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ARA Conference 2012 Special Issue cover images:
Main: Bettina Schmidt & David Wallace on the Conference stage
Top: A Delegate in conversation.
Middle: Conservators in Action.
Bottom: The Gala Dinner

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to November's issue of ARC magazine.

This month we reflect on the annual conference which took place this year in Brighton, on the theme of "progression, innovation and new landscapes". Hopefully it will bring back memories of a stimulating, interesting and enjoyable occasion for those of you who were able to attend, and give a flavour of the discussions, experiences and attempts at Salsa dancing for those of you who were unable to be there.

This year's conference was a resounding success, with a wide-range of speakers giving us all new ideas and inspiration. It was also the first conference to make full use of social media- the #ARA12 hashtag on Twitter was constantly in use- telling the outside world what was going on, and dispelling the myth that archivists dislike new technology!

The articles range from the perspective of a first-time delegate on the conference, to a reflection on the presentations of the speakers; including looking at the crisis in Cologne which made international headlines last year.

Since conference we have putting as much information as possible on the website, including some papers and presentations. Do check in at www.archives.org.uk

Also, apologies to Barbara Vesey for the mis-spelling of her surname in the Catholic Archives Society Conference article in last month's edition. We had included Barbara's surname as Vestry. Given the context of the article we are glad to say Barbara saw the funny side.

Happy reading!

**Sarah Norman, Gary Collins, Ceri Forster,
Rose Roberto and Richard Wragg**

DISCLAIMER

The Archives & Records Association (UK and Ireland) cannot accept responsibility for views expressed by individual contributors to ARC Magazine. It is a medium for informing members of news, information and ideas relevant to the profession, including archive conservation. It is not an official guide to procedures, concepts, materials or products.

Opening Lines



Caroline Brown has chaired the ARA Conference Organising Committee for the past two conferences in Edinburgh and Brighton and has held various other roles with the Association. She is currently Deputy Archivist and Programme Leader for Archives and Family History at the Centre for Archive and Information Studies at the University of Dundee.

When I originally became Chair of ARA's conference committee one of the first questions I asked myself was 'What is the point in holding an annual conference?' At a time when most services are facing cuts or worse and when technology encourages us to communicate virtually and at a distance why should ARA expect members and others to attend? It seemed clear to me that finding the answers to that question would help us create a successful conference.

So what are the answers? The following are some of my personal thoughts.

1. Face to face is better than virtual

Or at least some of the time it is. If you want to communicate with someone effectively it is often better to meet in person rather than rely on the phone, email, Facebook or Skype. I sometimes find networking a difficult word but if it means the opportunity to be able to talk, or just listen, to others who share the same ambitions or interests or challenges then that's what conferences are good for.

2. The chance to participate in around 50 different talks, workshops and presentations

That was what was on offer in Brighton at least. The sessions may be on new developments in the profession (for example PD 5454), practical issues (new user services) or conceptual challenges (is our main goal just to make people happy and should we hand digital preservation over to the IT people and be done with it?). You may want

to reinforce something you already know or to think about something completely different. 50 sessions in 3 days is surely something we could argue is good value for money.

3. The chance to make a difference

Maybe one of the most important answers is just this. As well as providing traditional sessions with speakers we hold workshops and break-out sessions where delegates can join in, raise their own issues and often contribute directly to the development of professional projects (in Brighton two examples of this were the accreditation scheme and ARA's CPD project)

4. An opportunity to feel good about what you do

Much of the feedback that we have had about the conference is that people left feeling inspired or reinvigorated or just better about what they do. Putting over 200 archivists, records managers and conservators together in one room mysteriously seems to make everyone feel more optimistic. This may have something to do with the social events and it has a lot to do with the quality of the papers. I think if we get that right, if the papers are both interesting and useful, then delegates really get something positive out of the conference. Personally I also think that the right venue is crucial. For the past few years ARA has held conferences in city hotels, this allows and encourages us to take ourselves more seriously as a profession. We are worth it.

5. Making an impact on the wider world

The conference is an opportunity to tell others about our profession. Brighton had a range of impacts – the local mayor, the hotel staff who commented on what a great group we were, speakers who came from outside our immediate profession (including Tony Ageh, Controller of the BBC Archives who introduced himself as not an archivist) but also in the ideas and enthusiasm that the delegates took back to their working environments.

What next for the ARA conference?

We rely on feedback from delegates to improve and evolve the conference so that it remains relevant and useful to members and those interested in our profession. Personally I would like to see

- More speakers and presenters from outside our sector
- More questions from the floor and discussion
- More opportunities to find out about ARA and what it can do for members
- Perhaps some recognition of achievements of members of ARA, this need not just be senior members.

We can't plan a conference or have a conference without you. I see next year's conference in Cardiff as one of the key things that ARA provides for its members and we want to get it right. Please get in touch if you have any suggestions and we hope to see you there.

Collecting Matters

Writing this column, I have just returned from ARA's 2012 conference, inspired by the speakers urging us all to take time to think, to plan and to improve: not to get so caught up in "just doing". All very well, many of you will shout, but when? With the day job as varied and demanding as it is, how can I find this time?

That has to be where Accreditation for Archive Services comes in. I hope you have already had a chance to see the draft standard and supporting guidance. If so, you will have an idea of how the scheme supports services to shape their policies, plans and procedures. From having a clear mission for the service to supporting it with sufficient resources, improvement planning and daily work, everything should be moving in the same direction. Being ready to apply for accreditation means finding exactly that time and space to think through how your service works.

Of course, the process has to be proportionate. This is why accreditation is underpinned by the concept of scalability: recognising that different types and sizes of archive will have different capacity, serve different communities and have different ways of working. So scaled guidance is being developed and tested through the piloting of accreditation for archive services, to ensure that making space for planning, thinking and improving is time well spent.

Melinda Haunton

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John Chambers, ARA Chief Executive.

The Conference: An Organiser's View

Planning for the Brighton 2012 conference started in late 2010 when we were given the brief to hold it on the south coast of England. Joan Smith, from our Conference Organisers Sounds Commercial, and I then embarked on getting a series of quotes from suitable hotels that, in the end, stretched from Plymouth to Eastbourne. An initial sort left us with a choice of three, the Grand Harbour in Southampton, Royal Bath in Bournemouth and the Grand in Brighton. Site visits eliminated the Grand Harbour. We then entered a period of hardball negotiation which resulted in the Grand Hotel and Royal Bath bidding against each other and significantly reducing their quotes. As both hotels are part of the De Vere chain this was somewhat unexpected. In the end both hotels matched a rock bottom price and it became a straight choice based on other factors.

When presented with a choice of two great hotels, which would both have been excellent venues, a long conversation resulted in the deciding factor being the view that the conference committee had of Bournemouth as a town. It wasn't a flattering view, and as I lived in Bournemouth at the time I was suitably

moved. So Brighton was chosen and in January 2011 we signed contracts with the Grand Hotel. In March 2011 a new Conference Sales Director at the Grand got in touch to say that the agreed prices must have been a mistake and they "have never quoted that low before". However there was never any doubt that they would honour the agreement.

The theme of the conference and the selection of the papers is entirely down to Caroline Brown, Mark Allen and their colleagues on a group that meets purely for that purpose. The next stage for us was social events. Having managed to get delegates up on the dance floor, and in increasing numbers, for the last couple of conferences we decided we preferred to keep with dancing, rather than moving back to after dinner speakers. A salsa band and two dance instructors were recommended by the hotel. We were able to check them out online before booking them so we were confident they were good.

The venue for a drinks reception outside of the hotel was more problematic. The Design Archives at the University of Brighton wanted to host us at the Art Gallery there. Unfortunately when we went to look at it the

powers that be had decided to close it when conference was in town. Their alternative was the refectory which we didn't think was suitable. Other locations in the town wanted £800, or more, plus drink on top, for a one hour reception. After a hard search (done remotely unfortunately!) we found a bar at the end of Brighton pier which was suitable and affordable.

The people who organise conference have been largely the same people for the last three years and we are really now getting the benefit filtering down to conference itself. The conference organisers are all more confident and we learn from the feedback forms that delegates complete at conference each year. The rest of the organization of conference this year was the smoothest I have known. Conference went off without a hitch or (for the first time) any complaints. Once we turned the lights down delegates swamped the dance floor. So now is the time to tell us what you want to boogie to in Cardiff next year. I am open to anything except Abba tributes.

