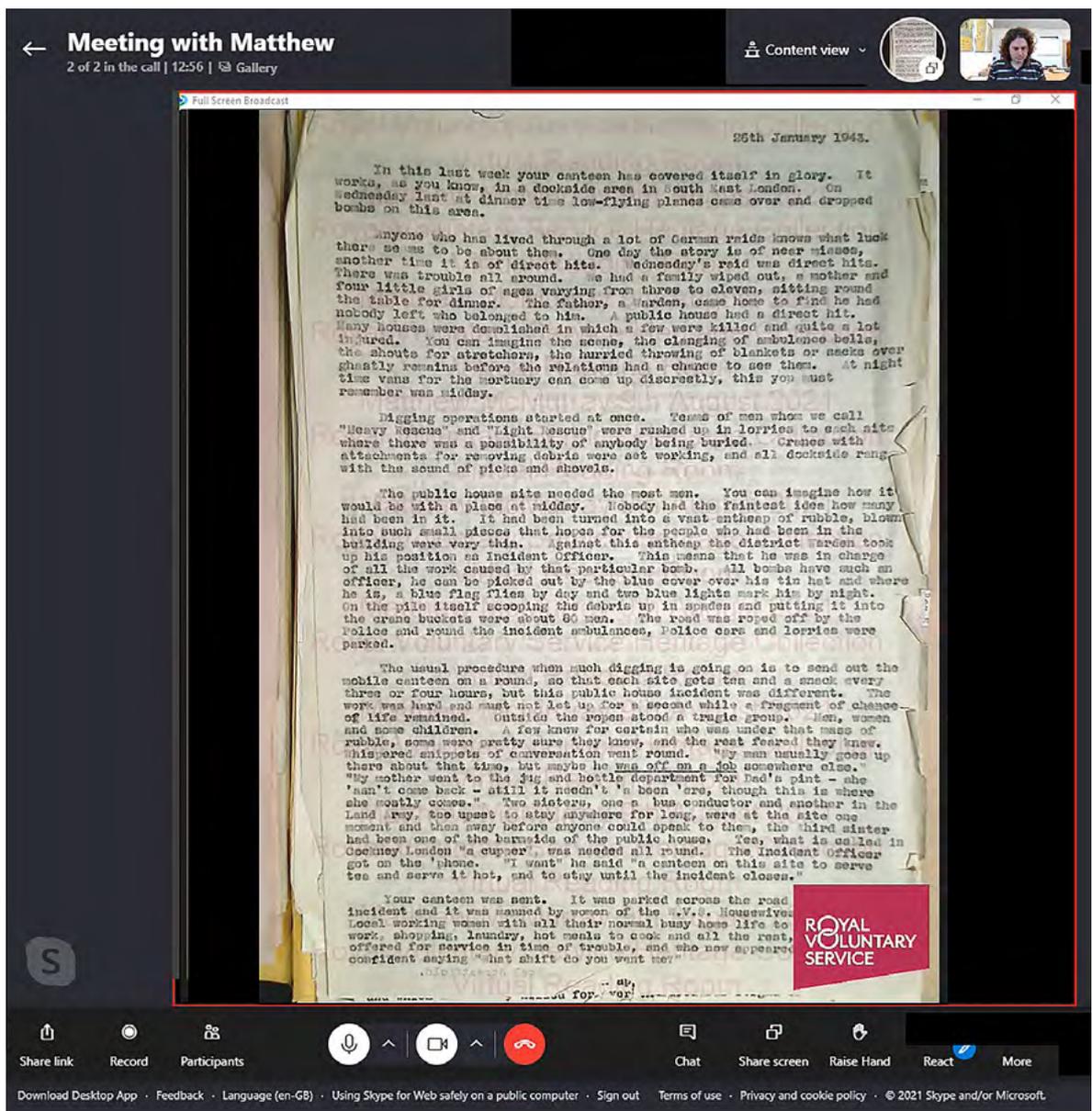
groups of students 'zoomed in' detail from a book or manuscript. It had been used infrequently, but during the pandemic, our Wolfvision VZ9.4L stole the show as a simple and effective way of sharing material via Zoom with a remote reader.

