ARCmagazine

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ARA Conference 2015 Special Issue

Call for Core Training Co-ordinators

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

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

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

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

Lizzy Baker, ARA Training Group Chair

Email: lizzy.aratraining@outlook.com

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

Archives & Records Association
UK & Ireland

ARCmagazine

Contents

Welcome to **ARC Magazine** November 2015

Welcome to the conference issue of *ARC*. This month the magazine is packed with articles written by members who attended the ARA Conference in Dublin, either as speakers or as delegates.

I was lucky enough to attend the event this year, which proved an excellent opportunity for continuing professional development (CPD), networking, keeping informed with developments in the sector and – perhaps most importantly – socialising with other professionals. So if you did not make the conference this year, then I thoroughly recommend that you attend in future.

Articles in this conference issue of *ARC* include Alison Diamond's insightful piece on what archival ethics mean in practice, and James Elder's controversial commentary which questions why recordkeeping professionals do not contribute their expertise to public debate. This issue also includes an overview of the conservation sessions by Emma Nichols, and a synopsis of the digital preservation (DP) stream by Mike Quinn. Rolled out for the first time this year, the DP sessions proved to be extremely popular with delegates.

Don't miss the photographs of the ARA presidential handover from Caroline Williams to Alex Buchanan. We wish Alex well in her new role. This issue provides an insight into many highlights of the ARA Conference, but you can also check out the ARA website and conference Twitter feed for further information and photographs:

www.archives.org.uk/ara-in-action/the-ara-conference.html
Twitter: @ARAconf
Hashtag: #ARA2015

Finally, thank you to all those who contributed articles at short notice – your assistance is greatly appreciated.

Ellie Pridgeon
Editor

opening lines

Tom Quinlan is the Keeper of Collection Care and Customer Service, National Archives, Ireland.

Professional colleagues from throughout the United Kingdom, Ireland and further afield assembled this year at the Doubletree Hilton Hotel on Leeson Street in Dublin for this year's ARA Conference. With the overall theme comprehensively set by the title of Challenges, obligations, or imperatives? The moral and legal role of the record keeper today, it was clear that this year's annual conference would offer an excellent opportunity for archivists, records managers and conservators to gather and reflect on the role of the information professional. We all work in an environment of increased awareness and understanding of the legal obligations encountered in performance of work, and are aware of the wider moral and ethical challenges surrounding the pursuit of the professional activities of information management.

Over the course of the three days, conference delegates were afforded the opportunity to hear papers presented by internationally-recognised experts and professional practitioners in information, records, archives and conservation management, on issues as diverse as preserving and providing access to information, privacy rights and digital preservation.

The conference opening address by Joan Burton, Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland, neatly encapsulated the prevailing theme of the conference, in which she stressed the significant role of compliant information management in facilitating accountability and the protection of citizens' rights, making explicit the human consequences and recognising the essential role that professional archivists and records managers could play in this regard. Joan Burton also acknowledged the extremely sensitive nature of some of the content of records and the obligation to ensure their appropriate management, sometimes through regulation.

Proving to be informative, lively and thought-provoking, presentations both expanded and tested the boundaries of our understanding of professional roles. They included presentations on digital preservation, explorations on the nature of legal regulation of information professionals in the performance of their work, as well as reflections on their role and significance as keepers of recorded information. Presentations on digitisation not only outlined the legal and moral dilemmas that are potentially confronted, but also treated of the conservation aspects, thereby acknowledging the increasingly interconnected nature of the functions of information professionals.

It became obvious that, no matter what our individual professional pre-occupations were, the overriding message to be taken away from this conference was that our work is now undertaken in an environment of increasing regulation, and cognisance must be taken of this.

What is also obvious is that information professionals are becoming less focused on the methodologies by which they work and, through necessity, are becoming much more focused on the wider managerial issues, including legal, surrounding how they perform their work.

It was wonderful to see so many Irish archivists, records managers and conservators feature in the conference programme, reporting on their practical experiences. It was also gratifying to be able to hear so many speakers of international standing present in Dublin. It is this facility that made attendance at this year's conference such a pleasure.

Tom Quinlan
Keeper of Collection Care and Customer Service,
National Archives, Ireland

Registration Scheme **news**

Conference is a moment in the year when we can come together as a profession to discuss new ideas. It also allows us an opportunity to share experiences with colleagues. On Thursday, at the conference information marketplace, members of the Registration Scheme sub-committee were in Dublin to do just that – to discuss new ideas about changes to the ARA's continuing professional development (CPD) offer, and to share with committee attendees experiences that might help them successfully submit their Registration Scheme portfolios.

It was encouraging to hear so many people express an interest in changes to the scheme. In particular, the conference attendees we spoke to were very supportive of the idea of revalidation. Under the current scheme, a professional registering towards the beginning of their career can find that they spend the next two or three decades of working life without their CPD activities having any structure or recognition from the ARA. Under the new scheme, professionals will need to demonstrate that they continue to maintain and develop their skills and knowledge.

Also encouraging – and something of a relief – was that we did not meet anybody who was not aware of the forthcoming changes to the Registration Scheme. A number of people were evidently keen to submit under the existing system. We encouraged those people to attend a 'Blitz-It' workshop, and keep in the back of their minds the remaining submission deadlines. These are:

1 April 2016
1 October 2016
1 April 2017
1 October 2017

There is not a huge amount of time left, but the deadlines are not so close that anyone should panic. The message to everyone we spoke to was the same: don't rush, focus on submitting a strong portfolio rather than submitting a weak one quickly.

Delegates enjoying the conference wine reception. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

" Don't forget: Existing candidates have 23 months to submit their portfolio under the existing Registration Scheme. "

Some people we spoke to were keen to get started on working towards Registration but had not yet enrolled. It's a little frustrating that motivated candidates cannot currently enrol. However, it is important that the new scheme is properly discussed at the planning stage. Registration will open again in 2016, and conversations at the conference suggest that a number of people are eagerly anticipating getting started. Our advice to all of those people was the same – enrolments may have paused but CPD continues. If you are thinking of enrolling on the Scheme in 2016, keep a record of your CPD activities now – don't let current enthusiasm diminish through inactivity.

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Richard Wragg
Communications Officer, Registration
sub-committee

Collecting **matters**

So you might have attended this year's ARA Conference, but what other training and events have you been to in the last year? How did you decide which would benefit both you and your organisation the most?

It's not always easy to argue for the time or the money to spend away from your day job, even when it seems so obviously important for your Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

The value and impact of any activity depend on who delivers the training or hosts the event, where it is held, and who else will be there. However, don't look at them in isolation.

Review what's available and draft your own schedule: a personal programme which balances your own development needs with your organisation's mission. Identify training and events which are complementary, linked thematically, or focused on particular issues, and you will have a stronger argument for funding and support.

You don't always have to leave the building for an education. Try new ways of engaging through webinars, online communities, listservs, following events in real-time via social media, scheduling reminders to seek out presentations or podcasts published post-event, contacting speakers directly for advice, or asking colleagues who do attend to target useful presentations.

Afterwards, be committed to writing up and sharing the learning. How will your organisation see the benefits reflected in the way you work? What will the impact be over the short, medium or long-term?

Be creative. ARA's continuing professional development is externally accredited. You do not have to do only ARA training to gain credits. Look at CILIP and the British Computer Society who run externally accredited training courses too.

Though some events will be closed to non-members, you might still benefit from online guidance and downloadable resources.

On The National Archives website we advertise our own training programme and promote relevant activities elsewhere:

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector

If you're not sure where to start, then maybe start with us.

Cathy Williams
Head of Collections Knowledge, The National Archives

Email: asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

David Mander. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

The perspective of the ARA Chair

Our conference theme, which sought to produce papers which explored the moral and legal role of the record keeper, was intended to provoke debate. I think it was a resounding success. As I am sure the conference organisers had hoped, discussion spilled over into the coffee, lunch and even the drinks events. There was much to think over – and quite a lot for my board colleagues and I to mull over.

Challenges, obligations or imperatives? Well certainly challenges, especially in managing the archives of the Troubles or the conflict in Northern Ireland. Our keynote address from James King explored the dilemma of creating records and attaching conditions of restricted access which could be disputed through legal processes. Brendan Lynn's paper on Ulster University's 'Conflict Archive on the Internet' (CAIN) project to provide online access to selected National Archives of Ireland and Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) records, was followed by Wesley Geddis' 'Cataloguing in conflict: Northern Ireland records of troubles'. This paper moved from the process to provide access to inquest and coroners' court records, to the sensitivities archive staff developed in working with those making the requests. Online catalogues are backed up by additional metadata to help inform the archive staff in the event of access requests. When providing surrogate records for inspection, the removal of overly graphic photographs and protecting individuals from identification through covering up car numbers were part of the process – but so too were the preparatory sessions with the families. I was struck by the professionalism involved at many levels, and the job satisfaction coming from working with people under potentially very trying circumstances.

Imperatives? I was part of a shared presentation on the ethics of disposal. The ARA has already been prompted to look at our own Code of Conduct, encouraged by The

National Archives' (TNA) guidance on deaccessioning and disposal, and also by our discussions with the British Records Association, which have led us to reconsider what our members not employed in professional posts should be asked to take into account. More than a decade has elapsed since our disciplinary panel has been convened – which is a good thing – but has also prompted us to take advice on how any changes in the law may have affected professional bodies' powers to deal with breaches of their rules. I was pleased to announce that we aim to publish a document for consultation by the membership by December of this year and, in line with other professional bodies, move from a Code of Conduct to a Code of Ethics.

