



Archives & Records
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Section for New Professionals

13 Scottish summer
seminar stories

16 Archival
immersion

20 Keep it simple,
stupid!



Queens Hotel, Leeds 28-30 August 2019



Archives & Records
Association
UK & Ireland

CONFERENCE
2019



Welcome...



Section for New Professionals

Being a new professional myself (just about), I was delighted to edit this special issue. As I edit, I am struck by how enthusiastically young professionals are tackling the challenges of digital preservation. Whether it's by creating new workflows (Katherine Bullimore) or cataloguing born-digital photographs (Megan Joyce), we've really grasped the nettle. It's inspiring to see how our peers have rejected the idea of the so-called digital black hole and are actively ensuring the preservation of the digital realm.

I was intrigued by Eleanor Clarke's maxim, "to get inside the mind of archives you must get inside the mind of an archivist". I think this is true of all recordkeepers and highlights the

impact we have on the records we look after. Whether you're a conservator deciding to repair a torn photograph or a records manager marking something for permanent retention, you hold the fate of a piece of history in your hands. It's easy to forget this during the drudgery of the day-to-day, but new arrivals to the profession help us remember.

Hopefully, this issue will give everyone who reads it a little spark of enthusiasm for our magnificent profession. For anyone feeling inspired, why not pass on the joy and contribute a piece for a future issue? We're always on the look-out for stories of professional innovation and creativity and are happy to accept contributions outside the standard article format (who doesn't love a listicle?).

Finally, I'd like to thank Alicia Chilcott, the section co-ordinator, without whom this issue would have been bereft and many pixels smaller.

Kim Harsley
ARC Editor



A streetcar named ISAD(G)

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FIGHTING FREEZE-UPS

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Openinglines

Justine Reilly, director of Sporting Heritage, an important ARA partner, introduces an area of cultural heritage with some surprising challenges – but also some solutions in the works



In a world where sport is forefront, we are used to hearing sports stars and commentators talk about the importance of sporting legends as inspiration for sporting achievement and we recognise the importance of sport in delivering against so many wider agendas. One might therefore expect that UK sporting heritage and the sporting past to be central components of both the sport and heritage 'sectors', ie a key priority worthy of significant investment, strategy and priority.

However, as the director of the subject specialist organisation for sport in the UK, Sporting Heritage, it's clear that there are tensions between sport and culture which have, for a long time, affected the protection, preservation and access of sporting heritage.

Why is this? Well, the main reason (NB in the UK context) seems to be an enduring – and, to many, inexplicable – perception that sport isn't part of culture; that it's something 'other'. Part of this is because sporting heritage tends to focus on working class histories, which, until recently, were not seen as relevant to the established heritage infrastructure. The Cultural Olympiad for the 2012 London Olympic Games, for example, made no mention of sporting heritage within its contents, and there no funding was provided to deliver any activity in respect of sporting heritage in the run up to, or during, the Games. This seems inconceivable at a time when the case was being made that the UK was the home of sport. It signals the gulf between the recognition of the importance and value of sporting heritage and actions taken in support of the sector.

But we're gradually seeing a shift in perception. We see a very real threat to some of the UK's heritage venues and provision, with audiences in some areas falling because of a perceived lack of relevance. Sporting heritage provides

a clear opportunity to re-engage and re-ignite community interest on a grand scale, and reach new audiences. It's possible to tell the story of the social, cultural, political, and economic development of the UK through the development of sport, uncovering hidden histories and shining light on grass-roots heritage that was previously overlooked.

Additionally, sport is central to our communities: it provides a sense of pride and of place, and tells communal and individual stories. These stories and the story of communal heritage are powerful tools in creating identity and cohesion. Finally, sporting heritage responds to a number of wider agendas, for example education, health and well-being.

The key for us as the support agency for the sector, is to provide opportunities for all those working in the field to share and support each other, to protect collections and develop a national infrastructure to remove them from risk. Most sporting collections are held outside the heritage sector, so much of our work means engaging at community-level to support the development of collections management and access skills and develop partnerships with heritage professionals.

We also deliver a range of programming, which shouts about the importance of sporting heritage at the same time as developing quality activity, research and knowledge about how sporting heritage as a subject matter can impact different audiences in different ways. And we have many amazing Sporting Heritage Ambassadors who share our vision, including Olympic athlete Jenny Meadows; Paralympic cyclist and swimmer Dame Sarah Storey; artist Paine Proffitt, and poet Ian McMillan.

Our work includes:

- A UK National Sporting Heritage Day (NSHD) on 30 September every year
- Subject-specialist advice, guidance, events and networking, including a major annual national conference (in Cardiff in 2019, on 23 and 24 October – come and join us!)
- A range of training events
- National partnership programmes, such as with the UK armed forces, focusing on specific collection areas
- The development of an online database of sporting collections and archives on our website (www.sportingheritage.org.uk), which is free to access and user led; and
- A (UK) national programme of research exploring the role and value of sporting heritage, working with universities and collections across the country.

Finally, we are a membership organisation, and our network is the glue that holds the sector together. Archives and archivists are central to our work - if you haven't already, do get in touch! And if you are attending the ARA Conference in Leeds later this month, we'll be at the ARA Hub.



Professional development news

In this edition, **Chris Sheridan** takes a closer look at the vital role that assessors play in the ARAs Professional Development Programme.



Our Professional Development Programme (formerly Continuing Professional Development, or CPD) relies heavily on assessors, all of whom are volunteers. Not only do they help to ensure standards are maintained across the entire programme, they also provide an invaluable contribution to the work of the ARA. We are always on the look-out for more members to join the team of assessors do contact me (details below) if you think it might be for you.

Flexibility and operational detail

The role of an assessor is very flexible, and assessors can commit as much or as little time as they can offer. There are two types of assessment:

- CPD Reviews (ie, periodic reviews of already-attained ARA qualifications, including under the former Registration scheme), and
- first-time Foundation and Registered level and Fellowship applications.

Around 15 candidates submit their CPD Reviews monthly, and each takes an average of 1-2 hours to assess. Submissions for first-time Foundation and Registered membership and first-time Fellowship applications take place every two months. Each Foundation/Registered level application received takes an average of 3-4 hours to assess. Individual Fellowship applications can take longer.

Part of my role is to allocate review candidates and first-time applications to assessors that have confirmed their availability. We first ensure that there is no conflict of interest between an assessor and an applicant. Assessors then process the review or application they have been allocated to determine whether the evidence in the review/application meets the standard for the Foundation or Registered qualification levels and for Fellowships.

Assessors manage their 'caseload' online, ie via accessing the programme website, so can do them at any time of the week and in a way that best suits them - they just need internet access. They can take on as many applications as they feel comfortable with.