The concept is simple and involves two key pieces of hardware – a visualiser and a laptop, plus a Zoom licence (Zoom is preferable to Microsoft Teams due to the image quality and screen sharing options). This equipment makes it possible to offer real-time image capture and share documents with a researcher anywhere in the world. As our video demonstrates, an assistant talks to the researcher via the Zoom call and shares their screen. The remote reader will then instruct them on when to turn the page and when to pause. This set up works best for flat, standard size objects but we also developed strategies for trickier objects such as maps, tightly bound books and oversized, non-conventional materials. After some experimentation, we found that a GoPro with a magnifying lens works very well for showing flat objects that are too large for the visualiser. We have also experimented with PTZ (Position, Tilt and Zoom) cameras for other non-standard objects.

Camcorders have also generated impressive results.

These two different responses to a shared problem show that it doesn't matter whether you are a lone worker in a charity or part of a team in a large institution with a zoom licence, access to media services and an expert imaging team. It was ultimately a case of trial and error and a shared determination to serve our users that generated results.

We wanted to share our experiences with ARC Magazine readers so that colleagues across the sector can learn from our successes and mistakes. The Royal Voluntary Service has given several webinars on the development of its system and the John Rylands Research Institute and Library contributed to a recent Research Libraries UK (RLUK) conference. Both institutions are very happy for colleagues to contact us to find out more.

Virtual appointments are here to stay. Though they are resource intensive for staff, they offer a few benefits. This is particularly true in opening up collections to those without the financial

Setting up a virtual reading room appointment at the John Rylands Library. Image courtesy of the John Rylands Library.

> It was ultimately a case of trial and error and a shared determination to serve our users that generated results.

means to travel, and potentially offering a solution to the ethics of international travel for overseas researchers. For the archive profession as a whole, it is clear that there will be an expectation that all institutions will have to offer some virtual access. Indeed, RLUK has recently commissioned research into virtual reading rooms and virtual teaching spaces to enable and support good practice.

Matthew McMurray has been the Keeper of Heritage at Royal Voluntary Service for 15 years and developed its virtual reading room. In 2017, he pioneered the 'Million Wartime Women' project, the first use of crowdfunding by a UK archive, which has gone on to form a template for future projects across the archives sector. He is the Secretary of the UNESCO UK Memory of the World programme and a leading member of the Charity Archives and Records Managers Group (CHARM), an affiliate of the ARA's Section for Specialist Repositories. He is also the author of the influential study into the state and challenges in charity archives 'Charity archives in the 21st century.'

Dr Janette Martin is the Research and Learning Manager at the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, Manchester. In addition to her strategic lead on research and teaching, she curates the Modern History collections. Until very recently, Janette managed Reader Services. During the pandemic, Janette was closely involved in developing a virtual reading room and a virtual teaching space at the Rylands. She recently curated the digital and physical exhibition, Manchester's Guardian: 200 years of the Guardian newspaper. Janette is Vice Chair of the Society for the Study of Labour History, and on the Executive of the International Association of Labour History Institutions.

The Clevedon Pier & Heritage Community Archive in lockdown

The Clevedon Pier and Heritage Archive is a community archive that preserves and tells the story of this Victorian landmark at the Somerset seaside. The Grade 1 listed building was once described by Sir John Betjeman as "the most beautiful pier in England".

During lockdown, the volunteer team at the archive were kept busy with several projects, including cataloguing the contents of a large scrapbook of clippings and photos, making this unique and personal history of the collapse, saving and rebuilding of the pier more accessible to the public.

Engineering drawings from 1863 were opened and prepared for digitisation. Other digitisation projects included the scanning of a unique collection of documents and drawings recording the early days of Clevedon Pier from 1860 to 1890. Remote access to the collection was facilitated by making digital copies of items held in the archive available for inclusion in various publications. The transcription of 'The Little Letters', a collection of around 120 missives documenting the running of the pier from the second half of the 19th century, has contributed to making this small treasure trove more publicly accessible, a task that will be completed with the digitisation of all the letters.