John Chambers

Archives and Records Association



Some of the ARA bursary recipients with Head of Public Affairs Marie Owens (centre back).

A Delegate's View

Since my first tentative steps into the world of Archives I have thought of going to the annual Archives and Records Association conference as something akin to a pilgrimage. Naturally the news that I had been awarded a full bursary for the conference was received with great excitement.

Closer to the conference the excitement was still there, but some slight anxiety started to take hold: what would I do if nobody spoke to me and I ended up standing alone in a corner for three days? What if people did speak to me? Luckily I already knew two of the other bursary winners and once I arrived at The Grand Hotel and inspected the delegate list I found that I knew several of the other delegates.

Combining the fact that I already knew a few people with some golden nuggets of advice, such as having a "lift speech" ready and identifying people you would like to meet on the delegate list so you could ask other delegates to introduce you if conversation dried up, received from seasoned conference delegates enabled me to network confidently and I am happy to confirm that archivists, records managers and conservators are a very friendly and interesting group of people.

Part of the "deal" in receiving the bursary was that some of the bursary winners would communicate the conference through personal blogs and Twitter. I had brought my iPad along as I had planned to tweet from the conference alongside taking notes. It very soon proved rather difficult to tweet and take notes simultaneously, so I concentrated on taking notes (I

have over 50 pages of notes from the conference). The lack of tweeting from me did not mean that my iPad was redundant for the remainder of the conference as I found following #ARA12 useful even as a delegate at the conference as other tweeters often tweeted points that I had missed and there were some great Twitter discussions initiated by tweets.

I managed to write a short blog post on Wednesday's talks between breakfast and kick-off on Thursday. I had also planned to summarise Thursday's talks in a blog post on Friday morning, but after an excellent night at the Gala Dinner an extra few minutes of sleep was deemed necessary in order to be alert for Friday's talks.

The theme of the conference was "Progression Innovation and New Landscapes", and all the talks were superb and very interesting. It is difficult to mention only a few of the talks as they all deserve to be highlighted, but perhaps the two keynote speakers, Dr David A. Wallace from the University of Michigan and Tony Ageh from the BBC, deserve a special mention. Especially Dr Wallace's speech on Wikileaks and how they affect archives was much talked about throughout the conference.

In my opinion there was a hidden theme of the conference, that of partnerships. Many of the talks included elements of how archives work in partnership with other archives and organisations. On the first day alone we heard how the Historical Archives of the City of Cologne for the past years

has worked with others to salvage what they can from the collapse of their archive in 2009; we learnt how West Sussex Record Office after cuts and restructuring to their service have developed partnerships with Chichester University and local hotels to offer "research & stay" packages where researchers can book a hotel room and receive an hour of one-to-one research time with an archivist; we learnt how a partnership programme combining the resources of four partners has resulted in The Keep, an exciting new historical resource centre. The list of partnerships highlighted goes on.

As a first time delegate I cannot compare this year's conference with previous ones, but I very much enjoyed attending and it definitely will not be my last ARA conference. I would encourage every archivist to attend as it is a great way to find out what is happening in the profession, meet other archivists and do a bit of networking.

Anne-Grethe Jensen

News International



Conservators in Action.

Conservation Programme

I was delighted to be awarded a bursary by ARA to attend this year's conference. As a practising Conservator and an Instructor on the Training Scheme for Conservators run by ARA, it is vital for me to keep up to date with developments. The Conservation programme was as full, varied and highly informative as ever. Also there was much debate and participation from delegates at the end of each presentation which I always feel helps to push forward the boundaries and get people involved. It enables participants to take part in the development of method and helps them to fine-tune applications to suit their own work.

Some highlights of the programme for me were: 'Britain from Above: A Condition Survey'. Rosalind Boss and Deborah Allen. This was actually about surveying the condition of nearly 100,000 photographic images. With grant funding from HLF, the Preservation Assessment Survey Tool was used. The tool was manipulated to suit the needs of the collection with the assistance of the PAC, it is useful to know that adaptation is possible. We were also given a resume of conservation and preservation techniques as applied to individual photographic items.

'Domesday: The Tudor Boards'. Ian Maver gave us an insight into the history of the original and subsequent

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Funding the Archives Sector

- *How are archives in the UK funded?*
- *What funding resources are under-developed within the sector?*
- *What appropriate advice and training support can be delivered by The National Archives to improve access to additional funding resources?*

Over the last year The National Archives and University College London have collaborated on a research project seeking to answer these three key questions.

bindings of that most iconic of all British archives, The Domesday Book. He showed how a technical knowledge can inform our investigations and lead us to a better understanding of early structures enabling us to make suitable choices in our own work.

'Plain Sailing – partnership comes in all sizes, the conservation of 8000 muster rolls' this was a veritable celebration of partnership working. The speakers, Rachel, Jenny and Christiane were bounding with enthusiasm for their project. They had achieved a huge quantity of work by combining the talents of one full time Conservator, one Icon Intern Conservator, one Librarian, an objects Conservator and twenty two volunteers. The presentation was both descriptive and technically informative at the same time.

'Moulds in Collections: conservation, health, legal implications & sustainable solutions'. Dr Jagjit Sing, Building Pathologist, has a no nonsense approach to the cause and effect of environmental problems. His paper gave some interesting case studies and led to lively discussion with members of the audience, particularly with regard to the recommendations of PD5454.

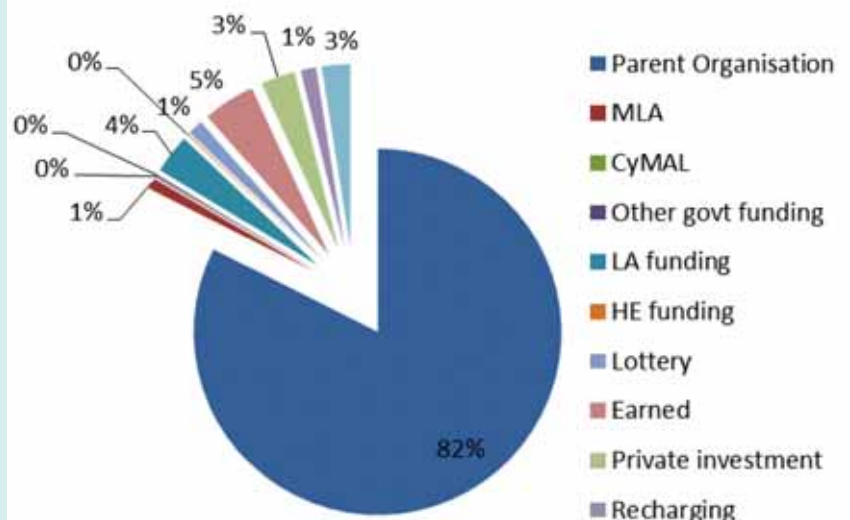
I wish to extend my thanks to ARA for my bursary and to the organisers for such an excellent programme. Also to the speakers and delegates who made the Conference so informative, enjoyable and most of all interactive!

Richard Nichols

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service.

The ARA conference provided a perfect opportunity to present an overview of the findings, as part of the Friday panel discussion on funding and supporting services. The conference themes of Progression, Innovation and New Landscapes reflect the drivers behind the research project. 'Progression' - starting from an evidence base of the current funding picture in identifying future developmental support. 'Innovation' - creating a cultural shift within the sector and encouraging new approaches to developing sustainable funding. And 'New Landscapes' – working within a changed economic and political context, with increased financial constraints on services at the same time as the development of the 'Big Society' agenda and related philanthropic initiatives.

Following a survey of collecting repositories we have been able to produce a snapshot of the sources from which services in England and Wales receive income and this has revealed that only around a fifth of funding for archives services comes from external sources.



Archives in England and Wales: How much income did your archive service receive from each of the following sources in the last financial year?