Training and support

We provide training and guidance to all new assessors, and we hold an annual meeting with them to share experiences and discuss their questions/concerns.

We would love it if members that have secured qualifications under the Professional Development Programme, whether at Foundation or Registered level, or as Fellows, chose to become assessors. Anyone looking to develop their own governance, line management and critical thinking competencies, for example, should find the role beneficial. It's also a great way to gain perspective and expertise whilst contributing to the development of the profession and the next generation of the ARA's qualified professionals.

Pioneer assessors

Rather than just take our word for it, we asked two assessors to share their thoughts on the role and the benefits of getting involved.



Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan
Director and Consultant
Archivist

Elizabeth qualified as an archivist in 1996 and went on to work in the museums and local authority sectors before setting up her own consultancy in 2003. She has been a

Registered ARA member and assessor on the former Registration scheme since 1999 and is now an assessor on the Professional Development Programme.

"As an assessor, you get to see the breadth of professional activity as well as the emergence of new types of working and trends. For my own work, it helps inform my understanding of how the sector as a whole is developing,

which I then apply; for example, reviewing the current status of some aspects of the archive sector. It also provides a great opportunity to learn about what other professionals are doing, from which you can learn and perhaps make contact."



Gavin McGuffie
Senior Archivist, Postal Museum

Gavin has been a professional archivist for more than twenty years. He is currently a senior archivist at the Postal Museum, a role he has held since 2017,

having joined in 2007 as catalogue

manager. Prior to that, he spent six years

at the Guardian and Observer newspaper group, where he helped set up its archive and visitor centre. Gavin has been a Registered member of the ARA since 2001 and became an assessor under the former Registration scheme in 2010.

"Not only has being an assessor really helped with my knowledge of the issues facing archivists in different institutions, it's also allowed me to recognise the communality of the challenges facing the profession more generally. Reading and considering others' experiences in very varied circumstances, as articulated in their applications, can help put one's own career development into proper perspective. It also illustrates how others have coped with challenging circumstances in their work lives. Being part of a wider assessment community provides an invaluable support network for seasoned professionals."

How to get involved

If you are interested in becoming an ARA assessor, please contact me (Chris Sheridan) by email chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk or call 07377 940696.

“Being part of a wider assessment community provides an invaluable support network”

Collecting matters

Jane Shillaker, Programme Officer at The National Archives (UK), tells us about the recent archives accreditation refresh and the ongoing success of the programme.

A year ago, Archive Service Accreditation, the UK standard for archive services, was relaunched following a programme refresh. The revised standard examines in greater detail how an archive service collects, manages and provides access to born-digital records, as well as expecting services to plan for future change that might impact on the management of and access to their collections.

Since relaunching, the number of accredited archive services has continued to increase. Over 145 services have now achieved the standard. Recently-accredited services include university archives, specialist repositories, business archives and local authority services.

Accreditation is not awarded in perpetuity, and services must continue to meet the eligibility criteria of the standard to retain accreditation. The award itself lasts for up to six years, with a review after three years. During this time, an accredited service must report on progress and any changes that might affect the delivery of the service.

“ *Over 145 services have now achieved the standard* ”

Six years after the initial award, an accredited archive service must make a new application for accreditation. With the first services accredited in 2013, this means we will soon see archive services celebrating accreditation for a second time! The archive services will apply under the revised standard, and this will provide an opportunity to reflect on service development since the first award.

For successful archive services, there will be a new certificate that shows both awards, demonstrating that the service continues to meet the standard and has successfully delivered and navigated development and change.

The 2019 ARA Conference

28-30 August (Leeds): last chance to register

Mike Anson, ARA Conference committee chair, puts the final touches to this year's gathering in Leeds, with free one-to-one professional development sessions for ARA members, bursary and award winners, optional extras, social media, yoga, and more. Oh, and a reminder that it's last-chance time for bookings.

With one month or so to go until the 2019 ARA Conference in Leeds, now's the time to make your booking, if you haven't already, for all three days or one day. Transport couldn't be easier, as the venue, the Queens Hotel, is right at Leeds railway station and easily accessible from Leeds-Bradford airport.

We will take bookings right up until the week of Conference itself, of course. But we are now at full capacity at the Queens Hotel in terms of available overnight accommodation. So, if you are about to book for three days and require somewhere to stay, please now register for the full rate without accommodation and find an alternative place to stay close by. The good news is that central Leeds has a wide range of options to suit all budgets. If you are thinking about coming for one day, ARA members can still attend for just £180.

See here for details of the programme, venue and to register: <https://conference.archives.org.uk/>

Themes

In 2019, we are very much focused on the future. Our overall theme – Recordkeeping 3.0 – includes three designated individual day themes that fit the four main streams: information governance; archives and records; media and digital; and conservation. The three daily themes are:



The Queens Hotel, Leeds now (from Wikipedia)



...and then (1940s) © The Queens Hotel

- 'Our careers'
- 'Our workplace'
- 'Our profession'

So if you're keen to catch up on everything from traditional skills in a digital age, shaping digital recordkeeping competence, the future of records management and entrepreneurship, Blockchain, virtual-reality conservation, research data management, immersive education, museums and archives, fundraising, volunteering, parchment repair and more, Conference is your one-stop shop for the year.

Keynote speakers

Leading off the first day (28 August) is keynote speaker Dr Alexandra Eveleigh, of the Wellcome Collection and Wellcome Trust, who will speak about the future of professional recordkeeping. On 29 August the 'our workplace' keynote is Dr Ros Lynch of the UK Intellectual Property Office, who will update us on digitisation and copyright (and the digital single market), artificial intelligence, rethinking your records and archives as assets and cross-border IP transfers after the UK leaves the European Union.



J. Willgoose, Esq. and the cover of PSB's latest EP, *White Star Liner*



Dr Alexandra Eveleigh



Dr Ros Lynch

On 30 August, the 'our profession' day, the keynote speaker is J. Willgoose, Esq., the inspiration behind the innovative art-rock band Public Service Broadcasting, or PSB. He will inspire us to think differently about archives and records and see a wider potential for creative and educational impact. He will draw on PSB's impressive back-list of material using NASA and Soviet space records (timely, as we mark the 50th anniversary of the moon landings), the archives of the coal mines of south Wales and the latest EP, *White Star Liner*, based on the eponymous shipping line, among others.