While lockdown has been a worrying time for many, it has also motivated the volunteer team at Clevedon Pier to continue their invaluable work to preserve the unique heritage of this important building.

You can find out more about the volunteers and their work here.

CLEVEDON PIER & HERITAGE TRUST
COMMUNITY ARCHIVE

Archives reborn: recreating the 'record'

Recreating the Record is an electronic music album created using archive sound recordings from around Essex. It is a collaboration between the Essex Record Office (ERO) and Essex-based music collective, Resonance, using historical sounds as the basis of electronic music compositions.

Twelve musicians chose samples from the ERO's Essex Sounds website to create new works. Once the rights positions had been cleared, the artists were free to manipulate the recordings however they chose. This could be cutting the samples into pieces, changing the pitch and timbre using modular synthesis, or using guitar effects pedals to change sounds.

Ranging from ephemeral ambience to beat-driven industrial noise, the archives are reborn with a futuristic vision and a merging of the past and present. The tracks include dark, minimal compositions and uplifting passages which highlight the mixed history of Essex. Nostalgic sounds merge with machinery noises, echoing Chelmsford's industrial heritage. Field recordings capture the Essex countryside and beaches, combined with introspective electronic melodies. The ambience of Colchester's famous Zoo blends with trains and sampled orchestral TV programmes, inviting memories of days out and the journeys these archives capture.

The album is available on Resonance's Bandcamp page. All proceeds go to the Friends of Historic Essex charity, who help support the work of the ERO.

Click here for a closer examination of the archive sounds, which includes an interactive map showing where each sound was recorded.

Updates on Resonance events and work can be found on the project's Instagram account and on its website.

Persistence or obsolescence? Archives and archivists in the digital world

International records and archives management consultant **Laura Millar** reflects on the changing nature of documentary evidence over the past century, suggesting actions that can be taken to minimise the risks associated with digital databases and other forms of changeable documentary resources.

O n 9th February 1919, three months after the First World War ended, Sergeant Albert Thomas Giles, a soldier with the British Columbia Regimental Depot, died of influenza and pneumonia. Single when he enlisted in October 1915, Giles married Frances Emily Armitage in 1917. After his death, the Government of Canada issued a widow's pension of $95 to Frances, care of the Hare & Hounds pub in Burstwick, Hull, Yorkshire. We know this thanks to surviving documentary evidence from the misnamed 1918 'Spanish flu' pandemic.

The pandemic lasted two years and infected more than 500 million people and killed between 20 and 50 million worldwide.

A century later, there are still no accurate statistics about infection rates and deaths from the pandemic. Data and record-keeping protocols at the time were limited or non-existent, and information about the flu was gathered and disseminated haphazardly at best. What's more, many governments and military officials suppressed news of the disease, in part to maintain morale during the tumultuous last days of the war.

The surviving documentary evidence of the 1918 influenza pandemic exists largely in paper form: in government records, medical files, diaries and letters.

Confirmation of payment to Sergeant Giles' widow, paid on 26 August 1920. WWI Personnel Record: Giles, Alfred Thomas, regimental number 443471. Source: Library and Archives Canada/RG 150 1992-93/166 box 3526-14, .

Sergeant Albert Giles service record, showing his death on 9 February 1919. WWI Personnel Record: Giles', Alfred Thomas, regimental number 443471. Source: Library and Archives Canada/RG 150 1992-93/166 box 3526-14, .

Evidence of COVID-19 infections and deaths exist primarily in databases and digital systems, in server farms and in 'the cloud'.
© Shutterstock

> " The digital environment brings tremendous benefits, especially in terms of the flexibility and usability of content, but the risks cannot be ignored.

Records survived because they were set aside in filing cabinets or basements then left untouched, in some cases for decades. Only when someone – often an archivist – retrieved them and gave them order and context, could the records serve as a source of history.

A century later, we are in the throes of another global pandemic. COVID-19 has already infected more than 195 million people and killed more than four million worldwide. How do we know these numbers are accurate? And where is the documentary evidence – the stories – of those who suffered or died?