Ireland provided another ethical take on what archivists ought to take into account in the papers from Niamh Brennan on providing access to mental health records, and Kirsten Mulrennan on archiving historical medical records, raising sensitivities where the data subjects had no say in what was being said about them. Even where records should normally be open, for example where the subjects are long dead, there may be ethical considerations for archivists to take into account in presenting and providing access to some medical records.

Dilemmas featured in the two-handed business session on Friday. Mike Anson led off with some good audience participation – and a graceful leap from the stage, microphone in hand – asking us who we would feel comfortable working for and what sort of records we would feel ok to work with. James Elder's piece on when recordkeeping professions should take up the cudgels in public debates was especially pertinent. Colleagues may have followed the debate initiated by The Guardian on the Royal Archives in which the critique might have been felt to have been aimed at the archive profession as a whole. There was a debate within the board, which included our Chief Executive and Head of Public Affairs, on whether we should intervene. Careful reading prompted us to think that the attack was on the archive policy of the Royal Archives and that intervention would on that occasion have been counter-productive. However, both that debate and James' paper have prompted us to think about what guidance we should have to hand for future cases, for example where public statement rather than unpublished advocacy would be beneficial and how best to do this.

These were my conference highlights. I was unable to follow my own advice to join the conservation and digital preservation strands and, for family reasons, was unable to go to Thursday's sessions. Yet it was pleasing to hear that the 'Archives for the 21st Century' review workshop was

James King. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Mike Anson. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Drinks reception at the Royal College of Physicians. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Lord Mayor of Dublin with delegates at the Royal College of Physicians. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Drinks reception at the Royal College of Physicians.
Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Delegates at the gala dinner wine reception.
Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Delegates at the gala dinner wine reception.
Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Address by Ross Higgins at the Royal College of Physicians.
Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

packed to the doorway and beyond – was this the most popular workshop of the day?

We had a lovely venue for our drinks reception on Wednesday at the Royal College of Physicians, and a warm and commendably succinct welcome from the Lord Mayor of Dublin. If I have one memory that is less than rosy of our Dublin conference, it comes down to sound – too little in our opening session, and for me a little too much amplification for the band at the dinner. I recalled my daughter, aged three, putting her hand over her ears at an outdoor concert many years ago and saying, 'Too loud Daddy!', and beating a hasty retreat. At least that spared my fellow dancers from my ungainly cavorting!

David Mander
Chair, ARA

Friday morning session speakers, including Dara Price (right) and Tamara Thornhill. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

What do archival ethics mean in practice?

Possibly the most fascinating talks at the ARA Conference were those delivered on Friday morning – the morning after the night when archivists danced their way into the small hours and could potentially have slumbered through the presentations. Instead, archival ethics were given a practical make-over, with speakers calling us to action to apply them in real life.

Dara Price presented the Canadian government's commitment to open information, accountability and engagement by shifting the emphasis on access to information, to one where government records are open by default and only closed when essential. A situation had built up where many records were entering purgatory where access was closed pending review. For these files, access to information had to be requested via a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, leading to a review of the closed file resulting in most cases in the file being opened. To avoid perpetuating this situation, record creators are now being pushed to clarify at the point of transfer to the archives whether a record series is subject to exemptions and, if it is, to establish a process whereby this series will be reviewed. Dara raised the question of whether permanently-closed record series were worth preserving and whether public servants will respond positively to the risk of being held accountable if open information is achieved. She highlighted the positive, trusting relationships that can be built in the light of open information, and the potential for multiple voices and perspectives to be heard.

In a similar vein, Tamara Thornhill and Peter Sloane presented a case study of providing access to information as experienced by Transport for London (TfL) – an organisation facing particular challenges having the legal obligations of a public sector organisation and also running a commercial business. In particular, the speakers emphasised the cost of responding to FOI enquiries. In a proactive move to improve the situation, closure periods are now based on the pertinent dates of the majority of the material contained in a particular file, rather than the final date. This has enabled files to be opened up more quickly as well as confirming the archivist's responsibility for the files in their care.

Tom Quinlan turned our attention away from the practicalities and towards the more philosophical questions facing archivists today. We are subject to legal obligations to preserve or destroy particular record series and have a duty to provide access. We also have to accept that, where information has been supplied in confidence, enabling access to it can be seen as a breach of good faith. Within an organisation or institution, we have a mandate from our employers on how we are expected to act. How much discretion does an archivist actually have when determining whether access to information will cause 'distress'? Is there even any clarity on what constitutes 'distress'?

Whilst we all theoretically agree that open information is a good thing, individuals have rights in regard to that information, particularly as regards the confidentiality of their personal data and, additionally, a recognised right to be forgotten. Archivists can no longer consider themselves passive custodians, but rather people who acquire, manage and provide access through legislation.

James Elder presented perhaps the most provocative paper of the morning by asking why archivists as a profession are not making themselves heard when questions arise which relate directly to our expertise. In particular, James referred to the ongoing campaign for the publication of all clinical trials, and the recent 'outing' of MPs and government officials using personal email addresses to avoid FOI and public scrutiny. These issues impact directly on the creation of a complete historical record – is it not therefore the duty of archivists to participate in the wider political discourse and to speak out in defence of our professional ethics?

Mike Anson challenged the audience to put their cards on the table, asking whether there are companies whom we would not work for – tobacco companies, banks – and what do ethics mean in this context? If you work for a company, you have to accept what that company does, and that the records are preserved essentially for the use of the company. You need to preserve the archive before you can provide access to anyone, but the archivist is there to protect the record, not the organisation. Is it reasonable to expect a company to preserve archives which might threaten its shareholder value? Would or should an archivist destroy records which threaten the company? Businesses do not keep archives for the public good – some are preserved for legislative (tax) reasons, some for institutional memory. A business archive cannot be an objective record, but it can be contextually accurate, providing a transparent record of company business. If the record is preserved, then the story can be told rather than being destroyed.

Few of us are privileged enough to be able to pick and choose an employer who shares our particular values. The fact that we have our own individual values is part of the overall dilemma: should we be true to our own values, to our professional values or to our employers' values? How far should we expect these three sets of values to overlap?

It is part of the archivist's unhappy lot in the contemporary data-rich world that we must make our records as open and accessible as possible, whilst stringently protecting personal and commercial data. We believe that records have an intrinsic value and should be preserved, even if they

Delegates dancing after the gala dinner. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

cannot be made available now – contexts will change, and the records will then provide essential evidence to enable the full story to be told. How do we make ethical decisions in a world where issues, governments and companies are rarely black and white? How many companies have no skeletons in their cupboards? How many governments are really squeaky clean and have never been involved in any undesirable activities from slavery to selling weapons? Contexts constantly evolve: governments change, undesirable activities are exposed, and attitudes change.

There are no simple answers to any of these questions. Just this morning, as I sat down to write up my report on these sessions, I read an article about the British Library's refusal to take and preserve the archive of the Taliban Sources Project, apparently from a concern that through preserving and providing access to this archive, it might violate counter-terrorism laws. How should we as archivists react ethically to this news? Is this a moment for us to speak out, as James Elder suggested?

As archivists, we may lead comfortable existences in our safe and comfortable boxes, but real life is just outside and perhaps we need to take up the gauntlet thrown down by these speakers, to open the flaps and engage with it.

Alison Diamond
Curatorial Officer, National Records of Scotland

Mark Eccleston and Helen Fisher. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

A first-time delegate's view

Dublin was my first ARA Conference and proved itself to be a valuable event. I was impressed that the organisers had secured the attendance of Joan Burton, Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland, who gave the conference address on the opening morning. This was followed by a strong international contribution over the course of the three days, with papers presented by delegates from America, Australia, Canada and China.

Although all papers stimulated discussion and questions, some presentations really stood out. As a historian, I found Margaret Procter's paper particularly interesting as she questioned whether archivists had lost their sense of purpose. Suggesting that we should not always align ourselves with (forever changing) societal priorities, Margaret argued we should focus on – and constantly promote – our unique position of safeguarding and providing evidence.

We heard interesting papers from James King on the Boston College case and the associated difficulties

of collecting oral histories, some of which described atrocities in Northern Ireland. Niamh Brennan and Kirsten Mulrennan stimulated debate concerning privacy and access to mental health records. James Elder questioned why the ARA – and archivists in general – appear to be largely invisible in the media. Using various examples including the right to be forgotten and news of leaked emails from government departments, James wondered why archivists are rarely seen to commentate publicly on such issues. It was a thought-provoking paper, followed by a lively discussion session in which David Mander, ARA Chair, explained the difficulty the ARA has in finding time to ascertain a groundswell of opinion, and balancing this with the media's immediate need for comment.

The award for the most refreshing presentation must go to Heather Jack. Which of us is likely to forget Heather's remarkable, energetic and breathless delivery reinforcing the value of adopting a holistic approach to information governance? To encourage

Jon Elliott, Ross Higgins, Joan Burton and John Chambers. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Heather Jack. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Joan Burton, Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Ancestry at the information marketplace. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

a room full of delegates to sing along to an archivist's version of 'Big Spender' is no mean feat. Well done, Heather!

I was impressed with the information marketplace, in particular the display of goodies being given away by the Ancestry stand. I came away with a very smart lime-green notebook and a useful little torch! The array of technologies on display at the marketplace was inspiring – it was like some sort of archivists' fantasy world. If only budgets weren't such a big issue…

Throughout the conference, I did think that there appeared a dearth of attendees from local authority services. Although this is perhaps unsurprising in the current climate, is this something ARA should investigate? Can anything be done to ensure a more balanced cohort of attendees in future?

All in all, I left the conference feeling inspired, much more than I had expected to be. Well done and thank you to all those involved in planning and facilitating the conference – it is appreciated and you did an excellent job!