For an example of how PSB weave archival material into their extraordinary work, click here for a sample from *The Race for Space* – broadcast on BBC Newsnight in July 2019, around the 50th anniversary of the moon landings. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXZ7AKDfDwk>

Announcing our Bursary Winners

Congratulations to all of this year's Conference bursary winners and thanks to everyone who donated - large or small – as part of the crowd-sourcing or who sponsored the record number on offer. In the end, the Conference committee selected eleven full bursary winners, ie for all three days. Bursaries include attendance, accommodation and food, and up to £100/€110 towards transport. Here's the roll of honour:

Local Authority bursary, sponsored by Ancestry (increased from one to four in 2019)

Dina Strati, Richard Aitken, Julie Melrose and Katie McDonald

New Professionals bursary (crowd-funded by ARA members)

Lucy-Kay Brownson

ARA Bursaries (supported by the ARA membership)

Fiona Johnston, Freddie Alexander, Vikki Ellis and Sophie Leverington

Diversity bursary sponsored by kevinjbolton limited (increased from one to two in 2019)

Riza Hussaini and Michael Welsh

Apologies for the delay in making the formal announcement. This was due to the unprecedented number of applications (over 50) and the time it took to read them all, while giving everyone a fair chance. All successful and unsuccessful applicants have already been notified.

Don't Forget...

All the above is but a taster of what is on offer. As ever, we include a Gala dinner, where we will celebrate winners of this year's ARA's Awards for Excellence, one-to-one professional development sessions for ARA members, a (limited availability) visit to the outstanding Marks and Spencer archives building in Leeds and a reception at the amazing Royal Armouries museum.

Stop press.... a time also to re-connect, make new friends and celebrate achievements

At the Conference Gala Dinner on 29 August, join us to celebrate and appreciate the winners of this year's ARA Excellence Awards. Distinguished Service Award winners this year are David Mander, OBE; Debby Rohan; and Mark Allen. Debby and Mark are the first-ever conservators to win DSAs. We will also celebrate our Record Keeper of the Year, Elaine MacGillivray, and New Professional of the Year, Julie Devenney.

Delegates will be able to avail themselves of a social programme organised by our colleagues from the ARA North of England region, including an open social event at the celebrated *Head of Steam* pub in Leeds on the evening of 27 August for anyone arriving early. Full details of how to book your place will be provided when you register or can be found on the Conference website. Members of the ARA not attending Conference, such as in the North West and North of England regions, are also



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The Michael Marks (Archive) Building, Leeds. ©the Marks & Spencer Archive.



Elephant armour. © The Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds

more than welcome to join the social gathering. The North of England region has also put together an impressive guide – to be included in the Conference programme - of places to visit, eat/drink at, etc. for delegates looking to explore Leeds.

We are this year hoping to organise a morning yoga session for those wanting a more sedate alternative to the Chair's morning run. We will also reflect on progress with our #GlasgowManifesto campaign to improve diversity in the recordkeeping sector.

'Pick 'n mix'

The ARA Conference enables you 'pick and mix' your preferred sessions across all the major 'streams' and also catch up with many of those you have to miss. We will film all 'A Sessions' in the main plenary room over the three days – ie the items on the left side column of the Conference programme. So, if you want to be in two places at once, ie attend sessions in streams B-D and catch up on the A stream at your leisure, you now can be!

We will, as usual, be on Twitter and now Instagram throughout Conference. Our Conference handles and hashtags are #ARA2019 and @ARAConf (Twitter) and @araconference (Instagram). We hope to do Instagram video interviews during Conference, including with keynote speakers. So, if you can't join us for whatever reason, you can still interact.

If you're a Twitter regular, join us also on @archivehour on 22 August from 8pm to 9pm, where the Conference committee will be on hand to ask/answer a range of questions on the #ARA2019 @ARAConf programme and organisation. After the positive feedback in Glasgow last year, we will again use Slido, our dedicated audience engagement social media platform. Various speaker sessions during Conference will include voting on Slido, and throughout Conference you will be able to express opinions by voting on live Slido polls.

Finally....

There's still time to join several hundred colleagues and peers for tailored presentations and workshops that address the main issues facing you and our sector today. Our attendance fees this year are the lowest since 2013 and among the lowest in the past decade and more. The ARA Conference remains the best-value offering of any comparable event in our sector. It's a whole year's worth of training in three days!

(Note: the ARA organises Conference and prices it to break even. It is not profit-making!)

See you in a few weeks!

Collecting, documenting and using spontaneous memorials: the case of the 'Manchester Together Archive'.

Dr Kostas Arvanitis, Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Museology, Institute for Cultural Practices at the University of Manchester, explains the growing role that archives of 'spontaneous memorials' are playing in helping community healing and changing professional practice

On 22 May 2017 a homemade bomb was detonated in the Manchester Arena, as people were leaving the Ariana Grande concert. Twenty-three people (including the bomber) were killed and over 800 were injured. Within hours of the attack people began to leave flowers, candles, written notes, soft toys and other items in spontaneous memorials that sprung up around the city. These grew quickly over the following few weeks, especially the one in St Ann's Square, which became a focal point for people's spontaneous memorialisation.



The spontaneous memorial in St Ann's Square, Manchester, June 2017. Image courtesy of Manchester City Council

Immediate responses

Just over two weeks later, on 9 June, different organisations in the city came together to remove the spontaneous memorial objects from St Ann's Square. The team members carried out a number of specific tasks, including:



One of the 'Trees of Hope' in St Ann's Square, Manchester, May 2018. Image courtesy of Dr Kostas Arvanitis.



Middle top: Items from St Ann's Square at the holding site in London Road Fire Station, Manchester, June 2017. Image courtesy of Dr Kostas Arvanitis. Other images: The 'Manchester Together' Archive at Manchester Art Gallery. Images courtesy of Dr Kostas Arvanitis.

- Composting many of the flowers that people had left and used the compost to plant the "Trees of Hope" during the first-year anniversary in May 2018;
- replanted around the city many of the plants that had been left;
- (members of the Women's Institute) washing more than 2,000 soft toys, which were then donated to charities to be passed on to children in the UK and abroad (see film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHFvpYUDmFs>;
- a candle artist creating new candles from those left in the square, which were used in a church mass on the first year anniversary and then offered to the families of the bereaved (see film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnYUa5jbIIY>).

The beginnings of an archive

Manchester Art Gallery, led by the then acting director Amanda Wallace, oversaw the removal and collection of more than 10,000 objects (such as notes, letters, cards, drawings, sculptures, toys, t-shirts), storing them at the gallery and forming what is now known as the 'Manchester Together Archive' (MTA) of the public response to the Manchester Arena attack.

Evolving professional practice

Spontaneous memorials are not a new phenomenon. But their frequency, size and societal importance appears to be increasing. Academically, spontaneous memorials (also termed "spontaneous shrines", "temporary memorials",

"grassroots memorials", or "makeshift memorials") have been the context or object of different investigations. For example, they have been studied as spaces of 'cultural negotiation of public grief', as spaces of 'social action' or 'political protest', as 'rituals of gift-giving', and as examples of 'mass mediation of disaster and tragic death'.