National and international health and data standards are far more robust now, and digital technologies allow authorities to share information easily. But digital content can be changed or deleted in an instant and the archivist rarely has a chance to intervene at the time the information is created to help guarantee that it – the evidence – can be protected and made available.

The challenge of persistence
Sergeant Giles' service record lives in a storage room

at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) in Ottawa. A digital copy is now available because 40 staff members at LAC spent four years digitising 622,290 First World War personnel files. The files could only be digitised because they had been safely stored for close to a century. Their physical form gave them a quality of persistence – a stability not shared with today's digital counterparts.

In 2021, evidence of COVID-19 infections and deaths exist primarily in databases and digital systems, in server farms and in 'the cloud'. This digital content is critically important, but it is anything but persistent. As archivists know better than most, the immediate value of digital data lies in their flexibility and transience, but their long-term value is only realised if the digital content maintains a quality of authenticity and integrity.

Unfortunately, there is an assumption – one shared by many scientists, government officials and members of the public – that someone 'out there' is actively capturing, preserving, and sharing data and records of the COVID-19 pandemic. This assumption is dangerously wrong.

The evidential challenge is twofold. Firstly, how can people trust the data we see today? Secondly, how do we know that digital sources of information and evidence will remain trustworthy tomorrow or decade from now?

In his thought-provoking book, _Records, Information and Data: Exploring the role of record keeping in an information culture_ (Facet, 2019) the English archival theorist Geoffrey Yeo writes about the importance of records as 'persistent representations', which have the capacity to endure beyond the circumstances that lead to their creation. Paper-based records such as First World War service files can be seen as persistent representations; they stand as surrogates for past actions or events. Digital databases and other changeable documentary content may not serve the same role if they are not protected.

The digital environment brings tremendous benefits, especially in terms of the flexibility and usability of content, but the risks cannot be ignored. We cannot necessarily rely on a digital source of information or evidence if that source is subject to perpetual change. But we also cannot maximise the benefits of the digital world if we 'freeze' a digital source too soon.

So, what should we do?

Collaboration is key

There is no magic solution, but records and archives professionals can support improvements by remembering that we cannot solve the problem alone. We cannot wait for digital evidence to age before we participate in its care. But we also cannot construct digital systems by ourselves: that is not our expertise. Rather than trying to be something we are not – data managers or systems analysts – we are wiser to work with our partners as participants in what I call the data-evidence ecosystem.

Our data and systems colleagues are specialists in the manipulation and presentation of digital data. Our speciality is ensuring that reliable sources of evidence exist, regardless of form or medium, so that they can serve as persistent representations. By working together, we can combine our strengths. We can ensure flexibility in the management of data while ensuring that digital evidence can be 'frozen' when needed.

Collaboration brings strength. As partners in the ecosystem, we can share our message more forcefully with the public, raising awareness of the value of data and evidence and the importance of discerning the malleable from the fixed. Working together, we can achieve persistence – for our profession and the materials we manage. If we

do not act creatively and collaboratively, we risk obsolescence: for ourselves and the evidence in our care. We need authentic statistics and authoritative digital sources of proof: a marriage of malleability and control.

We can mark the passing of Albert Giles because we have more than statistics and data points: we have tangible pieces of evidence of his life and death. Let us work collaboratively with our colleagues and the public now to protect and make available the digital evidence of life and death in these pandemic times.

Laura Millar is an international records and archives management consultant. Her work ranges from establishing local community archival programmes to developing electronic records management strategies. She received her master's degree in archival studies from the University of British Columbia, Canada, in 1984 and her PhD in archive studies from University College London in 1996. She is the author of the popular textbook **Archives: Principles and Practices** *(rev. ed. 2017), which received the Society of American Archivists' Waldo G. Leland Award in 2011. Her latest book, written for the public,* **A Matter of Facts: The Value of Evidence in an Information Age** *(2019), argues for public support for the protection of records, archives and data as sources of evidence.*

And finally...

arc magazine

Our next edition of the *ARC Magazine* is due out in November/December 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.

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 catherine.scotcher@shconsult.co.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.