Mark Eccleston
Archivist, University of Birmingham

Collecting Ireland's archaeological heritage

Rachel Barrett. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

The National Monuments Service (NMS) archive forms part of the Irish government Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and plays a key role in the protection and management of the archaeological heritage of the state. Our archaeological monuments range from ringforts and dolmens to castles and church sites, with new monuments being discovered weekly. The count currently, which stands at 153,218, can be searched on our website:
www.archaeology.ie

Every aspect of monument protection and management is overseen by seven operational units, including the archive unit, responsible for the management of storage, preservation, digitisation and access to the collections of these units. The collections consist of c.500,000 individual items in a range of formats, from maps and photographs to inventories and microfilm.

Our primary users are in-house colleagues and the general public (archaeology students, local historians, archaeological companies and architect firms). Both the archaeological survey records and archaeological excavation reports are accessible to researchers. We operate from two locations: the historic Custom House in Dublin city centre, and off-site storage amounting to 3,800 square metres in North Co. Dublin. In terms of developing a state-of-the-art research centre with the complete range of archaeological collections – i.e. paper records and finds available under one roof – this co-tenancy agreement is a welcome step in the right direction.

The downturn in the Irish economy in 2008 hastened the necessity for a dedicated archive for the associated documentation from archaeological excavations. When development ceased, archaeological companies, employed on road and housing developments, were effectively left with no work and faced high costs for storing archaeological archives. There was no clause in the licence conditions for them to deposit archives with the NMS, and they were only obliged to state where and in what condition archives were to be kept.

In 2008, following consultation and pilot studies with relevant stakeholders, the first dedicated archaeological archive in Ireland was established by Dublin City Council, with Dublin City Library and Archive responsible for the management of the archaeological archives from c.2,500 licensed excavations in Dublin City.

However, there was still no obligation for the submission of archives from the other (almost 20,000) excavations in the Republic of Ireland. Despite having no legal obligation to collect these archives, we recognised we had a moral obligation as the government department who issued the licences to excavate, to step in and prevent this unique material from being lost. Guidelines and a MS Access donations database programme were produced, both designed to make the process as straightforward as possible with minimal additional cost and effort. A key decision to encourage donations was to provide depositors with archive-quality boxes. Guidelines on preparing archives for deposit are provided, with depositors encouraged to contact us if a collection type has not been included. As

Trim Castle, County Meath, Ireland. Photograph Copyright NMS, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Boyle Abbey, County Roscommon, Ireland. Photograph Copyright NMS, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

this programme is in its infancy and is new to us all, open communication with both parties is another key element.

There are 45 accepted collection types, such as finds registers, photographs and stratigraphic reports. Each of these has been assigned a unique identifier, the intention being that items requiring different storage conditions can be easily identified, removed and appropriately stored. Material is to be sorted by licence number, metal fastenings removed, the material placed in archival boxes, and photographs put in archival pockets. Anything rolled is to be kept rolled and placed in tubes, anything flat is to remain flat and placed in folders. The donations database, which includes key data elements and standardises information entered, is then completed. A unique identifier is assigned to the company depositing based on the company name, donation number for that company, and box number within the donation e.g. ABC/001/001. Depositors select 'box 1', enter licence number and site address, and select each sub-number for the relevant collection types for that specific licence. They then select 'box 2' and repeat the procedure. A box list, transfer list and labels can be printed for each box directly from the programme. Archive staff carry out sample checks, the database programme is uploaded to our main collections database, and the boxes transferred to the off-site repository. To date, nine companies have deposited material amounting to c.85 licences and c.500 boxes, with deposits pending for eight further companies. It is a simple, straightforward system and has so far proven to be a very effective means of recording the format and volume of material being deposited.

Overall, depositors are very happy with the programme, particularly as they do not incur a cost for archival boxes. They appreciate the potential for researchers of having paper records and finds stored on the same premises. The programme is a great achievement, the result of us recognising we had a moral obligation, as professional archivists and archaeologists, to lay the foundation for the establishment of a fully functioning national archaeological archive. We are actively listening to the demands of depositors and adapting our programme to reflect such. We are aware of issues surrounding the deposit of huge digital datasets, which is certainly something to be addressed, but our aim is to make the deposit of archaeological archive with the NMS archive a condition of licence applications. However, until we have gained recognition from department heads of the importance and unique potential of the NMS collections and investment in such, in terms of an increase in staff and funding, all we can do with the funding and staff we currently have is accept and manage deposits as best we can, and implement policies which conform to archival standards.

Rachel Barrett
Archivist, NMS

From filth to the future: reviewing the ARA training offer

All of us will, at some point, have worked with archival material we may have found distressing, difficult or legally dubious. Enquiries could bring us to 1960s coroners' records, or an 1875 asylum casebook, or a graphic account of 16th-century torture. Once innocent diaries can become legal minefields as new allegations force us to re-interpret and re-examine their content as societal norms develop. If this hasn't happened to you yet, we can state with confidence – it can, it will, and it will hurt.

The session we hosted at ARA 2015 was based heavily upon the Northern Region's 2013 'Filth: obscenity and ethics in the archives' mini-conference, and was designed to get delegates thinking about the role that the ARA could – and perhaps should – play in supporting members dealing with difficult, disturbing and legally or ethically-dubious collections. The exercises were based on real experiences sent in by ARA members, and featured issues including: "I still sometimes find myself picturing the photograph from a coroner's notebook showing the image of a man who had been murdered by having his head nailed to a tree", and "male reader requesting (repeatedly) access to 1950s photographs of schoolgirls in gym clothes".

Sometimes we are aware we will be working with records that will contain content that we will find upsetting. Those images and words may stay with us for a long time. However, we are just as likely to open a file or respond to an enquiry that brings us unexpectedly face-to-face with graphic evidence that life – for people like us in the recent past – has often been defined by some manner of tragedy. It is our duty – and privilege – to care for the memory of these people so that in the future, others need not suffer the same.

Our responses to these collections are dependent on our personalities and experiences. Most of us will work with something that will shock or upset us – it might be mortuary photographs, mental health records, animal cruelty files, or evidence of child abuse.

Jess Carlson addressing the workshop. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Workshop delegates were asked to sort the issues provided into those which they felt they needed emotional support to deal with, and those which may be helped by practical advice and training. Some of the results were surprising – for instance, there was much unease at processing and making available content that may upset third parties. There was also a desire for training in dealing with requests from customers for embarrassing (but not legally exempt) data. Delegates clearly expressed a desire for training and support in dealing with content related to death and inquests.

Beyond this, it was felt that the ARA should develop links with other existing organisations to share information in coping with emotive and distressing material, provide access to counselling services, establish an archival ethics case panel, and formulate a course on dealing with challenging cases (and clients).

Gary Brannan addressing the workshop. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Delegates discuss scenarios at the workshop. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

ARA Training Group members Jess Carlson and Hannah Jones chat to Jon Elliott. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Some of us are lucky enough to work in organisations where we have access to confidential counselling help lines or supportive colleagues. Regrettably, this is not everyone's experience, and it is clear that financial restrictions mean that occupational staff support services are becoming increasingly unavailable. Where they are accessible, those services are often unable to address the specific needs of archivists who are working with these collections. As professionals, we will talk amongst ourselves about our ethical dilemmas and disturbing collections, but for various reasons we may not want to be seen by our employer to need additional support. Those working alone may be left with no support network whatsoever.

This workshop helped us to identify initial areas where training could be developed. These include strategies for managing emotions and reactions related to grief and bereavement, sources of emotional support, training related to emotional resilience and stress management, and conflict resolution.

As fellow professionals, fellow travellers and fellow human beings, we cannot leave fellow professionals behind or leave another of us to suffer, working alone, with the records of some of the darkest days imaginable, unfettered, unfiltered, and unsupported. We cannot leave it to the employers, because they can't. We cannot leave it to the archivist alone, because we shouldn't. Our 'Filth' session made us think a little more about our needs, and what we need to do to help each other in this small community. Each of us works in a unique bubble, similar to others but not the same. Yet we believe this issue – of supporting each other in working with difficult collections – transcends these boundaries. Hopefully, further work on the training and support structures both within and without the ARA will be able to take us from filth, to the future.

Lizzy Baker

Archivist, East Riding of Yorkshire Archives and Vice-Chair of ARA Training Group

Gary Brannan

Archivist, Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York

Dublin' my knowledge: an overview of the conservation sessions

Father and daughter conservators: Richard and Emma Nichols. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

I was very impressed that the Irish Deputy Prime Minister opened proceedings, a nod to the status of the ARA and the work that we collectively do within archives. Then we were off, head first, into the conservation talks, with two presentations by teams of conservators from the National Library of Ireland (NLI) and the National Archives of Ireland (NAI). Both talks discussed how to overcome the struggles faced when working on large-scale collections, in finding a balance between prioritising, compromising, preserving and conserving. The NLI extolled the use of online survey builders such as: www.kwicksurveys.com

I grew up knowing about the ARA through my father, Richard Nichols. Richard is Senior Conservator at Staffordshire Archive and Heritage Service. I remember as a child being aware of him going to ARA Conferences and coming back enthusing about the joy of sharing knowledge, ideas and discoveries with friends. Then lo and behold, I too became a conservator, and in Dublin we both attended the conference as separate professionals in our own right. An amazing and enjoyable experience.

Richard gave a presentation on the conservation and rebinding of a privately-owned illuminated parchment psalter. The psalter had been severely trimmed and rebound in the early nineteenth century, and heavily vandalised, with many of its illuminated letters cut out. Preparing the materials, parchment, alum tawed skin and quarter sawn oak boards, led to a visually-stimulating and technically-informative presentation. It was wonderful to get deeply involved in the intricacies of treatments and follow the thought and decision-making processes used.