However, spontaneous memorials have also raised questions about professional practice in the cultural sector, traditionally the agents of managing, documenting and promoting object collections or archives, and the impact they are having on the sector. Examining the impact that spontaneous memorials have on local museums, libraries, archives or related cultural organisations tasked with their documentation is important. The archiving processes used and questions such as access and long-term use are significant because of the value and roles that these memorials (and their archives) have in constructing personal and collective memories of tragic events (including for the families of victims). One notable impact is the challenge to long-established archiving and museological methods and timeframes.

In the case of spontaneous memorials, cultural organisations are faced with challenges such as urgent, rapid-response collecting and documentation, which most often falls outside their usual acquisition, collecting and management frameworks. In this context, what is collected and documented (or not), when and how often, by whom and what/who for, are questions that need to be addressed, in order to reveal the agency, pre-conceptions and comprehensiveness in the formation and use of a spontaneous memorial's archive. Also, the frequency of

spontaneous memorials over recent years makes such an examination all the more important and timely.

Manchester as a case study

These are, indeed, issues that the Manchester Art Gallery itself faced in the process of collecting and documenting the MTA. The gallery addressed the gap in its experience with spontaneous memorials by adapting standard collecting procedures. This adaptation was a creative process of negotiating the interaction between professional ethics and a strong sense of civic and social responsibility. One example: the decision to keep all material objects from St Ann's Square, rather than apply selection criteria on them.

Rejecting 'representativeness' and embracing 'completeness' was a defensive reaction against the uncertainty of what, among the items from St Ann's Square, was significant, why and for whom. However, the decision to keep everything wasn't just a postponement of a final decision, but an acknowledgment that - in this case - selective representation could not adequately capture the scale of the event that was co-produced and experienced in St Ann's Square. Instead, the decision centred on the reality that what happened in St Ann's Square - as a mass participation event - needed to be preserved as such. Accordingly, one could argue that the MTA isn't a 'collection' of the spontaneous memorial, but another form and manifestation of the memorial itself.

Over the two years that followed the formation of the MTA, Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester Central Library-based innovator Archives+ and the University of Manchester developed a project to document the MTA and capture and reflect on the evolving thinking, interactions with different stakeholders and decision-making about the MTA, as well as the impact of those decisions on institutional life, policy and practice. This includes a digitisation project of the MTA, funded by the UK National Lottery Heritage Fund in summer 2018 and currently under way.



Participants in the 'Creating, Documenting and Using Archives of Spontaneous Memorials' International Workshop. Manchester Art Gallery, 20-21 September 2018. Image courtesy of Dr Kostas Arvanitis

MTA's digital archive aims to examine the possibility of going beyond the material or aesthetic characteristics of the items as the basis of the digitisation. Instead, it will be led by the performative and embodied actions that the physical objects carry. Also, through film-making, oral histories, crowd-sourcing, creative workshops and digital storytelling, it will examine the interaction between the physical and digital archive. Another goal is to understand the possible therapeutic uses of the MTA for people who have been affected physically and/or emotionally by the attack; as well as the psychological impact of working with such material on volunteers and staff.

The wider picture: international networking

The above issues and challenges are not unique to Manchester. Many places, especially over the last few years, have experienced tragic events that have led to large-scale spontaneous memorials and efforts to collect and document them. Recognising this, in September 2018, the University of Manchester organised a two-day international workshop (funded by the British Academy), that brought together practitioners, researchers and organisations involved in archiving and studying recent and past spontaneous memorials.

The Manchester workshop offered an opportunity to share experiences and discuss conceptual, practical and ethical challenges in archiving spontaneous memorials, including:

- the preparedness (emergency planning) of city and cultural authorities to respond to the speed, timeframe and public expectations of these memorials;
- issues of public participation and co-production;
- the expansion of the spontaneous memorialisation on digital and social media;
- how archiving decisions affect the construction and evolution of the memory of the relevant events; and
- the use of the resulted archive in the context of health and well-being of people affected psychologically and/or physically by the events.

The workshop led to the formation of an international network on creating, documenting and using archives of spontaneous memorials. The network is currently developing some relevant practical guidance for cultural and community organisations and is open to anyone who might be interested in joining it and sharing experiences. For more information about - and to join - the Network of Archives of Spontaneous Memorials, see:

<http://www.spontaneousememorials.org>

For more information about the Manchester Together Archive, visit: <https://mcrtogetherarchive.org>

ARA Conference 2019 connection

If you are attending the #ARA2019 Conference in Leeds and interested in this area of professional practice, please join the panel on "Archiving spontaneous memorials: approaches to rapid response collecting" on Friday 30 August 2019, 11.30am.

Backchat...



This month, **Kim Harsley**, ARC Editor discusses KIM (Knowledge and Information Management) with **David A Smith**, the UK government's KIM Head of Profession. David began his career as a librarian and has worked in a variety of UK government departments.

Could you start by telling us where KIM fits in with the recordkeeping profession?

I would say, from a government KIM perspective, it is where the record keeping profession fits within the wider knowledge and information management profession. The Government KIM Profession has six key constituent professions:

- records management, including archives;
- information management;
- information architecture;
- librarianship;
- knowledge management;
- information rights encompassing freedom of information, environmental information regulation and data protection.

Often, particularly in smaller organisations, members of the profession find themselves covering a number of these areas, so taking an agile approach to KIM activities is important. No profession is an island! It is also worth noting that in response to Sir Alex Allan's review of its strategy for managing digital records and archives, the Government produced the Better Information for Better Government report which identified the management of information as being critical for good government.

How did you get started?

I first started working with Government in KIM activities as part of a placement during my postgraduate Library and Information Science course in 1982. Since then I have worked in a variety of Government organisations, including the European Parliament, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Health and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

As this is the Section for New Professionals special issue, do you have any tips for people at the start of their career?

Be ready to work with uncertainty – it's not always clear what "good" (or for that matter "bad") looks like but avoid paralysis by analysis. As you progress in your career, the levels of uncertainty may not seem to diminish but your resilience in working with them will increase. And ask for help if stuck – the KIM professions are very collegiate

David A Smith. Crown Copyright



and supportive. At times it is easy to feel professionally isolated, so make contact with others: attendance at the ARA Conference can be a good way to make professional contacts.

Aside from the name, how has Knowledge and Information Management changed since the start of your career? Do you think it has changed for the better?

The widescale and commonplace use of computers to manage information. We take access to the web as a given, but back in the prehistoric times when I started online searches were a special event. Junior staff might (if well behaved) be invited to watch, taking place after the online searcher had communed for a few days with syntax and operational manuals to craft a boolean search of eye-watering complexity. I think KIM has changed for the better and we provide services which not only capture and exploit information from a phenomenal range of sources, but also ensure that the information assets we curate are held legally and securely.