It is important to recognise that whilst archives vary in their organisational context and the services they provide, a 'one size fits all' approach to fundraising is unrealistic. However, as part of the project we have identified seven service-level success indicators that are relevant regardless of the scale and nature of the archive. These are:

1. Parent organisations understand the need to continue to invest in their archive service and external funding is not used to withdraw or reduce core funding but rather to grow capacity
2. Heads of Archive Services (HoAS) and other budget holders are confident in financial planning and have a clear understanding of the cost of all aspects of delivering their service
3. HoAS are looking at all times to embed financial efficiency into service delivery, maximising the benefit of both core and external funding
4. HoAS have sufficient resources to develop a strategic approach to fundraising and income generation and work with their parent organisation on approved approaches that enable the archive service to harness the full benefit of successful fundraising and income generation
5. HoAS are able to work successfully with their parent organisation's development teams or draw on other internally available expertise, where applicable
6. Services are able to access a range of funding sources but are doing so through a clear-sighted analysis of strategic fit and return on investment, rather than simply chasing a funding pot.
7. Income generating activities are pursued with an understanding of value with regards to both profit generation and other purposes

From a national perspective, the next step is to develop a support programme that enables archive services to access a greater proportion of their income from external funding sources. More information on this will be posting in the future on The National Archives website, where you can already find a section called 'Finding Funding' (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/finding-funding.htm), providing further information on a range of funding sources.

The full research report, including more detailed analysis of the project findings, is available from The National Archives website www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/funding-archives-sector.htm.

Louise Ray

Programme Manager (Development Advice)
The National Archives

Contributing to our own heritage: one secret of success

There are many websites today which encourage people to contribute to their heritage. Upload your photos, they plead on the home page – it's so easy – tell us your stories – share your memories! My company communitysites.co.uk has set up dozens of these contributory heritage websites over the last six years. I have seen some thrive and become self-sustaining; others flicker briefly but never full take off. Why do some succeed more than others? At the conference, I discussed a range of success factors: in this short article, I'll focus on one, the website's editor.

Note the term 'editor'. Not 'webmaster'. Fearful of technology, a lot of project managers think that a technically-minded individual needs to be in charge of the site. But the software available today makes that unnecessary; and indeed 'techy' editors can get distracted by tinkering. The sites I have seen thrive have someone in charge with journalistic skills and enthusiasm for the content; a love of words, not a love of code.

Secondly, the editor needs to be visible on the site. Who would want to contribute to a site run anonymously by an institution? Publishing the name of the editor (or editors) helps: a photo is even better. I once asked Jennifer Drury, who runs the hugely popular www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk site, about improvements we were introducing to make it technically easier to contribute to the site. She wasn't that interested: it's easy enough already, she said, but there will always be people who

will want to send me content directly, because they know there's an appreciative human being waiting to receive it.

Thirdly, the editor needs to have time to give to the site. In the early months, contributory sites don't receive much content; it takes a while to get the ball rolling. But when people do contribute to a website, a response from the editor within 24 hours – even if just an automated response to say the contribution has been reviewed and published – makes a huge difference in terms of encouraging repeat contributions. The editor also needs time in the sense of staying power: all the longest-running sites I know are run by volunteers, who have cherished their sites for over 5-10 years, instead of moving on as soon as the 2-year project funding is over.

Where do such word-loving, content-seeking, time-giving volunteer editors come from? They don't usually appear from thin air at the start of the project; but they can sometimes be recruited and nurtured from the ranks of contributors and volunteers working on the site after it is up and running. With careful support, people move up the 'hierarchy of contribution'; from visitor, to occasional contributor, to regular contributor, to editor. At that point, the more ownership and control the volunteer editors are given, the more they dedicate themselves to the site in the long term.

The technical definition of a website 'host' is the company that owns the rack of computer servers, one of which keeps your website 24 hours a day. But the website 'host' that will make your site successful is the human being who you put in charge of your website: the editor who will introduce himself or herself, help people get to know each other, enthuse over new contributions, and create a sense of an online community.

Jack Latimer

Director, CommunitySites

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Bettina Schmitz, Cologne Archives.

Conference Report: Cologne

I am rather ashamed to admit that I have not attended the Association's conference since it was held in Edinburgh – 1995! A grand total of 17 years! And yet, I have continued with my archival career. My responsibilities as Mum was probably the main consideration in my lack of presence – additionally my organisation has been recently advised that attendance at professional conferences will not be funded. I was very thankful then to be successful in obtaining a bursary to attend one day of the conference, courtesy of the Scottish Archive Network.

But as attendance beckoned, the reality of organising school uniform, planning the out of school club rota, shopping, organising my mother in law to come and stay over, preparing beds – combined with the prospect of 2 days out of the office, 3 days of travel, 2 days staying over with my sister's mother in law, I began to wonder, would it all be worth it?

Having met a family from Cologne whilst on holiday in Paris, and having discussed with them [their English and French was perfect!] the shocking events of the collapse of the Cologne Archive, I was

excited at hearing the latest from Bettina Schmidt-Czaia, of the Cologne Archive. On the 3 March 2009, 30km of records were damaged when the Archives collapsed in a few minutes. Tragically two people were killed. Bettina spoke of the immediate emergency rescue mission, and also of the massive conservation task to date.

Her advice in managing such a crisis was that we cannot predict catastrophe – however it is worth making the emergency services aware of our specialist needs. Good packaging, storage, documentation, indexing and pagination were crucial to rebuilding the archive. And it will be a huge task – there are 30 to 40 years of salvage and restoration ahead. Every item needs dry cleaned; all are polluted with alkaline dust. All will be digitised. Costs are in the region of 300-400 million Euros.

Put simply though, nothing could have been saved or preserved without the help of others. The event has brought together experts and some 1800 volunteers from throughout Europe, America and Australia. The contents of the archive are now in the care of 20 archives throughout Germany. Co-operation with suppliers of technical services such as freeze drying facilities, and digitisation were life saving for the records. Universities are assisting in research based projects in conservation, and in providing courses and technical training. Social networks have provided funding and support – gathering restoration donations, and keeping alive the participation of the citizens of Cologne.

The response of conference delegates was one of sympathy – but there was also a recognition that whilst we have not witnessed a catastrophe of this kind, many archival services had suffered a ‘virtual crisis’ – in terms of experiencing cuts in budgets and losing staff. Actually, what would be the response of our own locality if a disaster were to affect our archive? Does it have to take a crisis like the one in Cologne to bring the plight of archival services to the attention of our employers?

In such circumstances, Bettina has shown that it is true that fantastic partnerships can be made – wouldn’t it be great to make them without having to deal with the clean up!?

.....
Pamela McIntyre

South Ayrshire Archive Service
.....

Everybody needs friends: An ARA Perspective

Everybody needs friends. Our sector probably needs them more than most because so few of the UK’s and Ireland’s taxpayers and voters really understand what we do.

I said this when I spoke with John Chambers in our conference session ‘What’s in it for you?’ – our roundup of what the ARA was doing on behalf of its membership.

Advocacy is my main brief as Head of Public Affairs. It’s a big, general word and can sound a bit ‘fluffy’. So I was pleased to be able to report at conference on some of the progress that I believe we’ve made over the past year towards one of our key aims: to make more friends, who we can call on, at different times for different things.

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Archives and History is a thoroughly good thing and a big feather in our cap. We owe my predecessor Rene Kinzett a major debt of gratitude for the work he did to set this up. As of today, there are 73 Lords and MPs who are literally our ‘friends in high places’. Many are historians who instinctively ‘get’ the relevance and importance of our work. The Group seeks to understand what we do and they are willing to question and advocate on our behalf. They are also keen not just to be there to fight our corner in the dark times, but to be there to celebrate with us. In the past year the Group has, among other things: publicly honoured the work of an archivist and an historian; visited The National Archives; heard evidence in a very pleasant and supportive way from the leaders of the UK’s national archives; hosted a lecture by a respected historian; taken evidence about history teaching; spoken in debates about the Historical Manuscripts Commission; taken briefing about the new legislation that could affect archives; celebrated the Memory of the World UK Register 2011 accessions; and written in support of our bid for a level playing field regarding Renaissance museum funding.

Such a Group would be a huge tick on anyone’s advocacy list. But what about everyone else in the UK and Ireland. How do we reach them?

I met a conservator recently whose collection care message was to ‘try to make a tiny bit of progress each day’. I feel the same about communication and advocacy. There are 2000 ARA members. If we all told one person every day – with pride – something about archives it would really add up to something. We need our messages, our

“
We need to be smart and to make the
very best communication capital of
everything we do.
”



Keynote speaker David Wallace.

achievements, our skills to be out there, getting noticed. Decision makers like MPs and Lords are vital. But so is the general public. It is their money which funds most archives.