The afternoon plunged us into the wonderful, if slightly gulp-inducing, world of science. The talks by Matthew Collins and David Mills described the methods used for analysing collagen to determine parchment species, and the uses of x-rays in deciphering unreadable or inaccessible texts. Both talks were enlightening and accessible, and the scientists were keen to highlight their aim for mutually-beneficial results between conservators and themselves, which lead to the better understanding of the cultural heritage for which we all care.

The evening reception was a great opportunity to socialise with other delegates, and several of us carried on the festivities with some live music and glasses of Guinness in Temple Bar.

I paced myself at breakfast on Thursday. Having had an enormous breakfast, lunch and dinner the day before I had learnt my lesson – Hilton buffets can lead to overindulgence! I was asked by the conference organisers to assist in writing short descriptive highlights of the day's sessions for the ARA website. It was great to be involved in making the conference accessible to those not able to make it to the live event.

Thursday's talks commenced with two presentations from the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York. Conservation Technician Tracy Wilcockson discussed how digitisation fits

Practical demonstration by Catherine Dand. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

The conservation session. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

> 66 *The wide range of talks and demonstrations were delivered in a supportive atmosphere and spanned all aspects of our work, from the glamorous to the gritty, with a palpable feeling of camaraderie.* 99

with the aims of conservation, and how to ensure that digitisation projects with tight deadlines impact on collections in a positive way. Conservator Catherine Dand gave a stimulating talk about the increasing need for conservators to be arbitrators, whether interdepartmentally when collaborating on a project, or within the conservation profession regarding conflicting perspectives. Personally, as a conservator nearing the end of one digitisation preparation project and about to begin another, I found these talks extremely helpful, and was glad to discuss and compare notes with Catherine at the end of her presentation. Catherine also introduced us to the material ferro sheet which she has been using with neodymium magnets to facilitate the removal of creases and folds in documents. A demonstration produced a lot of excitement and everyone was clamouring to get hold of the supplier's details so we could all buy some for ourselves.

Rebecca Honold from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge demonstrated how much of a life-line research is when making treatment decisions, especially if faced with something challenging such as the badly water and mould-damaged disbound parchment manuscript, which was the focus of her presentation.

Vicki Manners' hotly-anticipated talk on red rot produced a lot of discussion. Currently training as a conservator on the ARA training scheme whilst also working as the sole conservator at Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service, Vicki has been investigating treatment approaches to red rot, having discovered her archive is over-flowing with the tell-tale symptoms of powdery volumes. Vicki drew upon her recent results from outreach on the Midlands Conservators Group email thread, discussed the pros

The conservation session. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Conservators relaxing with a drink. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Natalie Broad. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Jagjit Singh. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Tracy Wilcockson. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

www.archives.org.uk

" *It was wonderful to get deeply involved in the intricacies of treatments and follow the thought and decision-making processes used.* **"**

and cons of using consolidants by talking us through her experiments, and weighed up the use of buffered enclosures to contain the worst of the damage and to protect the bindings and handlers.

The Thursday sessions were wrapped up with two very different examples of map conservation. Rachel Wales from Gloucestershire Archives discussed her project of 116 tithe maps, and Lucy Angus from The National Archives spoke about her project working with one very large map. It was interesting to draw contrasts between the talks, as each project highlighted complexities presented by scale, whether in size or number. Rachel described the journey of conserving a vast collection, all of which presented complex individual needs, with a very limited budget, time restraints and resources. Clever time-management and very efficient planning demonstrated that no task is impossible if you approach it well prepared. Lucy told the story of the conservation of a three by four metre map which became a departmental venture due to its scale. Stop motion filming of the process of lining the map fantastically illustrated the complicated and challenging nature of such a project. A special gantry was built over the map to enable conservators to apply tissue linings to the entire verso of the map, with as many as twelve conservators working on the map at any one time.

The day ended with the gala dinner and swing band. More delicious food, more opportunities for networking, more glasses of Guinness, and a swing dance lesson ended the day with a whirl.

On Friday we all staggered down to breakfast and began the day with a talk about the conservation of Scottish Referendum ephemera. The size, scale and diversity of the items and materials, from badges and banners to a giant YES sign, showed this to be a daunting prospect. Plastics are not a material I have yet tackled within conservation and I found the talk and handout sheet by Shona Hunter from The National Library of Scotland very interesting.

Caroline De Stefani from the London Metropolitan Archives gave a very thought-provoking presentation examining historic conservation treatments from the 1920s up to the current day of a large collection of parchment session rolls. Caroline evaluated the pros and cons of each treatment, and concluded that although methods have evolved over the last 90 years, no decade has yet managed to reach the perfect balance between item accessibility, item integrity, treatment reversibility, optimum storage of items, and ease of digitisation.

Jagjit Singh, Director of Environmental Building Solutions Ltd, and Natalie Broad, Assistant Archivist at The Rothschild Archive in London, gave an informative presentation about mould attacks on collections. They used three case studies of mould attacks to reveal how they tackled outbreaks. Having been shown how mould can strike at any time in any place, we were urged to practice vigilance, ventilation and vocalisation, and in short, to be bold with our mould!

At the close of the conference, I went back to Cambridge brimming with information. The struggles modern conservators face with constant budget cuts, limited contracts and hours, the necessity to balance and juggle workloads, all the while striving to make time for professional development and outreach, could fill you with despair. However, for me, the main take-away feeling from the conference was one of hope and enthusiasm. The wide range of talks and demonstrations were delivered in a supportive atmosphere and spanned all aspects of our work, from the glamorous to the gritty, with a palpable feeling of camaraderie. Meeting conservators from all over the world was an invaluable experience for me, and I am already excited about next year's conference.

Emma Nichols
Book and Paper Conservator,
Cambridge University Library

"Positive findings are around twice as likely to be published as negative findings. This is a cancer at the core of evidence-based medicine."
- Ben Goldacre

Silence in the archive:
why are the recordkeeping professions not contributing their expertise to public debate?

My paper discussed what happens when questions in which we have professional expertise emerge in public debate. I considered two examples where that has happened, and talked about what conclusions we can draw about our professional presence in the public sphere.

There were two caveats to my paper: first, no criticism was intended of anyone working in the sectors I discussed. Second, I spoke in a personal capacity. I am employed as a professional archivist, but these are my own views and not necessarily those of my employer.

My principal contention was this: we are not making our professional voices heard in public, and we should do. My first example was the publication of clinical trials. The randomised clinical trial is our best tool for understanding the safety and efficacy of a given drug. However, there is no obligation on pharmaceutical companies to publish all the trials they carry out, and it appears that they do not. Trials that suggest that a new drug is safe, effective and better than the competition are, it seems, far more likely to be published than those that don't. Moreover, the existence of the unpublished trials is not disclosed.

The drugs currently on the market were trialled in past decades, and many of these trials are missing. Hence this becomes an archives and records management issue. This issue is a major one, of undoubted importance to society at large. It has had significant media coverage and has been discussed in Parliament. I posed the question: why have archivists and records management professionals not been prominent in the debate?

My second example concerned Michael Gove and his special advisors at the Department for Education (DfE). In 2011, it became apparent that they believed that emails sent and received from personal email accounts were out of scope of the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) – even when they discussed government policy. They had all been making use of private Gmail accounts, and it was also established that they had unilaterally deleted a number of emails from their departmental email accounts.

Again, there was much media coverage, but all couched in terms of FOI, whereas the Public Records Acts were also at stake. There were few comments from the archives community, and although the Information Commissioner was open and forthright in his criticism of Gove, there were no public interventions from The National Archives or the ARA.

I suggested that if official records are not being created or are being inappropriately destroyed, is the archives profession perhaps failing in its duty to the defence of

> 66 *Are archivists engaging sufficiently with wider political discourse and making their voices heard in civil society?* 99

David Mander chairing the session. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

the record by not flagging this? To stop it, are archivists engaging sufficiently with wider political discourse and making their voices heard in civil society? These are two examples, but there are many others: Hanslope Park, the right to be forgotten, the National Health Service (NHS) CareData programme and so on.

Viewed by the outsider, a failure to engage could arguably mean that, as professionals, we are collectively breaching our own ethical codes – through acts of omission we are not protecting the record or promoting its accessibility.

I am aware that this is a desperately unfair accusation! There are many legitimate reasons why we do not do this. We are a small profession with limited time and many other battles to fight. But if we don't speak up, who is going to?

It was a great pleasure to present this paper and I enjoyed the lively discussion afterwards (both in the room and subsequently on Twitter), particularly David Mander's thoughtful response. I do hope that the debate continues.

James Elder
Archivist

A new President for the ARA

Caroline Williams' term as President of the ARA came to a close at the Dublin conference after four years. During her term, the position of President was developed into a wide-ranging ambassadorial role as Caroline made speeches, presented awards and represented the ARA in Parliament and elsewhere across the UK and Ireland. The wider role for the President was suggested by Alan Cameron, Caroline's predecessor, and has been very successful. Incoming President Alex Buchanan will serve a three-year term and continue to represent the ARA and its members in the same vein.

John Chambers
CEO, ARA

David Mander hosting the presidential handover. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Outgoing ARA President Caroline Williams. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Caroline Williams and Alex Buchanan. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Scottish Council on Archives Skills for the Future trainees: Paul Fleming, Mary Dunne, Lynn Bruce and Sharon Kelly. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

The 2015 ARA Conference: the experience of the Scottish Council on Archives Skills for the Future trainees

As Skills for the Future trainees, we have been extremely lucky to have individual training budgets which have allowed us to attend numerous workshops, events and conferences of our own choosing. When we heard about the ARA Conference in Dublin, we felt that this would be a great opportunity to use some of our funds wisely, and a good way to find out about current issues, topics and developments within the sector. So for those of us that attended, we decided pretty early in the year that this was an opportunity not to be missed.