What is the biggest challenge facing the field today?

Where to start? I think a key challenge is the capture and management of social media. Although we tend to

view this as a single block of information, social media unpacks to a bewildering range of platforms and apps with some data residing on individual devices and some in the cloud. The methods of capturing this greatly vary but its importance in contributing to the overall record cannot be understated. Linked to that is the issue of the “physical” longevity of the electronic record – 5 1/2” floppy disks and Betamax tapes RIP.

What do you like best about your job?

The sheer variety, ranging from the digitisation of sunken treasure maps to preparing biographical briefing notes for Her Majesty The Queen. The range of organisations I cover as British Government Head of Profession for KIM is also vast, from MI5 to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to the Food Standards Agency to The National Archives (UK).

What is the worst task you've ever been given to do?

Ensuring that a large, but important, data upload for a public inquiry was completed on time. This involved me setting my alarm clock to go off every 45 minutes through the night so that I could ensure that the data transfer, which I was running remotely from home, did not time out due to inactivity or was restarted in the event that a rogue record temporarily halted the transfer. This was one of those tasks where the buck very firmly stopped here with me. I finally finished at 3:30 am.

When you get a good night's sleep, what interests you outside of work? Has this ever inspired your day-to-day work?

I live near Hampton Court Palace which, I realised, was remodelled to how it looks today by my current department the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (then known as the King's Works). This gave me the idea of publishing a series of blog articles charting the history of the department from its founding in 1378 as the King's Works (Geoffrey Chaucer was amongst the first to head it) to the present day. These proved very popular and helped raise the profile of the records management service.

What is the most obscure thing you've learnt at work?

Circa 1986, I learned how to use the 309 UKMARC code when cataloguing a book because we used “pp” rather than “p” in the pagination field. It's tragic I can still remember that from my cataloguing days.

And finally, who inspires you?

The librarian who features in the novels of Terry Pratchett: he's an orangutan. The similarities to those of us working in KIM are striking: works for peanuts (and bananas), has a very detailed knowledge of the collection he has responsibility for (in the books he's described as “the only one who knows where all the books [records] are”), and is a member of a KIM Professional body (in his case the Librarians of Time and Space, but the read across to the ARA is clear). Despite pre-conceptions about him based on initial appearances and assumptions, he remains one of the most trusted, helpful and valued members of staff: I could wish for no more.

SfNP Chair's Update

Sara Brimble updates us on the work of the busiest ARA section.

The Section for New Professionals (SfNP) has been very busy over the past twelve months. We have striven to continue building on past successes. We provide an offering to members that not only reflects our values and priorities, but also streamlines our focus on the knowledge and skills needed for a career in archives, records management and conservation.

We continue to grow and work for our members, which has been reflected in the last year's activities. We have focused on building our profile across the regions, by hosting events in Edinburgh, London and Manchester to reach all members. These have included our annual Summer Seminar and two training sessions with a focus on soft skills. We have worked with our Ireland representative to support

SfNP Chair Sara Brimble introducing the 2019 Summer Seminar. Image by Alex Duthie, SfNP.



PROGRAMME

Registration 10:40-11:00
Introduction and icebreakers
Julie Devenney 11:20-12:00
Lunch 12:00-13:00
Sharon McMeekin, DPC 13:00-14:30
Break 14:30-14:50
Alison Scott 14:50-15:20
Hannah Smith 15:20-15:50
Summary 15:50-16:00
All are welcome to attend inf





The Section for New Professional's Summer Seminar 2019. Image by Fahema Begum, SfNP

the work of new professionals in ARA Ireland. In August 2018, the section staffed a stand at the ARA Conference, spending an enjoyable day networking and meeting delegates interested in our work. In April we held a new training event focused on diversity in archives, which was an incredibly enjoyable and educational day. We continue to collaborate with other sections and regions and look forward to another exciting year ahead.

Alongside our training events, the *Peer Pals Scheme* continues to offer members an e-mentoring service. This scheme allows recently-qualified professionals to provide guidance to new professionals - from those considering a career in the sector to those who are looking for guidance in the next steps of their career. Our fortnightly blog 'Off the Record' averages around one thousand views per month, enabling new professionals to learn about upcoming events, opportunities and career guidance. We are always pleased to have new candidates interested in taking part in Peer Pals as a mentor or mentee and welcome blog submissions.

We have had another exciting round of submissions for ARA New Professionals Award. Last year's winner, Zoe

We provide an offering to members which reflects our values and priorities

Fullard from Transport for London, writes about her work in this issue. I consider myself lucky to be chair as I get to work alongside an incredibly dedicated and enthusiastic committee who are always working hard to make the Section for New Professionals a success.

We are always on the lookout for new ideas and feedback, so if you have any suggestions, questions or would like to become involved with our work please do get in touch at newprofessionals@archives.org.uk

I look forward to hearing from you.

Scottish summer seminar stories

In this article we hear about the career benefits of attending the Summer Seminar from ARA Ireland bursary winners **Éilis Crowe** and **Anna Hunter**.

The newly-qualified view

I never need an excuse to go to Edinburgh, so when I discovered that this year the Section for New Professionals Summer Seminar was being held there, I thought it was an excellent reason to visit. As a newly-qualified member of the profession I want to engage more with the section and this was the perfect opportunity to do so.

The primary reason I wanted to attend the seminar was to meet other people who are in a similar situation to me; newly qualified, or about to be, and at the start of their careers. I have found the network of newly-qualified professionals in Ireland to be very supportive; attending the seminar was a way for me to widen and strengthen that network beyond Ireland. I met a fantastic group of people at the seminar and learned about the fascinating roles and projects many of them are engaged in. It was also a great opportunity to discuss the challenges and issues we face as new professionals in Britain, particularly with regard to employment, and to share different perspectives and approaches from our own experiences.

The talks that took place over the course of the day covered various topics, ranging from social media to digital preservation. They were very reflective of the dynamic nature of working in record keeping and the various skills that a professional develops over the course of their career. Alison Scott's talk on her experience working as a freelance archivist was particularly candid. Most new professionals in Ireland start out working on a series of short-term contracts, either as employees or as sole traders, hoping to build up experience towards gaining a long-term or even permanent job. To get an insight into the realities of working as a freelance archivist in Scotland was very enlightening. I learned about the challenges of working freelance, as there are not a great many available contracts. However, working as a freelance archivist offers the opportunity to supplement fixed, part-time positions and can help create further opportunities.

The most challenging aspect of attending seminars like this will be the cost. Travelling to ARA events can be prohibitively expensive for some. Flights, onward transport and accommodation costs quickly add up. For that reason, I was grateful that I was able to take advantage of a bursary to attend this event, and hope they will continue to be available to those hoping to attend future events, especially those on low wages or starting off in their careers.