We need to be smart and to make the very best communication capital of everything we do. That's exactly what the best archives are already doing. That's certainly what I'm trying to do as your PR/communication/media/advocacy person. In the last year we have definitely got more of our stories out there. What I always try to do is link stories to messages. For example, in the good publicity about the annual volunteering award which we gave to Wolverhampton City Archives, we made clear our robust volunteering policy: archivists and volunteers working in genuine, informed partnership. When the All Party Group honours an historian, we make sure that historian acknowledges a debt to our sector.

We all have to be advocates and it's important that the ARA does everything possible to help archivists and record managers improve their own advocacy and communication skills, or, more to the point, give them the confidence to know they have those skills. Our new media skills training course is being rolled out and by the end of 2012 will have taken place in London, Manchester, Belfast, Glasgow and Cardiff. I've been a press officer for more decades than I like to think about: even if one never has to talk to journalists, I believe the discipline of forming a press release is still one of the best ways to hone general-purpose communication skills.

The ARA has been writing more letters. Letters to the Editors of national papers. Also to those who, in our (correct!) opinion, are making bad decisions. We've also been writing more letters to say 'well done'. Well done, M&S for knowing what a business archive is all about. Well done those who employ the gifted archivists who have been awarded Archive Pace Setter status.

Campaign work is a big part of any Association's communication. The ARA undertakes two distinct types of campaigning work. The quiet rarely-publicised campaigning that goes on when we know our members' jobs are in danger. The noisier sort is when we are trying to raise awareness or publicly shame someone to do better. Over coming months we shall be launching with our partners The National Archives a new-look Archives Awareness Campaign and the UK's Universal Declaration on Archives publicity drive.

With a full year behind me as your Head of Public Affairs, I hope I'm through the painful bit of the learning curve. Sincere thanks for your patience and help so far. I remain enormously confident that this sector has a story to tell that many, many people wish to hear. 'Bit of progress every day' – that's the mantra.

Marie Owens

ARA Head of Public Affairs

Trust: applying traditional principles of authenticity and trust to digital archives at LSE Library: A Speaker's Perspective

Sue Donnelly, Ed Fay and I presented at the final day of this conference, the morning of which was dedicated to new developments in digital archives. It was a great opportunity to share the work that we've done in digital archives, and to engage with other archivists who might be starting this work.

Our talk was based around trust, and how we apply and sustain it at LSE. The idea of trust and trustworthiness has been a lynchpin of the archives profession since the beginning, and as professionals we're aware that our users, whether they are researchers, depositors, or any other stakeholder, must be able to trust us when we say that the document in their hands is authentic. But when that document is electronic, rather than physical, does the notion of trust change?

Sue kicked things off by considering the traditional aspects of trust and how it is demonstrated in the LSE Library. Trustworthiness is much more explicit in the care of tangible objects; when users see acid-free boxes coming from a locked strongroom they are more likely to accept our trustworthiness at face value. This attitude has been challenged by recent technological advances, and Sue discussed how some depositors with whom the Library has had a long relationship have started asking a lot more questions about what we would do with their digital material, whereas other depositors have embraced the technology and are more than happy for us to receive their files on a memory stick with little call for us to articulate what we would do with it.

This led nicely onto my section of the talk, which was to outline the practicalities of working with digital archive files at LSE. I tried to align our practices with traditional archive ones, so for example the use of anti-virus tools is akin to putting an archive in quarantine before accepting it into a store, and the use of forensic imaging and profiling tools such as FTK Imager and DROID enables the traditional archive practices of appraisal and listing. This is all done to protect archives and ensure their future use; it is the medium that has changed, not

the message. I also talked about the metadata we are collecting and why it's important to collect it; if we're not documenting the aforesaid actions then we cannot prove to our users and depositors that our records are authentic.

Ed rounded off our talk with trustworthy digital repositories and how they can be something of an elephant to manage. As the best way to eat an elephant is to take one bite at a time, so the best way to manage a digital repository is not to try to set up the entire infrastructure in one go, but to break down the process into what is necessary, what can be done now, and what requires further investment. Ed explained some of our technical infrastructure and how it is based on the OAIS standard, and then went on to talk about how we articulated the value of preserving digital records to internal and external stakeholders. In both cases we used our own interpretation of existing standards, thinking it is better to get the ball rolling and aim for full compliance later. Ed stressed that achieving official trusted status as a digital repository can take years, and advised institutions to work towards better practice, rather than best in the near term.

Sue wrapped up our talk by reminding us that trust isn't a new issue, but the lack of standards is. Rather than wait for standards and best practice to emerge, it's better to get hands-on with material and learn by doing, developing a narrative about preserving digital archives that we can use with peers, depositors and researchers, thereby preserving that trusting relationship. We ended with the George MacDonald line, "to be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved", although we like to aim for both!

Slides from our presentation are available online at: www.slideshare.net/digitalfay/applying-14155726

Elinor Robinson

Digital Archivist, London School of Economics

ARA Conference: A delegate's perspective

In August this year I had the opportunity to attend the Archives and Records Association conference in Brighton. I had been fortunate enough to secure a bursary from the Scottish Archives Network which meant I could attend one of the days at the conference. After careful consideration I decided to attend on Thursday 30 August because many of the talks that day were dealing with issues regarding digital records. Since undertaking my studies in archives and records management I have become eager to hear other colleagues' thoughts on the subject.

As this was the first conference I had ever attended I was a little unsure of what to expect, however, I should not have worried. Everyone was very friendly and welcoming and I soon felt at ease. I found the conference a fantastic chance to be able to talk to many people from the fields of archives, records management and conservation from across the U.K. I really enjoyed being able to discuss what people thought about different presentations and what they had enjoyed so far about attending the event.

Many of the presentations on Thursday were very interesting and thought-provoking. Perhaps the most thought-provoking of all was Steve Bailey's talk questioning if it was perhaps time for those who work in information technology to take the reigns of digital records management. In the questions and answers session afterwards it was clear that many archivists and records managers in the room strongly felt that there was still a key role for the profession to play in finding answers to the issues of digital records management.

I think perhaps the most inspiring talk came from Tony Ageh. He really was a wealth of information regarding his experience whilst working at the BBC. His positive and determined attitude showed just what can be achieved when you set your mind to it. It has definitely given me a boost of positivity and determination both in studying for my degree and in my current job as a records management graduate trainee.

Overall I found this year's ARA conference to be very interesting and a great chance to meet like-minded individuals who were keen to share their knowledge and experience. My biggest regret is that I was unable to stay for the full three days. Looking at the conference programme it was extremely difficult to choose just one day out of the three to attend. I am hoping that next year I shall be in a position to attend the entire conference. So, here's looking forward to the ARA conference 2013.

Amy Robinson

University of Glasgow

Reflections on the ARA Conference

Whilst going through some of our service's feedback forms a couple of weeks ago, one of the comments we found was, 'when are we going to move out of the nineteenth century?' This was perhaps a little bit exaggerated, but it does sum up the fact that expectations of us are changing. Our profession is now more in the public eye thanks to programmes like 'Who do you think you are?' People now have a vague understanding of what we do, even if this is, as one speaker at this year's conference put it, 'the magical profession that can put somebody's family history in a brown envelope within 15 seconds.' People increasingly expect us to provide them with the information they need in a time and place that is suitable to them. In order to be able to do this, we need to persuade our parent organisations and funding providers of our worth so they will fund the projects we want to undertake. Furthermore, there is the problem of how to preserve born digital records and the need to persuade our parent organisations to give due thought to the matter. We now have to be both progressive and innovative to tackle these issues at a time when budgets are being cut. A conference with the theme of Progression, Innovation and New Landscapes promised an opportunity to discuss these issues and find out how others were tackling them.

Progression and innovation are not words our profession is necessarily associated with, although judging by the speed at which people took up the salsa dancing taster during the Latin themed gala dinner, archivists and records managers are definitely not scared to try new things and this summed up the conference. We should not be scared to get stuck in and try new things. I heard a number of very enthusiastic and inspiring speakers talking very positively about, firstly, what we were doing already that could be celebrated and, secondly, what we could achieve if we worked together and were both bold and proactive. This philosophy is something that could be applied to both dealing with born digital records or finding

new audiences. Hearing about some of the projects that are currently taking place, even if it was just how a particular cataloguing backlog had been dealt with, showed what could be achieved even with few resources, and provided inspiration to go out and try similar things. Where born digital records are concerned, we were encouraged to play around with different options and find out what works. We should not be frightened to take up the issue of digital preservation with those higher up in our organisations and neither should we be frightened to promote the value we can add to the organisations we work for. Even if we do not have the answers, we need to draw people's attention to the issues and seek out the people that can help us find the solutions. The benefits of cooperation was also emphasised by the speakers. Although we are very good at networking within the profession, we were also encouraged to do so with people and organisations outside of the profession. This is going to be needed more and more as we deal with more advanced technology and skills outside of our traditional area.