It is safe to say that from the moment we arrived at the splendid venue, the Hilton Doubletree in Dublin, we were not disappointed. The venue and its wonderful staff continued to impress us over the course of the three days, making the arrangement of the ever-changing setting seem effortless, whilst staying on top of the three separate conference streams, the information marketplace, numerous break-out sessions, and keeping us all fed and watered. It definitely was a heroic effort. The

accommodation and food were also exceptional, with a splendid gala dinner and entertainment on Thursday night. It definitely was a jam-packed three days for which the organisers and venue staff should be commended.

We are also all in agreement over the wonderfully warm reception we received from our fellow delegates. The conference provided a brilliant opportunity to network and talk to people from many different areas of the sector, not only from the UK and Ireland, but from further afield too. It was great to hear about the experiences of numerous individuals and their places of work, projects and more.

Everyone we spoke to demonstrated a keen interest in our traineeships, and provided us with excellent advice and encouragement for continuing in the sector. This was nowhere better demonstrated than at our display in the information marketplace. The conference organisers kindly provided us with an excellent space to promote the Skills for the Future

Poster designed by Sharon Kelly. Photograph copyright Sharon Kelly.

Poster designed by Paul Fleming. Photograph copyright Paul Fleming.

project, our host organisations, the collections with which we have been working, and our individual posters. We also had a table for displaying leaflets, postcards and information about ourselves. This did require quite a considerable effort on behalf of our vocal cords, but the people this enabled us to talk to, and the constant coffee supply, made this a truly rewarding, rich and memorable experience. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to talk to us and the organisers for allowing this to happen, especially Andrew Nicoll.

This is also a good place to give a special thanks to Caroline Brown from the Centre for Archive and Information Studies (CAIS) at the University of Dundee, our contact at the conference, who kept us right and helped us to set up our marketplace display.

Paul Fleming
Skills for the Future Trainee, Centre for Research Collections, University of Edinburgh

The ARA Conference constituted three days packed full of interesting, revealing and thought-provoking papers, workshops and discussions. I designed a poster to promote 'Opening Up Scotland's Archives' and highlight my achievements over the past year. The information marketplace was bustling during coffee and lunch breaks with many people taking the time to stop and chat. It gave me the chance to engage with delegates on a less formal footing, and I relished the opportunity to talk about my traineeship at the University of Dundee Archive Services. What struck me most, was that

regardless of the stage in their career that they had reached many people who were willing to share experiences and offer words of encouragement. It is clear the ARA Conference attracts people dedicated to their profession, and eager to contribute to the growth and development of the sector.

The positive comments I received from a variety of delegates left me enthused and more certain than ever that this is the right career for me.

Sharon Kelly
Skills for the Future Trainee, University of Dundee Archive Services

What impressed us most about the ARA Conference was the sheer depth of its content, and the quality of the speakers and the papers they presented. There were a broad range of topics covered, yet all the speakers I had the chance to see still managed to keep it relevant to the overall theme of the conference. One of my personal highlights was the excellent keynote speech by James King, who had travelled all the way from America to share his thoughts on the controversy surrounding the Boston College case. This highlighted the fact that although archivists can offer contributors the upmost confidentiality, there is always a risk that this can be overruled by a higher authority. He demonstrated that we as a profession should be aware of these limitations when dealing with the testimonies of individuals kept in our repositories.

One paper which sparked some interesting and heated debates was Mike Anson's 'Dodgy business:

are corporate archivists moral archivists?' The debate which followed actually transcended the room into the realm of social media at one point. Finally, I have to mention the excellent paper by Heather Jack on information governance. Not only did it make me feel positive about the need in the modern world, having just started out in the sector, for people with experience in records management, it also provided us with the only sing-along of the conference – 'Big Data' to the tune of 'Hey Big Spender'. Genius!

The three streams allowed us to tailor the conference experience to our own areas of interest and the particular focus of our individual traineeships.

Paul Fleming

As a first-time delegate arriving in Dublin for the conference, I was unsure of what to expect. Everyone was very welcoming, and it was a very supportive and friendly atmosphere.

There were many thought-provoking discussions at the conference, and I was particularly interested by the way in which issues surrounding access to records were addressed. This was a recurring theme over the three days, from discussions over the digitisation of mental health records, to granting access to Australian Aboriginal communities in a culturally-sensitive manner. Particularly stimulating was Dara Price's succinct and thoughtful paper on making Canada's government archives available. She described how from 1983, legislation meant that all records were by default open. In practice however, around 80% were closed. The target was to have only 20% closed. Her paper focused on the way in which policy changes and working with depositors have begun to bring about a shift in culture towards more openness. There is still some way to go and issues of risk management still need to be addressed, but her paper demonstrated how policy changes in recordkeeping can make public bodies more accountable.

Lynn Bruce
Skills for the Future Trainee. Glasgow City Archives.

Emily Nimmo. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Sherry Li Xie. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

For me, this was a conference of firsts. It was the first time I had attended, and the first time the ARA had introduced a specific digital preservation stream to their programme. As the focus of my traineeship is digital preservation, I attended many of these presentations. The opening talk by Sherry Li Xie provided an insight into the enormous challenges faced by records managers when basic concepts are not well-defined or commonly-shared. Sherry explained that this challenge was not made any easier when the new director of State Archives Administration of China (SAAC), the Chinese equivalent of The National Archives, was appointed in 2006. He declared that he did not believe in electronic records management, and that all e-records should be printed out on paper. A collective groan of sympathy (and perhaps recognition?) was heard in the room at this point!

Simon Wilson exhorted us all to consult or revisit the International Council on Archives' Code of Ethics. I also enjoyed Emily Nimmo's talk on digital preservation on a budget and with a budget. She contrasted two very different projects she has been involved with at the Royal Commission for Ancient and

Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCHAMS). One involved a low-budget, in-house developed system for creating automatic checksum values for digital objects. The other was a far more protracted process to procure the third-party digital preservation system, Preservica. Emily emphasised the need to understand the wider organisational context and to effectively engage with IT professionals within your own organisation.

Preservica demonstrated some powerful aspects of their system. A step-by-step guide to archiving Microsoft Outlook emails was particularly impressive. The system successfully manages and preserves all email attachments, and maintains the relationships between other emails in a 'conversation'.

My non-digital preservation highlight was Wesley Geddis' talk on cataloguing the conflict in Northern Ireland. He explained how Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) staff involved in the cataloguing of coroners' inquests and court records from this period received emotional resilience training to support them in their work with these sensitive records. People request access to these records to seek greater understanding, closure, or legal redress. His words, "let the records speak for themselves", resonated powerfully.

Mary Dunne
Skills for the Future Trainee, University of Glasgow

Overall, the ARA Conference provided us with an amazing experience from start to finish, and we would highly recommended it to anyone who is starting out in the sector as an enjoyable way to get up-to-date on the current issues and debates in the world of archives and records management. We would like to finish by thanking the Scottish Council on Archives, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), and the conference organisers for making it possible for us to attend, and everyone else who helped to make it such a wonderful and welcoming event. Roll on Wembley 2016!

Paul Fleming

Approaching archival authenticity: when records become data

Authenticity is a key concept in archival science, and authentic records are considered to be those which are genuine, and have not been altered, tampered with or corrupted. Authenticity is often associated with a record's relationship to its creator – it may be confirmed by the presence of a signature. Authenticity may also be ascertained using diplomatics – assessing the physical form of the document such as its paper, ink or seal to determine whether it is trustworthy. Digital records provide new challenges in evaluating archival authenticity, and these have been explored in international research such as the InterPARES 2 project.

In undertaking interdisciplinary research (for example in the digital humanities), archival records increasingly form the basis of new datasets which may be manipulated and queried using innovative computational techniques. In the Irish Record Linkage (IRL) project, the team investigated methods by which our new linked data query platform could support principles of archival

Rebecca Grant. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Redacted death record from the South Dublin Union, 1870. Photograph copyright GRO.

authenticity, allowing data to be traced back to its source in the original archival record.

The IRL (1864-1913) is a multi-disciplinary project which aims to answer research questions about maternal and infant mortality in Ireland using historical big data. The project was funded by the Irish Research Council, and developed in partnership with the Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI) at the Royal Irish Academy, Insight@NUI Galway, and the University of Limerick.

The records used to create the dataset included digitised images of birth, death and marriage registers provided by the General Register Office of Ireland (GRO). The records were prepared by the project team's digital archivists for transformation into a linked dataset by linked data and ontology engineers, to allow querying by medical historians. The research questions formulated by the historians included: 'How

accurate are historic maternal and infant mortality rates for Dublin?', and: 'To what extent did vital registration underreporting complicate health policy planning in Ireland?'

In order to build a linked data platform capable of addressing these questions, the information provided in the scanned register pages needed to be transcribed into a relational database before being transformed into a resource description framework (RDF), a data model for linked data.

The team had to decide which information from the digitised registers was essential to address the research questions, acknowledging that each additional line of data which was transcribed meant additional work for the digital archivists. In designing the transcription methodology, the archivists also considered archival authenticity and the extent to which the new dataset would be comparable to the original archival records.

Linked data from the Logainm dataset: logainm.ie. Photograph copyright DRI.