I know there have been some ARA specialist section events in Ireland of late – including Special Repositories and Film, Sound, Photography. It would be great to see more sections active in the nations/regions of the ARA family. An SfNP event in Ireland in 2020 along the lines of the Edinburgh summer seminar would be very welcome!

Éilis Crowe, Guinness Archive

The student view

Winning a box of Maltesers in the Summer Seminar's first activity, icebreaker bingo, proved to be a rather luxurious start to a fantastic day! As well as bingo, the day included:



Stuart MacDonald described how Historic Environment Scotland preserves digital images, such as this one of the seminar venue, Edinburgh City Chambers. Courtesy of Historic Environment Scotland"

- meeting other trainees and recently-qualified professionals;
- seeing examples from professional practice;
- learning more about social media advocacy, digital preservation and freelancing.

These are all reasons to recommend attending this or other ARA events.

Getting to meet professionals and students from mainland UK provided a good overview of the opportunities and types of jobs outside the island of Ireland and what sort of role I can expect to find myself in as a new professional. I also had the benefit of meeting recent graduates of the course I'm currently on, who reassured me that the dissertation can be finished and that there's every hope of employment once I'm out the other end!

Julie Devenney's presentation on the role of social media in archives was my favourite of the day. For someone like me, who has yet to promote an archive on social media, it was a concise but valuable lesson in keeping it simple but effective. Outlining how to represent an archive on Twitter using various ways of joining in, such as Archive Hour, and #Archive30 showed how small things can accumulate into connection-building and outreach.

Having come to archival training as a mature student after stints in broadcast subtitling, disability support and heritage interpretation, a stand-out for me from the day was recognising the value of transferable skills. For instance, how experience from the heritage sector of presenting information in a succinct way with a visual boost links in with advocating for an archive on Twitter. Stuart MacDonald's presentation about Historic Environment Scotland's digital archive showed how procedures in dealing with digital material, embedded during my time as a broadcast subtitler, aligns with good digital preservation practice. It also provided a way to think about how the skillset learnt in recordkeeping training can be applied to ways of presenting heritage information in the twenty-first century.

I had a great day overall - aside from the horror of a 5am start to get to the airport on time! I came away with a sense of the skillset I want to build in the next few years and how the ARA can help with that. The bursary allowed me to attend an event I wouldn't have gone to otherwise, as it simply wouldn't have been possible on a student budget. To anyone still unsure about attending a Section for New Professionals event, I say this: on top of all the useful information, they give you sweets and cake, as well!

Anna Hunter, University College Dublin

Born this way: working with digital collections

Megan Joyce describes the opportunities and challenges of working with born-digital photographs as part of the UK Imperial War Museum's Ministry of Defence Digital Imagery Project.

The Imperial War Museum (IWM) is the official repository for photographs and film taken by the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) on behalf of The National Archives (UK), acquisition of material being made through official transfers. This has been the case since the First World War, with the process being officially legislated under the 1958 Public Records Act.

These official transfers continue, and have led to the recent MoD Digital Imagery Project, which began in 2017. This project seeks to address photographs and films transferred from the MoD to the IWM over the past ten years and make the contemporary material more accessible for wider audiences. By working with the MoD and TNA, from appraisal and selection to ingest and accession, the project aims to increase accountability for these transfers and provide effective stewardship for future material.

Cataloguing

As a new professional to the archives and heritage sector, this has been a great opportunity to work with digital content, learning the process of acquiring, cataloguing and preserving born-digital material. I joined the project in its third year and have entered during the cataloguing phase. As a result, my main day-to-day work involves cataloguing born-digital photographs taken by official photographers attached to the Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy photographic units. Photographs cover a range of subjects and highlight the various operations British servicemen and women have been involved in since 2003. The subjects covered are varied and help to provide a photographic record of regimental units, equipment and military operations British forces have been involved in over the past fifteen years.

A Royal Air Force Regiment unit fires mortars as they carry out counter IDF (indirect fire) operations (2007). © Crown copyright: IWM



Cataloguing digital photographs on this project involves software that I was previously unfamiliar with. We are batch-creating records for hundreds of digital acquisitions at any one time, using a template spreadsheet to input and edit data that we have extracted from original photographs. IWM uses Adobe Bridge to view and extract this information and add it to the spreadsheet. The data that populates the spreadsheet comes from the metadata of each photograph and includes:

- camera make and model;
- location;
- creator;
- file size;
- copyright status;
- shutter speed;
- description.

All information manually created at the MoD helps us in creating a record for each photograph transferred. The records are imported into the museum's content management system and photographs ingested to the digital asset management system (DAMS), where the photographs will eventually be made available to the public online. Audiences will then be able to gain a better understanding of how the UK armed forces trained, fought and lived in various contemporary conflicts across the world.

A message written on an Air Traffic Control Tower in reference to the capture of Saddam Hussein (2003). © Crown copyright: IWM



“*The MoD Digital Imagery Project... highlighted the importance of active management of digital collections*”

Challenges and Opportunities

However, cataloguing contemporary collections from recent years presents challenges. The files transferred are public records, but, with new rules surrounding personal data, it is often tricky when thinking of public release or programming. Personal data is not only in the descriptions sent by the MoD but also integrated in the photographs themselves. Individuals from the armed forces can often be identified in photographs through showing their face, wearing a name badge and even having a distinctive tattoo. In addition to this, the photographs cover aspects of war, meaning increased sensitivities when thinking about releasing material online. This poses several ethical questions for staff.

The MoD Digital Imagery Project introduced me to digital archiving and highlighted the importance of active management of digital collections. The project will further document the stories of those who have witnessed contemporary conflict and will inform resource requirements for future transfers to maintain these records. This project has also provided IWM with a better framework for acquiring born-digital collection; and, for me, has emphasised how valuable it is for new professionals in the sector to gain digital archiving skills.

Archival immersion

Eleanor Clarke explores how immersing herself in the archive has helped her development.

The beginning of any career can be daunting; initially it can feel that as much as you learn, there is always more to understand. For many reading this, their understanding and knowledge of records may now seem like second nature. And yet, at the beginning, it can feel like a jump into the unknown.

Following university and a year of volunteering, I applied for a 14 month internship at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), working on the Whitechapel Bell Foundry cataloguing project and with the archives of The Pensions Archive Trust (PAT). Managed by the City of London Corporation, LMA is the largest local authority-run archive repository in the UK, with over one hundred kilometres of archives. LMA has partnered with PAT since 2007, providing PAT a place of deposit for records of the pensions industry. The Whitechapel Bell Foundry's business records were deposited at LMA after the site closed in 2017.