Some of my personal highlights of the conference were, firstly, Tony Ageh's keynote address in which he talked of how he saw archives as being at the centre of a cultural revolution. He described archives as the raw material of our economy. Secondly, Heather Briston's lecture in which she described how we were already being innovative in the small projects we do to creatively make the most of often limited resources was very much something I could relate to. Thirdly, there was Tony Butler's lecture about the Museum of East Anglian Life's work and involvement with the local community. He spoke of the satisfaction people can get out of volunteering in the archive or simply by taking part in an activity that has been organised in the community. Volunteers can also provide extra skills and experience where needed and can approach some of the problems we encounter from a different perspective. This was also something I could relate to and gave another example of how a very simple idea could be very innovative and effective. Another highlight was hearing about the TNA project to collect people's memories of the Olympics and create a lasting archive of the games for the first time in their history, a truly exciting project and one that demonstrates what can be achieved through collaborative working. A group of speakers from the London School of Economics gave a lecture explaining how they dealt with born digital records that depositors were bringing them and how they tried to ensure their long-term accessibility. Having frequently heard the discussion of the problem that born digital records pose and many questions asked but not answered, it was refreshing to hear an example of what one institution was actually doing. Steve Bailey also

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It seems we are already being innovative and progressive and the enthusiasm shown by people at conference suggests that we are in a great position to continue to be so and deal with the many challenges that are thrown at us, even if we do not know all the answers yet.

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had an important message in his lecture, 'the king is dead, long live the king,' in which argued that archive and record management theory has never been more relevant, as we are trying to achieve the same objective that we always have, but with new technology and new media. Finally, it was interesting to hear about how Hull History Centre had dealt with their cataloguing backlog, by using a thematic approach and breaking it down into small chunks.

I also found I could relate much of what was said to my own workplace and experience. We have run several very simple projects on a limited budget which could be said to be innovative in their own way, for example a recent project to use knitting patterns in one of our collections to make the garments of the period. In terms of involving the local community, I am always amazed at the number of people who want to volunteer with us and it is a joy to see the satisfaction they get out of it. Some of them as well as some of our regular users have some very in depth knowledge, which has often got me out of a hole, as they are often willing to help other users. We are still running a volunteer project to repackage all our wills. Not bad for a service stuck in the nineteenth century.

It seems we are already being innovative and progressive and the enthusiasm shown by people at conference suggests that we are in a great position to continue to be so and deal with the many challenges that are thrown at us, even if we do not know all the answers yet. Conference therefore was very worthwhile attending. As well as the inspirational and thought provoking lectures, I was also able to catch up with many friends and acquaintances and meet new ones, all of whom were incredibly friendly and welcoming. I am very grateful to ARA for providing me with the bursary to allow me to attend.

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Richard Wade

Archivist, Herefordshire Archive Service



Using Twitter to Communicate at the ARA Conference 2012

I first explored using Twitter when the Theatre Collection was exploring all forms of social media in an attempt to widen our user base and especially to encourage more interaction from our students. We also looked at Facebook and blogs; the former we have implemented and the latter we intend to use for any projects that gain funding for but which we decided was too much work on a daily basis. We decided at the time, that Twitter would be extra work for not much added benefit, as Facebook allows us to post images, project work, information from the Friends association, and general updates without taking too much time or effort and without duplicating the work already done with our newsletter.

However, as part of this investigation, I opened a personal Twitter account to see what was involved, how it worked, and how to use it in order to establish its possibilities. I have tweeted a few times – often when on long train journeys when I had finished reading my book (!) but not consistently or with any real enthusiasm or belief in its usefulness. So, when I learnt that I had been awarded one of the ARA's conference bursaries I was very excited and also realised that I would need to think carefully about how to successfully communicate during conference, and that tweeting would probably be involved in that.

I started tweeting from the very opening of the conference, and it didn't take long before the challenges started! First there was choosing the platform on which to post my tweets – along with Twitter itself I was already aware of TweetDeck, which allows you to monitor multiple aspects of Twitter at the same time, but the delegate sitting next to me introduced me to a new

platform – TweetChat - which allows you to follow a specific hashtag (#) (ie. a specific conversation/topic). The organisers had already set up a new hashtag (#ARA12) for the conference and logging on to this on TweetChat meant that I could post to it automatically, and it immediately added the relevant hashtag brilliant for saving valuable seconds!

The Wednesday morning sessions went very well, as I managed to listen to the papers, take notes and tweet as well – no mean feat, as some of the other bursary winners can testify (it even came up on Twitter as a topic!). However just after lunch the battery on my laptop died, so I was reduced to using my phone to continue to tweet which was even more challenging in terms of trying to type coherent messages on a small keypad and battling against the wonders of predictive texting, which is woefully unaware of archival terminology...

Tweeting during the conference also meant that I spent time monitoring other people's tweets about the conference and there were certainly a lot of them. It was very interesting to note what others thought were the pertinent points being made. Conversations even sprang up around certain points, both between those who were present at the Conference and who were tweeting and also those who were not able to be present who were seeking clarification. It was certainly a lesson for me regarding the spread of information as I watched tweets that I posted being retweeted by numerous other people and organisations. Amazing and scary – how an almost throw-away comment could be taken and made into something more authoritative by others; intriguing from an archival perspective.



Heather Bristow from UCLA.

Having spent a concerted amount of time on Twitter during the ARA Conference I am definitely coming around to its usefulness and its ability to reach new audiences immediately and to also get immediate feedback. Especially as there is such an active archive community already in existence on Twitter of which I was completely unaware previously – using Twitter to communicate about professional issues either as individuals or on behalf of their institution (or both for those who really are dedicated!). It would be very good for the Theatre Collection to become a part of this community and communicate to its users and maybe find out more about those elusive non-users.

Heather Romaine

University of Bristol Theatre Collection



New audiences and new museum archives: meeting the growing needs of society

Writing in the journal *Museum Practice* in July 2012, Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, author of the ARA report *The benefits of capital investment in archives* writes: 'Well-designed archive services can significantly add to the success of a museum. They can engage a wide audience, support museum research and exhibitions, provide a location for activities and widen the overall offer that museums can make to audiences. ... By investing in its archive service a museum can confidently present itself as both an attractive venue for a range of audiences and a serious research institution.'

Museums today are required to meet the needs of new audiences including traditionally under represented sectors, community and local history groups, volunteers and families. These drivers are the same for publicly-funded archives: however, museum archives have benefitted from changing museum practice, specifically by new ways of interpreting and displaying objects. Original archival documents have regularly been used in museum displays but digital technologies and other methods of interpretation are now used to show the breadth and significance of archives, thereby engaging new audiences.

Archive collections are now considered part of a museum's wider role to educate and inspire people, or in the National Maritime Museum's (NMM) corporate plan, to stimulate curiosity.

In engaging with new audiences, museum archives benefit from the museum general visitors, and encourage them into becoming archive users in a number of different ways. Making museum archives more open and user-friendly impacts on many areas including physical space, facilities, services, public programmes and online content. In some cases it even impacts on varieties of customer service.

Several museum archives and libraries have recently been redeveloped to reach new audiences, in some cases converting general visitors into archive visitors. In the redeveloped Caird Library at the NMM, which opened in July 2011, the reading room is designed in two parts, one for small groups and the other for readers working alone, to meet the requirements of different audiences. The Search Engine at the National Railway Museum, Explore History at the Imperial War Museum and the redeveloped information services at National Museums Scotland have also all benefitted from redeveloped spaces and services – they have different spaces for differing information levels, providing a separate reading room/s and information point. Explore History has become the Imperial War Museum's main focal point for self-directed learning based on the collections, where all enquiries are dealt with and specialist enquiries forwarded to relevant curatorial staff. In addition to providing an information point for drop-in visitors, new archive

services have responded to the demand for more online content, including film and audio, at the Imperial War Museum. Many have also provided enhanced digital access to their collections, at the NMM through Collections Online, which allows seamless searches to be made across archives and the Museum's object collections. Another way of reaching new audiences has been the development of public programming and formal learning sessions specifically using the archive collections such as the Slavery and Stuart sessions run for schools at the NMM. In addition, engaging with new users has impacted on a more innovative use of volunteers – at the NMM, the Sea and me volunteers give informal talks on their personal connections to the sea, using their own documents and museum's collections to illustrate their talks, helping to promote the archive service.