Although authenticity was not a core concern of the project, a number of relevant concepts were examined which helped to inform decisions on how the register pages should be transcribed, connected to the new dataset, and queried. For example, we considered that in order to be authentic: "individual records must be complete; they must contain all the information they had when they were created", that "for a record to be considered trustworthy […] it must accurately reflect the event it records and be uncontaminated by the distorting influence of time, bias, interpretation, or unwarranted opinion on the part of the record-maker" (P. Hirtle, *Archival Authenticity in a Digital Age*, *Authenticity in a Digital Environment* (2000), 8-23). It was also stated that authenticity "is typically inferred from internal and external evidence, including its physical characteristics, structure, content, and context" (R. Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (SAA 2005)).

The team addressed these concepts of authenticity in two ways. First, each register page was transcribed in its entirety. We did this rather than transcribing only the life events (e.g. deaths of infants and mothers) which were considered relevant to the research questions. Every piece of information from the register page was transcribed faithfully, and at the transcription stage we did not correct 'errors' – for example misspellings or the use of acronyms. Secondly, two separate ontologies were created to describe the linked dataset, one which allowed the faithful transcription to be

captured, and one which allowed interpretation of the information and the application of computer analysis. For example, in the first data store, an infant's age at death might be recorded as three days. In the interpretation layer, days could be broken down into hours and minutes and searched at a more granular level.

Although the final linked dataset may not fulfil each proposed criteria for an authentic record, we hope that the methodologies we used have created a dataset which is fully traceable back to its foundational records, where its physical characteristics can be examined. This provides information which has not been corrupted by interpretation during the transcription process, and which provides evidence of the complete record to the greatest possible extent.

Rebecca Grant
Digital Archivist, DRI

Dolores Grant,
DRI-IRL Digital Archivist, DRI

The ARA conference. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Remarks from the ARA Section for New Professionals bursary winner

I was extremely excited and honoured to find out I had been awarded the ARA Section for New Professionals (SfNP) bursary. I firstly want to thank the SfNP, particularly everyone who contributed to the bursary. As I am at the start of my professional career, I had little idea of what to expect, and how my five years' experience of working in archives would stack up to other far more experienced colleagues. There was no reason for me to have been worried as every single person I spoke to was incredibly friendly and generous in sharing their knowledge. I did not feel out of my depth.

Looking through the conference programme in advance, I had identified several speakers whom I knew I did not want to miss. Most relevant to my job were the speakers from business archives. Tamara Thornhill from Transport for London (TfL) spoke on their recent 'Access to Archives' project. Her session considered some of the issues associated with a business archive that strives to provide public access while balancing operational requirements. Tamara explained their updated processes, including approvals for third-party requests, differing levels of access afforded to internal and external enquirers, and close collaboration with the Freedom of Information (FOI) team. Coming from the viewpoint of another highly-regulated organisation, I face many of these issues on a daily basis, so I found the session very useful.

Another talk that provided food for thought was Mike Anson's paper on corporate archivists and morality. Mike leapt off the stage to take to the floor with a quick vox pop of the audience. Would we work as the archivist for a tobacco company? An oil company? A meat processing company? The initial choice to take (or not take) one of these roles is a moral choice in itself. Once employed in a business archive, we have to confront the fact that the archive exists first and foremost for the company itself. Protecting that archive comes before we can even consider access.

Another key point raised by Mike was how to make a moral choice when information compromising to the company is found. Would you blow the whistle? Would any archivists destroy such material if ordered to? Short-term decisions that would destroy damaging records negate the possibility that they may have long-term value.

Perhaps one way to square our morals with job requirements is to accept that a company archivist simply cannot be objective, but can be contextually accurate. A comment from the floor also pointed out that we would most certainly want to be confident that records of the tobacco company and the meat processing company were being properly managed – and in that case someone has to work for them. No easy answers here…

The information marketplace. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

The information marketplace. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

The talks I attended were so thought-provoking that a week later my colleagues must have been bored with my constant expressions of archival excitement. My mind is still whirring, and I know that what I have learned will be valuable now and in the future.

Reflecting back on the conference once I arrived home, it struck me that the theme of trust was a constant through the sessions I attended – from regaining the trust of care-leavers and others who have lost access to their own records, to earning the trust of digital depositors, and gaining the trust of rights-holders to allow their images to be displayed on archive catalogues. I have also been reflecting on the discussions of risk, especially the challenges of trying to implement an 'open to risk' culture. In order to avoid being paralysed by fear, I believe that this is going to become essential.

I want to end by emphasising how grateful I am to everyone who made it possible for me to attend this year's conference. The experience was exciting and informative, and will certainly shape how I approach ethical and legal issues in the next few years of my career.

Nicola Herbert
Records Assistant, Network Rail

Crowd funding: a real team effort!

In April 2015, Andrew Nicoll, Chair of the ARA Conference committee, suggested to the group we should offer another conference bursary through crowd funding. As no one had any experience of this and it would be a first for the ARA, we had to consider what was right for us. We had no idea at that time just how successful this venture would be, and how quickly we would arrive at the total required to fund the bursary.

We looked at several sites for ways of crowd funding, and asked advice from others who had taken this route before us. After some research, we settled for the BT MyDonate site, which is a free online fundraising service where every penny donated goes directly to the charity. Our appeal for £595 was launched on 12 May and closed 16 days later having spectacularly reached our target. We received 56 donations from ARA members whose generosity would send our new professional, Nicola Herbert, to Dublin.

Lorraine Logan
Membership and Office Administrator, ARA

ARA Conference bursary winners with Jon Elliott (centre): Kate Jarman, Helen Hargest, Fergus Brady and Nicola Herbert. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Crowd funding: a real team effort. Continued...

Attending the ARA conference at the beginning of my career has provided an exciting opportunity to reflect on the issues that will shape the work I do over the next decades. Although I have certainly experienced ethical dilemmas already, I have now gained a greater appreciation of the challenges in the wider profession and the wisdom that further experience will bring.

I would strongly encourage anyone to apply for one of the ARA bursaries – it's an incredible opportunity and an amazing experience that, for many people in my position, would be extremely hard to come by without a bursary. The Secton for New Professionals (SfNP) bursary is especially meaningful given that it is funded by ARA members themselves – so thank you to the ARA and to every single person that contributed.

Nicola Herbert, SfNP bursary winner

On behalf of the SfNP committee and our members, I would like to express my thanks to all ARA members who supported the New Professionals conference bursary so generously, financially or otherwise. Your support enabled the successful recipient to partake in an exciting and insightful learning opportunity which otherwise may have been inaccessible.

The ARA Conference is an important event that new professionals are keen to contribute towards and participate in, and Dublin was notable for this. With crowd funding as an increasingly popular resource, it is hoped this opportunity will be extended in the future.

Once again, thank you for your continued support which is much appreciated.

Frances Lund, Chair, SfNP

Social media success

I was delighted to be awarded one of this year's conference bursaries. I was particularly looking forward both to the presentations directly relevant to my current role working with medical and other sensitive records, and to the opportunity to take a break from the daily practicalities of enquiries – facilities management and grant-writing – and think about the social, political and even philosophical grounding for what we do as archivists and record keepers. Working in a small service as I do, the chance to meet and share ideas with colleagues from across the sector was particularly welcome, and I was keen to get involved with the wider discussion on social media. It took me a few years to be convinced of the merits of Twitter, but over the last couple of years, I have grown to really appreciate it as a tool for sharing ideas within the archive, records management and heritage sectors, and engaging with new and established audiences.

However, as someone who has never tried to live-tweet anything, I was a little apprehensive, as conference week approached, about the idea of following a paper while trying to summarise arguments and follow online discussion. However, I had committed in my bursary application to tweeting from the conference, and I was keen to be part of the wider discussion, both with other delegates and remote followers.

It was heartening to hear a senior politician, Joan Burton, Deputy Prime Minister of Ireland, speak with evident understanding of the role of record keeping and archives in government accountability, as well as of their cultural value. I enjoyed the session at the end of the day on issues of access and consent in dealing with historical medical records in Ireland, which considered similar challenges to those I deal with in my own work. For me though, the papers of the day on Wednesday – and the ones which generated the most discussion on Twitter – were from Leah Benson and Margaret Procter. Both discussed how concepts of rights are at the

Margaret Procter and Leah Benson. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

root of what we as archivists and record keepers do. Leah examined the need for legislation in Ireland that effectively balances the right to privacy with a citizen's right to pursue knowledge and accountability. Margaret argued that the constant in the record keeper's role has been their role in safeguarding rights, and that aligning ourselves too closely with the current 'historical paradigm' risks diminishing the perceived value of our profession. I was particularly pleased to find that far from distracting me, tweeting from the sessions really made me think about what was being said

ARA Conference Twitter feed.

and focused my mind on the key issues. It was particularly satisfying to discuss things further throughout the day with colleagues from Australia, the USA and across the UK.

The session examining the role of records in public enquiries into the Hillsborough disaster and historic child abuse underlined the previous day's discussion of archives and rights. In the conservation sessions, I was particularly struck by Lisa Childs' contention that in a time of (over)stretched resources, pursuing lengthy and high-intervention treatments like rebinding individual items rather than focusing on low-intervention preservation and better collection management might actually be unethical. In the light of movements towards 'more product, less process', I wondered if this applies to archival processing and cataloguing too?

I spent most of the rest of the day on the Registration Scheme stand in the information marketplace, answering questions about the upcoming changes to the scheme, and although I was not brave enough to join in the dancing, I had a great time at the gala dinner in the evening. The late night notwithstanding, ethics were back on the agenda the following morning, and the standout session for me was Mike Anson's talk on how, and indeed whether, personal moral judgements and professional ethics can coexist with corporate agendas.