LMA's paid internships welcome individuals with a demonstrable interest in expanding their understanding of archives, rather than those with existing extensive heritage experience. Six months into the internship my knowledge of acquisitions and cataloguing of collections has increased dramatically. The benefit of splitting my time between two projects has had a big impact on this. With the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, I am working with a complete project from beginning to end, whereas with PAT I am involved in partnership work to engage the wider community with archives.

The internship has provided a wide range of practical experiences, including the opportunity to catalogue different types of collections and formats: business papers, plans and photographs, as well as adding new titles to PAT's library. This is alongside expanding my understanding of conservation and packaging. LMA has its own conservation studio, which allows us to work closely as a cataloguing team with conservators who can train us on handling and preserving collections. LMA also has a digital team, with which I have liaised with through my work with PAT. I now have first-hand experience of making digitised items accessible to the public, namely speeches of George Ross Goobey, a leading light in the development of equity investment by pension funds. Additionally, I have had the opportunity to be involved with surveys and discussions with potential depositors.

During this internship, I have learnt the importance of understanding your own engagement with learning. I have found I assimilate training better when it is linked to a physical action, either taking notes or doing the activity whilst having the process explained. Being honest and open about your own individual learning style, in my case as a visual learner, will enhance your ability to learn new skills.

Eleanor Clarke with plans from the Whitechapel Bell Foundry collection. Image courtesy of Steph Eeles, digital imaging assistant, London Metropolitan Archives



“ *to get inside the mind of archives you must get inside the mind of an archivist* ”

And yet, are practical skills enough to determine your knowledge of archives and records management? A vital part of my internship at LMA is the visits to other services, ensuring that an interest in a career in records is not based purely on what it is like to work at LMA. As I quickly learned, it is far from the truth that when you have seen one archive you have seen them all. So far I have visited: The National Archives (UK), the George Padmore Institute, and the Zoological Society of London Archive. These visits included a tour of the archive and their collections, followed by a discussion with the senior archivist.

Although being able to see a variety of collections in different settings was fascinating, the discussions quickly became my favourite part of the visits. With each visit, I gained a much better appreciation of the bigger picture, from staffing and resources, to buildings and connections

across heritage organisations. At LMA I am fortunate to be surrounded by a friendly team who will openly discuss topics from packaging, the politics of archives, to debates on whether we should be opening that sealed envelope! To have colleagues with such a wealth of knowledge who are willing to give up their time to answer and speak honestly about their experiences of the industry is an invaluable source of knowledge.

The importance of practical skills gathered through a variety of role opportunities cannot be overstated. From my personal experience, such skills are enhanced by open curiosity and listening to the experiences and advice of colleagues. Practice makes perfect, but to get inside the mind of archives you must get inside the mind of an archivist.

A streetcar named ISAD(G)

Darren Webster tells us about his experience cataloguing transport records, highlighting the importance of the practical elements of postgraduate courses.

As part of my recently-completed postgraduate course in archive administration, I arranged, catalogued and repackaged a small archive collection relating to the trams and buses of East Lancashire at Lancashire Archives. When I began the project, the records were not accessible to users. I was keen to undertake this project, though it required background reading in transport history to enable me to undertake my work more effectively.

Burnley District Tramways opened in 1881, and a line was built linking the tramways in East Lancashire between Burnley, Nelson and Padiham. In 1901, the line was part-purchased by Burnley Corporation Tramways, which, from 1924 also ran the bus services. The Burnley Corporation amalgamated with its sister corporations based in Nelson and Colne to form the Burnley, Colne and Nelson Joint Transport Committee from 1933. Two years later the tram services ceased, which was common across many parts of Britain during the 1930s. After 1935, the Committee was responsible for the running of the local bus services until the reorganisation of local government in 1974. Some of the records relating to the above-mentioned organisations were accumulated by the local historian Dr Michael Harrison and then deposited with Lancashire Archives via Colne Public Library in 2001.

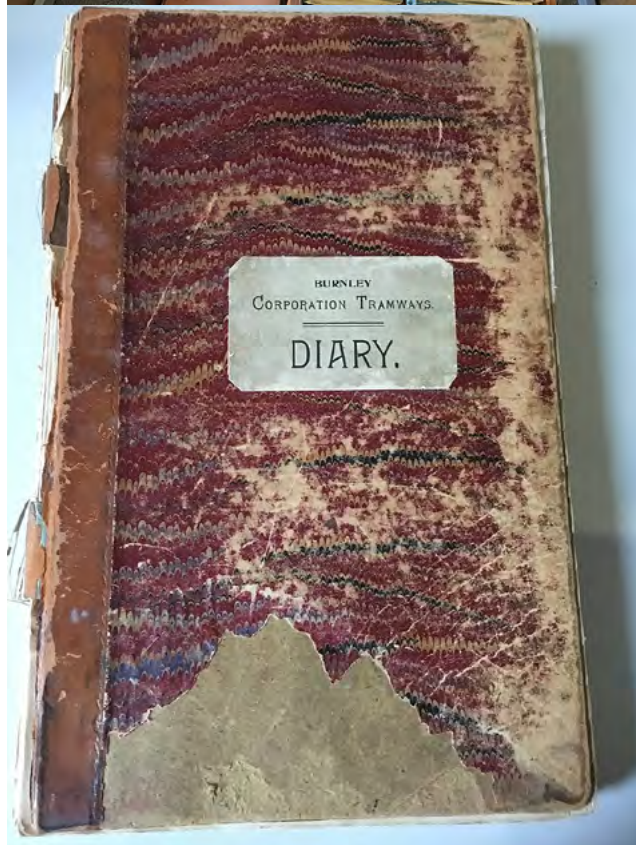
Giving people a voice

The archive provides researchers with a view of life in the British northern towns of Burnley, Colne and Nelson during the late Victorian period and into the twentieth century. It charts the rise of the tramways from the 1880s to their decline in 1930s Lancashire. Furthermore, this collection of records captures the evolving nature of organisational history, as the company was taken over several times before experiencing a period of relative stability from the mid 1930s until 1974. One highlight of the collection is the minute books, which complement other transport