Many archives have benefitted from major capital investment in the parent museums which has helped new users to access archives in innovative ways. Whilst this has been beneficial to the service, it has perhaps placed a greater focus on front-of-house activities and innovations in user services. It could be argued that less emphasis has been placed on back of house services and management, which is certainly not what was envisaged. There is also a degree of risk to collections that must be carefully managed, as new users may require guidance in basic research skills or in handling vulnerable documents.

But one of the main benefits to developing museum archives and encouraging new users is that it embeds the archive and library service in the work of the museum, encouraging cross-museum working, and bringing together archive and library teams that previously worked separately. Once new facilities and physical spaces are in place, there is often a greater drive for museum archives to work more closely with the education team in developing an outreach programme, to show visitors how archives can mean something to them on many different levels.

Museum archives, like all publicly-funded archive services, cannot stand still in this 'changed landscape' and there is still lots to do to improve services and access to attract new audiences. Following up feedback on how well new services meet the needs of readers is key. These evaluations help to review how well the services align to the needs of existing and new users, building a case to make further improvements or funding bids, to develop more imaginative and innovative services to reach new audiences.

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Eleanor Gawne

Head of Archive & Library, National Maritime Museum
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A view on the conference

This year's Archives and Records Association conference, having taken place in Brighton, was my first time attending the annual conference of the ARA. When first looking at the conference programme and theme which was focused on Progression, Innovation and New Landscapes, I simply thought it too good an opportunity to risk missing, given that we are in the middle of such change, advancements and project planning here at the James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway. I was one of the very lucky few to receive a Conference Bursary to enable me attend the conference in full, so to the ARA, I am very grateful for that.

Prior to attending, I honestly was not overly sure of what to expect, who I would meet or how things would take shape over the few days. Having attended, I can honestly say it was one of the best decisions I have made in my career as an archivist. From start to finish it was simply a wonderful learning experience. From a journey that began leaving Galway in the early hours of Wednesday morning to arriving in Brighton with minutes to spare ahead of the welcome address.

From and following a welcome address from Martin Taylor, Chair of the ARA, the level of importance and relevance in the programme was obvious. Dr David Wallace, University of Michigan, delivered a keynote address that was simply fascinating entitled "Burdened with the Truth" on the topic of Wikileaks and the risk of 'leaked' information from archives. Dr Wallace outlined how accidental/intentional 'leaks' of private and restricted information can affect an information service.

Other talks on the morning session addressed issues from planning to dealing with a large backlog of collections; a really interesting talk from



Attempting some Salsa dancing.

Cathy Williams, Head of Collections Knowledge at The National Archives on how they documented the Olympics through 'Live and Online Archives' and how they are still actively encouraging the public to contribute to this communal archive.

The Keynote address on Day 2 was delivered by Tony Ageh, Controller of Archive Development, BBC Archives. Ageh's talk on Archives being the Foundation of the Creative Economy was simply inspiring. He continually emphasised archives being "the resources to ignite our nations" and how we will be part of a digital revolution.

A talk of key interest from a personal point of view was from Sue Breakell, University of Brighton Design Archives. Being a fellow university archives service with a strong focus on creative arts archives, it was great to hear such similarity in approach, such as increasing engagement with academics via teaching, research and postgraduate recruitment as well as exhibitions and marketing.

The conference was wrapped up by comments from a wide range of archives and records management professionals and Dr David Wallace concluded things as he began some days earlier with some great insights and inspiring comments.

All in all, it was a fantastic learning experience. As bursary recipients and as a group we could not have been treated better. As an opportunity to network, make new contacts and share some of what we are doing here I found it incredibly useful. I think it very important to stay connected and in touch with our representative body, the ARA. It is a network we can only benefit from by being a vocal and visible institution. I met some really great and interesting people and it was a joy to learn of such innovative projects happening in archival institutions across the UK and Ireland. All I can add here is roll on ARA conference 2013!

Barry Houlihan

Archivist, James Hardiman Library, National University of Ireland, Galway.

The word of the conference - the first two days at least - was 'bracing', directed at the traditional weather of the British seaside in August: wet and windy. The polite response to such weather is generally that it is 'invigorating' or refreshing, which seems to me to be a very apt metaphor for the whole conference. There are 'bracing' winds of change blowing through our profession, but the conference suggested that we are more able than we might think to face these changes.

The speakers across all three days were excellent: professional, thoughtful and engaged. The sheer enthusiasm and incredibly impressive variety of approaches to the issues facing the professions was inspiring. I particularly enjoyed the papers from Dr Caroline Adams from West Sussex Records Office on the future role of local authority archives, Wendy Walker introducing The Keep project from East Sussex (fantastic photographs!) and Jane Stephenson on the Linking Lives project. Tony Ageh from the BBC was amazingly positive with a determined refusal to take no for an answer that was inspirational and encouraged us all to ask what is the most not least we can possibly do with our resources. Brownie points also for Steve Bailey for getting a Dr Who reference into a talk on records management!

For me three major underlying themes came out in the conference. The first was technology and all the enormous possibilities and issues it has brought to the profession: almost every talk referenced digital archives, preservation, social media, networked data or online community engagement. Michael Gallagher's introductory facts

Word of the conference?

included the slightly sobering statistic that mobile devices will outnumber humans by the end of this year! The second key theme was volunteers and community involvement. I was impressed by how many of the projects discussed had so successfully engaged with their communities and volunteers. The Hull History Centre project on World War Two records was particularly striking for the large number of volunteers it had attracted. Tony Butler from the 'Happy' Museum of East Anglian Life offered a radically different way for us to measure our successes and work with our communities to envisage a better future: he made us wonder exactly what a 'happy archive' would look like!

But the third and probably most important theme was without doubt innovation. Most archivists are already very innovative - but often in a classic 'sticky back plastic and string manner' - ad hoc and improvised solutions to the day to day challenges we face. But across the conference the underlying and sometimes explicit message was clear: to be innovative in a more strategic and systematic way, to rethink our approaches, tactics and theories, what we really need is time. As so many archivists know time is a luxury we don't always have. Conference did, quite literally, help to give me that time and distance - the chance to spend 3 days away from daily reality and to really stand back and think. The Grand Hotel in Brighton became a cauldron full of new ideas 'to borrow' and enthusiasm to inspire - but it was the time and space to reflect, innovate and reenergise my brain that I found invaluable.

As always with any ARA event I found a room full of archivists, records managers, and conservators a friendly and engaged environment - I left



Speaker: Tony Ageh BBC.

Brighton refreshed, reinvigorated and impressed by the enthusiasm and ingenuity I had heard from everybody: speakers, organisers and other delegates in the queue for coffee!

On the final day of the conference the sun came out - like most delegates I headed outside in every available tea break to soak in some vitamin D and the world already seemed a more positive place. So to return to my weather metaphor: there may be bracing winds of change blowing through the record keeping professions - and some of them have brought and continue to bring stormy weather. But as I left the Brighton and the ARA Conference 2012 the sun was still shining. I hope that this is a good omen for the future of the profession, and that we will continue to respond to the challenges we face with positivity, innovation and good humour.

Lizzy Baker

Public Services Officer, East Riding of Yorkshire
Archives and Local Studies Service



The Gala Dinner.

A Delegate's view

As a first time conference attendee, I was apprehensive about what to expect over the three days. The conference's themes of progression and innovation were pertinent given current challenges in the recordkeeping sector. My hope was that attendance at the conference would provide advice, guidance and insight regarding the directions the recordkeeping profession can take in the future.

Dr Schmidt-Czaia's presentation on Wednesday morning shared the experiences of the aftermath of the collapse of the Cologne archive. Insight into the collapse showed that, reassuringly, a true professional network exists. Hull History Centre's presentation introduced the idea of categorising material in various themes in order to tackle a cataloguing backlog. Working thematically helps to recruit volunteers with a specific interest in the chosen themes. A win-win situation. Tony Butler's presentation introduced the concept of a happy museum, where user satisfaction, or happiness, is valued above more traditional measures such as visitor numbers. How wonderful it would be to translate this, repercussion free, to recordkeeping!