I came away from my first ARA Conference buzzing with new questions and ideas (my husband told me I have never talked so much about my job before), a to-do list for getting back to work, some really helpful advice and useful contact details, new Twitter followers, and far too much food for thought to write about in this short article.
Check out the #ARA2015 hashtag!

Kate Jarman
Deputy Trust Archivist
Barts Health NHS Trust

ARA Dublin 2015: digital preservation sessions

It was a real pleasure to be part of ARA 2015 in Dublin this August. It was the first time there has been a dedicated digital preservation track, and judging by the level of participation at the workshops and roundtable, it certainly seems to be an important 'hot-topic' for many archivists and records managers.

Mike Quinn. Photograph copyright Preservica.

Some common themes emerged over the two days, centred on maintaining the authenticity of digital content and the perennial challenge of how to secure organisational buy-in and funding for a digital preservation program. Fortunately, ideas on the latter were shared by a number of the speakers, including what was described on the #ARA2015 twitter feed as a "very inspiring and practical" talk by Claire Tunstall on the digital preservation of the Unilever business archives.

Day one of the digital preservation track kicked off with two fascinating talks about national projects, first from Dr Sherry Li Xie from the University of China on developing a regulation for digital records in China, and Rebecca Grant from the Digital Repository of Ireland discussing a project to link data on genealogical records.

This was followed by Emily Nimmo from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments for Scotland (RCAHMS), sharing how the experience of building their own system helped to build the case and secure funding for an off-the-shelf solution. Day one finished with a great roundtable discussion contrasting different approaches to digital preservation, with input from Sam Johnston from the Dorset History Centre, amongst others.

Day two opened with Ian Song of Simon Fraser University Library in Canada discussing the challenges of adding metadata to over 15 TBs of digital theses and dissertations. This was followed by Simon Wilson from the University of Hull exploring the ARA Code of Ethics in the context of liaising with depositors of born-digital material.

The final session highlighted the need for archivists and records managers to embrace the digital challenge (because it is only going to get bigger) by proactively engaging with upstream content creators and contributors, rather than simply being seen as the final resting place for digital material. This message seemed to resonate well with the attendees, and was also highlighted as one of the keys to securing funding by several of the track speakers.

John Chambers, Chief Executive Officer of the ARA, closed the digital preservation track with an announcement that the ARA will be launching a brand new series of Practical Digital Preservation (PDP) training workshops and webinars for 2015/16. These will build on the success of the previous highly-rated program.

The PDP 2015 training has already built a community of archivists and records managers sharing experiences, ideas and best practice in digital preservation. My hope is that the next version of this popular training program will help build the community further – culminating in

Digital preservation session. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

The information marketplace. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

The information marketplace. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

another successful digital preservation track at ARA 2016. See you there!

Mike Quinn
Commercial Director, Preservica

www.preservica.com

A reflection on the personal and practical impact of the ARA Conference

I rarely leave training events these days without a new (or renewed) enthusiasm for further exploration, pondering the implications and determined to make practical changes to my work and that of my service. The 2015 ARA Conference was no different in that respect: on my first day back in the office, I made sure the International Council on Archives and ARA Codes of Ethics and Conduct were on display in the general office.

I have also been thinking about new ways to publicise our events as part of 'Explore Your Archive', and how a regional approach might look if other offices are interested. I was very interested to hear how others are approaching the copyright clearance headache, and I expect we will soon be discussing how their experiences can and will inform our approach in the future. As a service, we have already started looking at some small but important changes we can make to our procedures for managing access to restricted records. The move was partly inspired, and certainly informed by, Friday morning's papers considering ways to reduce the burden of access legislation whilst still meeting legal obligations.

From a digital preservation perspective, although I failed to make a note of the actions I pledged to complete on the Section for Archives and Technology postcard (due to be returned to me in a few weeks), I will be using all the various tips shared during the papers and over coffee for making a business case to my organisation (which I will have done by the time you read this).

What was different about the conference as a training event was the personal impact it has had on me, and how I view myself as an archivist and as a professional. I wondered on Friday afternoon (following the excellent papers from Mike Anson and James Elder) how I would sleep that night with all their questions running through my head. Am I a moral archivist? Would I ever consider blowing the whistle on my employer? Am I failing in my professional duty of ethics by not joining the public debate on recordkeeping issues? How should I join the debate? Dara Price perfectly summed it up: "How can I balance my role as a civil servant [or employee], a professional and an individual with regards to advocacy and lobbying in the public domain?"

Fortunately, after a long week it did not take much to drift off, but in my waking moments at least, I can still picture myself in the conference hall thinking about these incredibly important and incredibly complex questions. I would have liked a whole extra day to discuss these and other issues with the rest of the delegates. Though I have already started, and will continue to raise the issues with colleagues in my service and region, I hope we have not left the questions in Dublin, but each delegate has taken them back to their offices and colleagues. More importantly, I hope they will continue to be the focus of the ARA's conversations with us as members for the foreseeable future as we search for solutions together.

The conference has been an amazing source of inspiration and I must not let my current enthusiasm and determination fade in the coming months. I want to use it to spend more time deepening my involvement, reading and learning more, using social media as a vehicle for this (this conference being my first real and enjoyable experience of Twitter), and being more active within the ARA and the profession.

So, what will I do next? Find – MAKE – time for regular ethical reflection regarding:

- Our changing roles as we settle into a world where the gap is closing between ourselves and the record creators – a world of "born-archival digital records" (Mike Quinn, Preservica)
- Our relationships with depositors, decision-makers, and especially society.

I hope other delegates have experienced a similar personal and professional impact as a result of the conference, particularly those who, like me, were attending for the first time. Especially in the current financial climate, finding funding for attendance is increasingly difficult, but I strongly urge you all to consider attending a conference or similar event. The value really is self-evident as you sit in the conference hall and listen to speakers from across different sectors and across the world, feeling a sense of being part of something bigger.

Becky Sheldon
Archivist, Derbyshire Record Office

Becky Sheldon and Jon Elliott. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Digital preservation customised: the experience of Simon Fraser University Library

Overview

Located in the city of Burnaby in British Columbia, Canada, Simon Fraser University (SFU) operates as a comprehensive university, which has been rated as top in the country for six consecutive years (2008-14), according to the Maclean's magazine ranking. To support the university's goals of learning, research and community engagement, the SFU Library dedicates itself to providing access to collections, services and facilities of the highest possible quality. This dedication is evident in the creation of the Library's digitisation centre in 2000, a function that specialises in making digital transformation of valuable physical collections for faster, better, and wider access.

Since its establishment, the centre has completed about 150 projects and digitised various kinds of unique, frequently-sought materials, identified either in the special collections of the SFU Library, or in those of its partners such as the University of Alberta, the Vancouver Public Library, University of British Columbia, and the University of Toronto. For its noticeable performances, the Library has been awarded with funds by the Canadian federal and provincial governments, other funding organisations, and private donors interested in particular collections. As of 2013, the centre has produced 15 TB of digital contents in 19 languages and in a variety of documentary formats such as newspapers, magazines, books, theses, archival documents, cartoons, photos, postcards, stamps, posters, and audio/video files. These are all open and accessible online: http://content.lib.sfu.ca

To ensure the long-term accessibility of these valued contents, digital preservation becomes the necessary next step.

SFU Library. Photograph copyright SFU Library.

The customized approach

The 15 TB of contents were created with high-quality master files and item-level descriptive metadata for primarily the purpose of access. They were stored on two Windows file server partitions with standard backup copies on tape. Files were hierarchically arranged by collection and CONTENTdm was used to support organisation within collections and within individual items in collections for publication purposes. Metadata was captured in UTF-8.csv, Excel, or Calc, and the master files were stored in recommended preservation formats (mainly those by the Library of Congress): www.digitalpreservation.gov/formats

Metadata was not stored or tightly associated with individual items, except for established identifiers pointing to an item level directory in the hierarchical organisation. The situation was assessed as insufficient for long-term preservation because the items and the necessary information for their indefinite accessibility were not managed in an infrastructural independent manner. To solve this problem, existing preservation standards and practices were evaluated, and METS and BagIt emerged as suitable candidates for the Library's solution building, i.e. item-level packaging as a single .zip file, with metadata decided by the Library, and checksums for all files constituting the item:


SFU Library. Photograph copyright SFU Library.

www.loc.gov/standards/mets
https://tools.ietf.org/html/draft-kunze-bagit-11

However, the evaluation process also found out that few off-the-shelf tools were capable of completely satisfying the packaging the Library intended, particularly in large batches, which motivated the self-development of the tool METS/Bagger.

METS/Bagger is the integration of METS and BagIt formats, and is programmed to accommodate the current arrangement of the contents on the file servers. At the design level, the integration observed the principles of being parsimonious, open source based, and file oriented: www.loc.gov/standards/premis
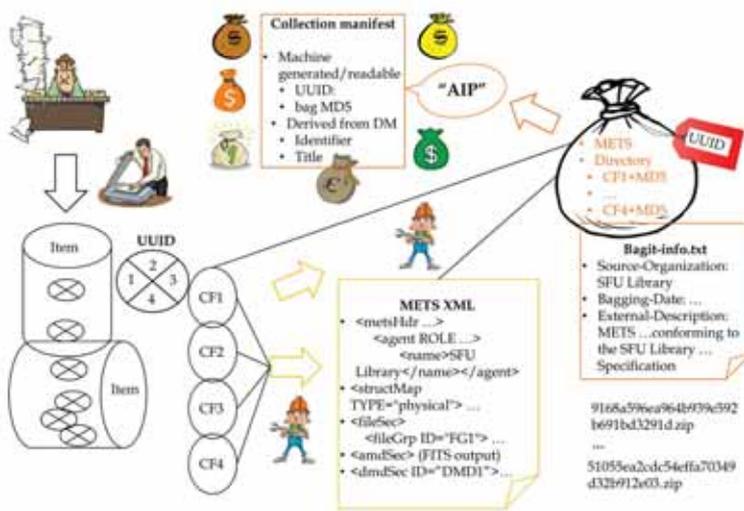
SFU Library customised digital preservation process. Photograph copyright SFU Library.

Which comes first, the paper or the disability? Opening up archives to users with unseen disabilities

At the technique level, the tool's capability includes recursing the hierarchical directory structures that digitised contents were stored in, identifying item level groups of files, retrieving and parsing the associated descriptive metadata, generating the METS file, and creating a bag containing the content. The accompanying graph illustrates the usage of the tool and the results it produces (CF stands for content file).

The resulting packages are AIP alike because they can be treated as preservation packages. Yet the packaging process does not intend to be fully Open Archival Information System (OAIS) compliant. These packages can be deposited with any types of storage facilities, e.g. Archivematica or Private LOCKSS Networks: www.archivematica.org
www.lockss.org/community/networks

Due to their nature of being infrastructural independent, they can also be treated as SIP for future preservation actions, which the Library anticipates to be mostly certain.

Summary
The Library's experience of customising preservation standards and open source tools appears to be positive, as it suited the need of the Library and its previous development in digitisation. The METS/Bagger approach is straightforward and efficient, which permitted the tight association of content files and all needed metadata, thus setting up the foundation on which future preservation actions can be designed.

The author would like to thank Mark Jordan and Marcus Barnes for their contributions to this project and my presentation.

Ian Song
Digital Initiatives Librarian, SFU Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

My paper at the ARA Conference examined an issue which is not widely-debated or considered when we look at the topic of making our services accessible: how to ensure that our services welcome those who do not fit the stereotypical model of being disabled, yet still have complex needs which our services need to address. Those with unseen disabilities.

These disabilities can include a wide range of conditions including diabetes, epilepsy and deafness, and are covered by the provisions of the Equality Act (2010). The Act sets out the definition of a disability that archives need to adhere to when making sure their services are accessible. The Act defines a disability as:

"A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect upon a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

The Act requires that provision be made when providing access to goods, facilities, services and premises. Reasonable adjustment must be made in order to make services accessible to users and employees with disabilities. Therefore, as service providers we need to ensure that we are catering to the needs of users with unseen disabilities, not just wheelchair users, in order to make sure we do not break the law.

The challenges faced by individuals with unseen disabilities can be complex, and there are no 'one size fits all' solutions akin to the provision of ramps. Obstacles could include: people with osteoporosis not being able to sit at desks for long periods of time, those with diabetes needing to eat if they are suffering from a hypo (low blood sugar), and deaf users not being able to participate in talks. However, if we do not cater to these challenges, we risk not being able to call ourselves truly inclusive, whilst also breaking the law.

Sarah Norman and Susan Healy. Photograph copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

Yet catering to these challenges poses a number of questions for archive services. For example, if a diabetic user starts suffering a hypo while looking at a sixteenth-century map (which happens to be the only one preserved) and requires sugar, would we be able to give it to the individual without damaging the record, and thereby arguably failing in our duty as archivists? This sort of question illustrates the conundrum that could be faced in meeting the needs of users with unseen disabilities.

As a sector, we lag behind our counterparts in making concerted efforts to address these challenges.

Other sectors, such as museums and libraries, have proved pro-active in attempting to welcome users with unseen disabilities. The Society of Colleges, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) published a report in 2009 which gave practical guidance to libraries in meeting the needs of these users. The Museums and Galleries Commission has long retained the post of disabilities officer. We should ask ourselves why our sector is behind in addressing these challenges.

As part of the research for my MA dissertation, I asked both users and staff about the provision of services for unseen disabilities. The overwhelming majority of staff (90%) felt that they were welcoming, but many acknowledged they would not know what to do if asked for an adjustment. In contrast, potential users felt, in the main, that they would not be able to use archives. A few of their comments are shown below:

- "I wanted to go to a talk about my local area. I am deaf. When I asked if they had an interpreter they said no. Consequently I didn't go".
- "The archive isn't for someone with my condition".

This suggests a disparity between staff and user perceptions of the available provisions in meeting the needs and/or providing adjustments. This may give an indication as to why the sector is lagging behind – we simply haven't realised that we are!

Possible solutions ranging from practical solutions such as keeping food behind the desk, to ensuring that considerations for users with unseen disabilities are included in or access policies, can be implemented at little extra cost.

In conclusion, the sector needs to make sure that we are truly inclusive and do not end up in court for not meeting the challenges that unseen disabilities may pose to our users, and of course staff. A lot has been done but much more is needed in order to ensure we help these users feel truly welcomed in our services.

Sarah Norman
Archivist

Rob's Top Tips
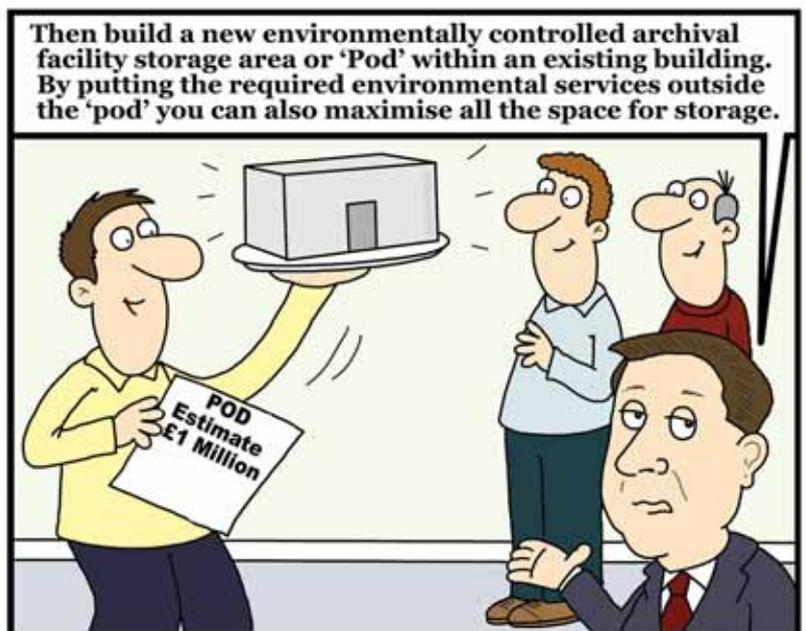
by Rob Dakin of Link 51   www.link51.com
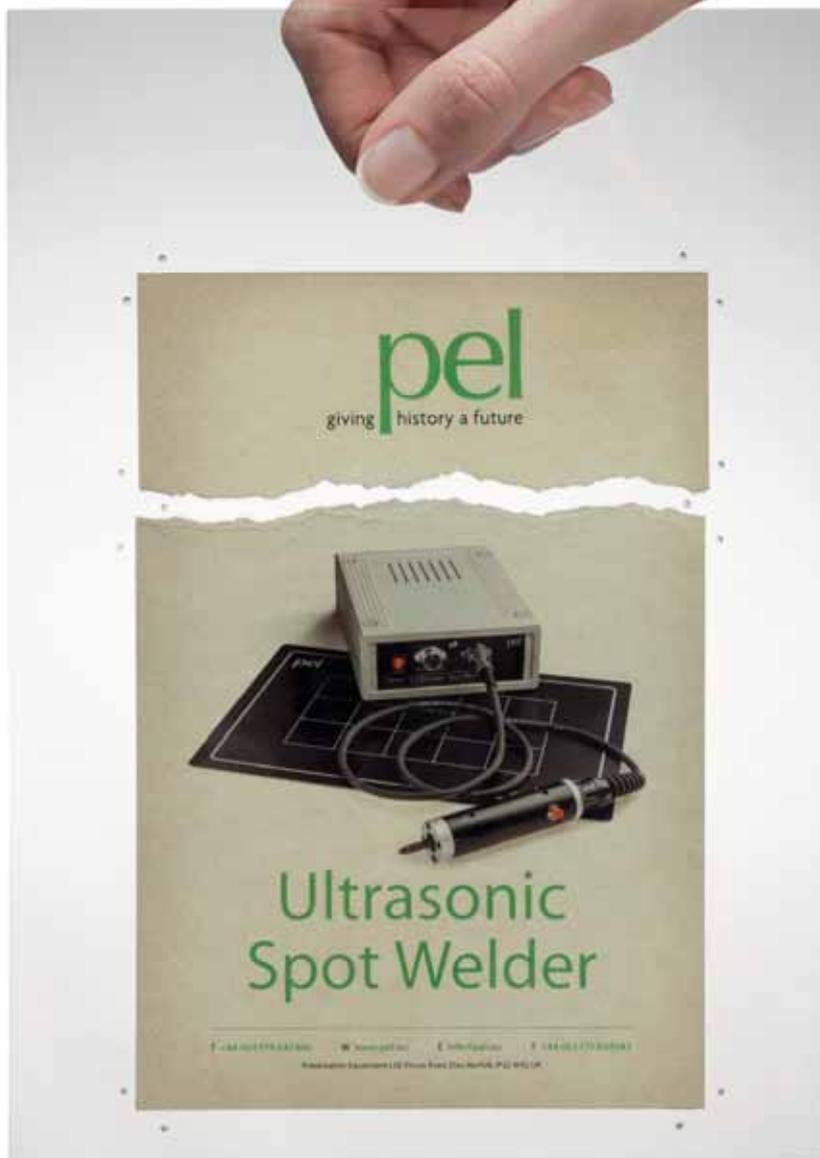
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