Thursday's keynote address from Tony Ageh, followed by Heather Briston from UCLA continued Wednesday's unofficial themes of positivity and optimism by providing a professional pep talk. Heather Briston reminded us that as a profession and as individuals we are innovative often without realising it. Our attempts to adapt to challenges such as reductions in funding provide the very evidence of the innovation we may sometimes believe we lack. In short we need more belief in ourselves. Steve Bailey's presentation on the future of digital records certainly provided food for thought. The issues surrounding the future of digital recordkeeping and the ways in which the profession adapts to these challenges is not a new area of debate. However, the suggestion of handing over these challenges to those working in IT was, for me, a radical one - although one which certainly requires consideration.

On Friday morning LSE shared their methods for managing deposited born digital collections by providing their step-by-step procedures for use with digital material. It was this practical application that I found the most useful of all the presentations at the conference. LSE's guidance was something that I can take immediately forward in my own role.

Dr David Wallace's concluding remarks perfectly summarised the themes of the conference:

- work was still required to engage society with records,
- digital records will not disappear and therefore must be dealt with,
- recordkeepers need to think more about how users can add value to our services
- and, finally, discussion surrounding the role that ARA can play in supporting the profession through these themes.

One theme, emphasised by more than one speaker, which really made an impact on me was the concept of creating an environment where failure was acceptable, where failure is viewed as part of the learning and creating process. Nurturing such an environment and mind-set would allow more risk taking and in turn the possibility for greater innovation in the recordkeeping profession.

Attending the conference gave me the opportunity to see the bigger picture, to hear a variety of differing views from across the heritage sector and to ascertain where my professional view fits into the sector's as a whole. Overall I left the conference feeling refreshed and invigorated and with a much longer to do list than I started with!

Lucy Bonner

Community Archivist, Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre

Delegates.

Meeting expectations?

Archiving and records management can feel at times a lonely calling – I have two part-time jobs where I am the only information professional and this was one of the main reasons I wanted to come to conference. Thankfully ARA agreed. I owe them a huge thank you for my bursary.

I expected to enjoy the conference, but I hadn't expected to enjoy it quite as much as I did. To meet so many other professionals from all kinds of backgrounds but with similar passions was both reassuring and energising. Exchanging information, experiences and advice was a boon – and there is something hugely comforting even in seeing others roll their eyes at the right moment when talking about the more challenging aspects of our jobs: we may work alone but we are not alone.

As somebody who works in both archives and record management, it was especially pleasing that there was both an implicit understanding (in the nature of the merged ARA) as well as an active engagement with the fact that they are not discrete disciplines but on the same spectrum.

I'd expected some of the sessions to feel more like a lecture than they did; it was a pleasant surprise to discover how practical many of them were – one I enjoyed in particular (and this may surprise people who know me) was the session on user services and user engagement. An active discussion with other delegates about the complicated nature of the archive I worked at was extremely productive and I came away with a series of ideas about involving volunteers and the community in a project – and not just that, but also the desire and motivation to put them into practice.

"Kat accepting that users can be an integral part of developing an archive" shock! – I should perhaps explain (admit!) at this point that I had a bit of a, well, reputation on

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I'd expected some of the sessions to feel more like a lecture than they did; it was a pleasant surprise to discover how practical many of them were
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my course at UCL for putting archives first and users very much second. I blame this on the fact that I have actually had very little exposure to users of archives and while I could perhaps, grudgingly, theoretically see the benefit in involving them closely, in practice I didn't really trust them. So for presentations at conference to scratch at my deep-seated Jenkinsonian convictions – well done!

Overall, I came away with a spring in my step, inspired by the enthusiasm of speakers with a clear pride in our profession, talking passionately about what we do (and love to do!) while acknowledging and suggesting solutions to the problems we often face with a healthy dose of realism.

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Kat Petersen

Records Manager, Wingas Storage
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Founded in 1981, Graham Bignell Paper Conservation is an accredited member of the Institute of Paper Conservation, specialising in the conservation of all works of art & archives, on paper & parchment.

Cathy Williams, The National Archives.



The Student Perspective

The conference was a great chance to engage with the archive community. I was able to talk to those currently dealing with some of the issues confronting the profession that I have been learning about during the course of my studies. Attending during the stressful time of completing my dissertation and beginning the job application process, meeting so many friendly archivists and learning about the exciting work currently being done has reassured me that I had made the right decision in pursuing this career and filled me with enthusiasm for facing the challenges ahead.

I found all the presentations to be informative and thought provoking. Of particular interest to me was the section on 'All Together Now? The Future for Records Managers and Archivists'. Michael Gallagher's presentation on the challenges of managing organisational records that are stored on personal devices illustrated the evolving nature of the digital environment, raising questions of information security, privacy and preservation. Steve Bailey challenged us to think about whether archivists and records managers are the right people to lead on the management of digital records. Both presentations, along with several others including the breakout session on 'We're all Digital Archivists Now?', demonstrate how our role in the digital landscape is and will in the future be changing.

Another theme that arose in the presentations was the need for new partnerships and the importance of archivists collaborating with others, both within and outside of the profession. The most pertinent example

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of archivists coming together was provided by Dr. Bettina Schmidt-Czaia. She showed how networks, both local and international, were able to provide assistance in salvaging the holdings from the rubble after the collapse of the Historical Archives of the City of Cologne and how twenty archival repositories provided storage and conservation for the archives. It is events such as the ARA conference that provide us with the opportunity to continue to build networks within the profession and Bettina's presentation reminded us how valuable those networks are and the willingness of and need for archivists to help each other when disaster strikes.

I highly recommend that other students take advantage of the opportunities to get involved with the Association and apply for the bursaries available. It is important for newly qualified record keepers to contribute to and share our thoughts with the archival community. We in turn can learn a great deal from the experiences of those who have been working within the profession. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole conference and feel that I benefited greatly from going. I would like to thank the ARA for giving me the opportunity to attend such a worthwhile event.

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Laura Hynds
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A first-time attendee's perspective

On the 29th of August, a tribe congregated in Brighton at the Grand Hotel for its annual ritual known as Conference. The said tribe was, of course, archivists and we gathered together for the ARA Conference on the theme of "Progression, Innovation and New Landscapes". A varied and topical programme had been arranged for us, with a succession of excellent speakers and presentations. As a newly qualified archivist it was with some trepidation that I registered on that first morning. Would I be out of my depth? Would anyone talk to me? I soon realised that my fears were groundless as I met some old friends and quickly made several new ones. Brighton showed herself off in her most raffish style, the weather was benign and a fun series of social events was part of the deal. What was there not to enjoy?

The Conference kicked off with the keynote address given by David Wallace who, much to my delight, turned out to be a fan of the Byrds (remember "Mr Tambourine Man" anyone?). He spoke of the changing landscape of records management and archival science as barriers to the dissemination of information. A thought-provoking paper considered the "wikileaks" saga and its implications for the whole information community. He was unable to give any real answers but there aren't any easy solutions in a changing world. Dr Wallace was followed by Bettina Schmidt-Czaia, Director of the Historical Archives of the City of Cologne, describing the catastrophe in Cologne when the archive building collapsed into a hole in the ground. The network of partnerships established within Germany and the international community has gone some way to returning the Cologne Archives to their former prominence. I was left wondering what would happen in Britain if one of our major City Archives was faced with a similar disaster. Let's hope we never have to find out!

Topics during the rest of the day included a plea by Cathy Williams of TNA to ensure that we all gather together as many records as we possibly can about some events which happened in London in August and September – remind me again, Cathy? Of course, the Olympic and Paralympic Games! The challenge to all of us is to capture the vast amount of records produced by all those involved before, during and after the Games for the benefit of future generations who will ask the question "What did you do in the Olympics, Mum (or Dad, of course)?" Jack Latimer gave a fascinating presentation on community archives and the role they play in their communities. Wendy Walker then told us about

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it was very encouraging to hear about such ventures as the Parliamentary All-Party Group on Archives which can only benefit us as we seek to forge new partnerships and develop the profession for the 21st Century.

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the new Record Office in East Sussex, showing us what can be achieved by working in partnership with other stakeholders. This point was further emphasised by Tony Butler as he described the work of the Museum of East Anglian Life, which has recently found a new lease of life as partnerships are developed with organisations in East Anglia. The result is a vibrant, socially inclusive and exciting museum, a model which archivists could follow.

The afternoon session drew to a close with a presentation from John Chambers and Marie Owens, Chief Executive and Head of Public Affairs at ARA respectively, outlining some of the initiatives and work carried out on behalf of us all by the ARA. We often forget just what our professional association does on our behalf! Being a relatively small tribe in comparison with some makes it hard for us to have our voices heard so it was very encouraging to hear about such ventures as the Parliamentary All-Party Group on Archives which can only benefit us as we seek to forge new partnerships and develop the profession for the 21st Century.

Thursday began in fine style with an address by Tony Ageh, Controller of Archive Development at the BBC. He talked about the development and growth of the Corporation's digital archive and where it's going and the use to which it can and will be put. Given that he had the graveyard shift at 9 am he managed to be informative, witty and engaging with plenty of thought-provoking comments and ideas. The rest of the morning was given over to panel presentations and discussions from the need to grow and develop new to a consideration of the continuing impact of technology on archivists' and records managers' roles. In the afternoon, we were given a choice of sessions to attend which were on a smaller scale than the main talks but which were extremely useful. I especially enjoyed the session with the conservators: it's sometimes too

easy to forget that we are also the custodians of fragile and damaged documents and books. We should not and must not overlook the preservation requirements of our collections and the conservators certainly reminded me of our duty of care, as did Chris Woods in his overview of PD5454:2012. It was a timely reminder of the responsibilities we have for the day-to-day care and management of our collections.

Friday dawned fair and beautiful but this was possibly lost on some who had perhaps partied too hard at the Gala Dinner but more of that later! Again, the sessions were varied and useful. Finance was given an airing and this, of course, is a crucial factor for all of us in the current economic climate. Grant aid is the only realistic way forward for the undertaking of major projects so it was encouraging to hear how the Heritage Lottery Fund is trying to simplify applications. However, grant applications are not the only way to achieve desired outcomes and Sam Collenette was illuminating on the need and desirability to develop strategic partnerships if we are to achieve lasting benefits for all our stakeholders. The post-lunch session served as a summary of the threads teased out throughout the Conference and the speakers gave us a flavour of the future for the information sector as they see it which, in turn, provoked some lively debate from the floor. And then, suddenly, Conference was all over for another year and it was time for us to wend our weary ways home.

There has been little mention of the social side of Conference because I'm lost for words at the way archivists party! The Gala Dinner on the Thursday night was one to remember (hard, in view of the copious amounts of "vin rouge" quaffed) and was followed by a brave attempt by some professional dancers to teach us how to salsa. The least said the better, I think... suffice to say, there were many sore heads the following morning. We behaved ourselves better the previous night, though, at a drinks reception hosted by the Mayor of Brighton. The only problem was what seemed like a Force 8 gale blowing the length of the Pier which did give some of us girls the odd Marilyn Monroe moment! Nonetheless, despite the odd embarrassment, it was a memorable evening. Thanks must go to the programme organisers for arranging a challenging Conference programme. I came away with enthusiasm renewed and with optimism for our future. There are major challenges facing us but when have there not been? There are opportunities for us to position ourselves in the forefront of the information world and we must ensure that we take advantage of them. If we do, as a profession, we will be well-placed to prosper and grow in this already amazing 21st Century.

Lastly, thanks are due to all those involved in the organisation and who ensured the smooth running of Conference. Also, thanks must be given to the suppliers who supported the Conference by taking trade stands at the Information Marketplace and for being so generous with their time and advice.

While the gathering of the Archivist tribe in Brighton in 2012 was not quite so bizarre and may not have made quite the same impact as hippy San Francisco's "Gathering of the Tribes" in 1967, I have no doubt that Conference this year did have a major impact on those who were fortunate enough to attend. I came away enthused about our profession and even more convinced of the importance of our role in society as a whole. We are, I believe, the custodians of amazing stories and without archivists those stories would not and could not be told. As a profession, we face enormous challenges financially and technologically but Conference this year enabled us to see how we can meet those challenges and continue to ensure that all our "wondrous stories" can continue to be told.

I am grateful to have been able to attend Conference this year and wish to thank Daniel Scott-Davies, Archives/Heritage Manager at The Scout Association, for encouraging me to go and The Scout Association for the financial support I was given which enabled me to attend. Would I go again? Yes, I most certainly would!

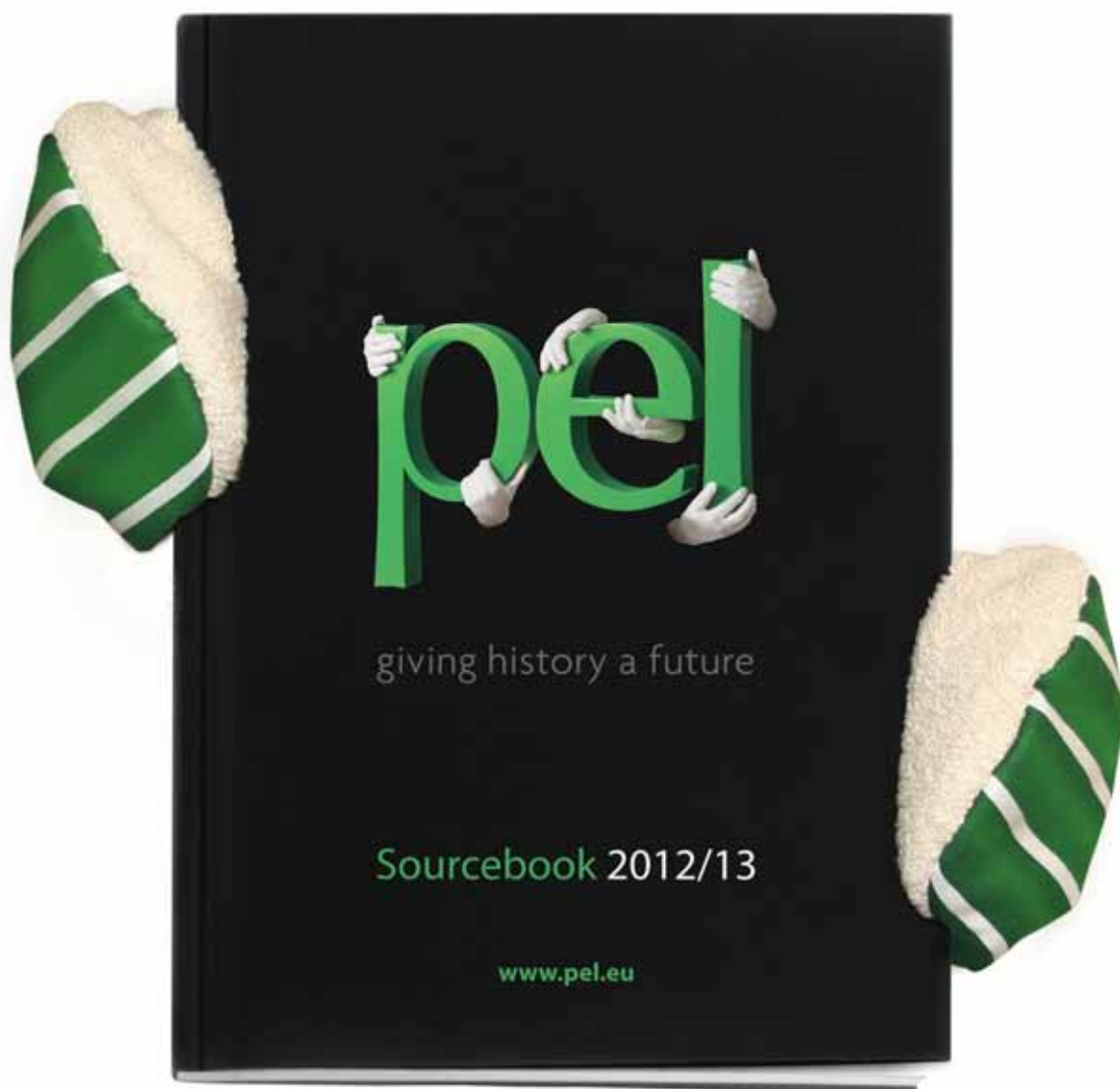
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Claire Woodforde

The Scouts Association
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