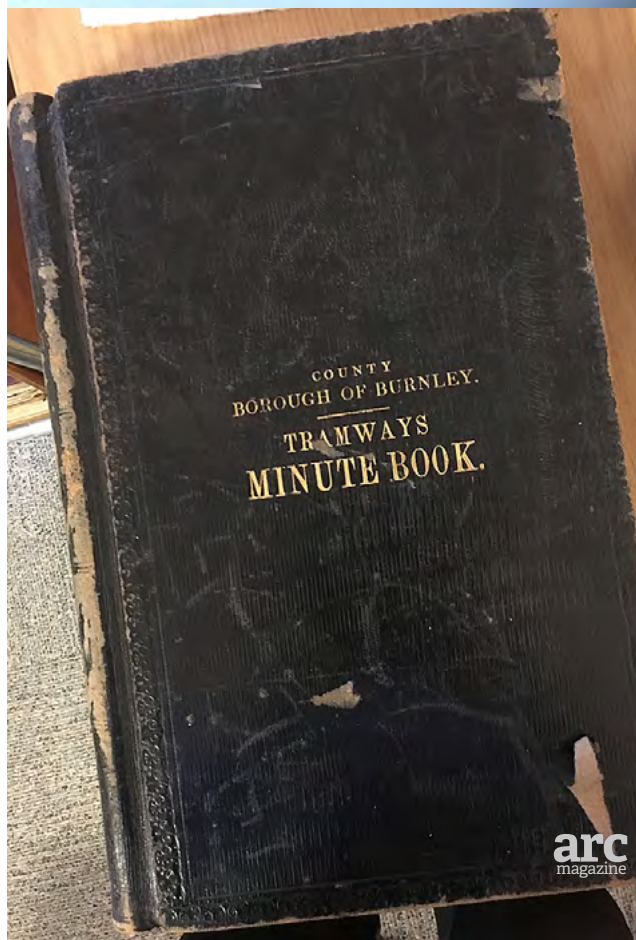
DDX 2313.
Image
courtesy
of Darren
Webster



Burnley
Corporation
Tramways
Diary 1901-
1911. Image
courtesy
of Darren
Webster



Burnley
Corporation
Tramways
Minute
Book. Image
courtesy
of Darren
Webster





DDX 2313/4/4. Leyland TD3 bus, c.1935, Burnley, Colne, Nelson Joint Transport Committee. Courtesy of Lancashire Archives.

records held by Lancashire Archives. The stories of 'ordinary' people are given a voice through records, such as letters of complaint from disgruntled passengers or the police witness statements of those involved in bus accidents.

Valuable experience

I found this project challenging because I was not familiar with transport history and had little knowledge of East Lancashire more generally. This project required me to read up on these topics and gain experience of cataloguing to international standards (such as the General International Standard Archival Description - ISAD(G)), as well as arranging and organising a collection. I think it's important that a practical element on postgraduate courses is encouraged to enable new professionals to broaden and enhance their skill-set.

The archive has now been fully catalogued and repackaged and is available for researchers to access. Through writing this article I hope to raise awareness of this collection and the wider value of transport records for users of archive services.

“it's important that a practical element on postgraduate courses is encouraged”



DDX 2313.
Image
courtesy
of Darren
Webster

Keep it simple, stupid!

Katherine Bullimore tackles digital preservation in a local authority archive, sharing what she has learned along the way.

How can local record offices tackle preservation of born-digital material? This is a pressing question right now and one I have been grappling with since completing my dissertation on digital records management with the University of Dundee. Adding digital preservation responsibilities to my full-time role has been challenging but also rewarding, pushing me to get the most from available resources. In this situation, 'keep it simple' is a good principle; leaving digital material to be tackled at a future date is not a good option, so a simple and workable solution has to be better than no solution at all.

'Keep it simple' is therefore the standard for all the new forms and instructions I have been working on, including the templates for a new digital deposit form and a digital asset register. After all, many of our customers are not particularly tech savvy and my colleagues have limited time in which to learn new skills. Our aim is to record essential information, while avoiding technical jargon as far as possible and providing glosses where terms like 'checksum' and 'digital quarantine' cannot be avoided.

The biggest challenge is putting together a digital accession workflow, to be applied whenever born digital material is accepted for archiving. Moving to a fully automated system is still some way off, so developing 'in house' systems is a good opportunity to get fully familiar with digital preservation before we hand over to automated accession. Fortunately, our digital holdings are still quite limited, so we have the chance to start putting processes in place before large amounts of material arrive.

Our aim is to record essential information, while avoiding technical jargon

Useful - and less useful - software

Our office already had a stand-alone computer, intended to act as a workstation where born digital material could be quarantined and analysed. We also had installed some recommended software to help with secure transfer and analysis, namely Droid, FTK Imager and Karen's Directory Printer. My first task therefore was to update and master these, whilst looking into other tools which it might be worthwhile to install.

All three programs proved useful, but do have some complications. FTK Imager is rather too powerful to be a standard transfer tool. It produces reconstructions of deleted material and previous file versions which, although helpful in some cases, would raise serious trust issues if created as a matter of standard practice. Our beta workflow version therefore uses the simpler tool Teracopy as the standard means of copying and transferring digital records. A collection of sound files deposited on CDs raises its own set of problems, as these cannot be copied using either FTK or Teracopy and will need alternative software-researching this is my next priority.



At work on the stand-alone digital workstation. Copyright: North Yorkshire County Record Office.

One of our key aims is to avoid just collecting data on digital files without having a clear idea of its purpose or any guidelines on how to use it in future. When I started, I had a lot of theoretical knowledge but no practical experience. As it turned out, my study of the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) was very useful, providing a vital basis from which to decide what information we need. Our goal is to create *Archival Information Packages* that will contain the data needed to preserve and make available born-digital deposits. The big question is how best to pull all the data we have together. Our present method, which uses Excel, could do with some streamlining, but it will only be after more testing that we can be sure how well it will stand up in practice.

Lessons learned

Although the workflow is still a work in progress, we have already been able to examine older deposits in ways that would not have been possible before. The process has also taught me some important lessons:

- Doing something is always better than doing nothing - even the odd half-hour here and there has added up to progress;
- Do not be afraid to ask for help - everyone I have contacted for advice has been very polite, so a big thank you to them all;
- You may not be as far behind the latest practice as you think - some of the problems we encountered proved to have been challenging even to leaders in the field.

Now, back to those sound files....

From archives to records management and back again

Thomas Wales discusses the advantages of career diversification, reminding us that in the end we're all record keepers.

Making the jump from archive work to records management, or vice versa, can appear a challenge. Nonetheless, my early career experience has taught me that the unique skills acquired within one can propel an understanding in the other.

A different, confusing world

The difference, or indifference, between records management and archives varies depending on who you confide in. During my experience, seasoned archivists informed me that records management is a different, confusing world disconnected from archive work. Records managers often said the same, in reverse. Yet, in my early career I have found that the skills, understanding and attitudes required to work in one directly advantage the other.

From records management...

Personally, I have felt the positive impact of having experience in both fields. While working at the Royal Household within their information assurance department, my role operated separately from the Royal Archives in Windsor. I therefore had little focus on what archivists would expect from the records that we deposited with them. Fortunately, my prior archival experience, combined with my studies, gave me an awareness of the archive's priorities. A significant focus of my role was to form strong working relationships with data owners to ensure compliance. I believe that my prior experience and study enabled me to balance the divide between prioritising the needs of people and of records equally.

...to archives...

When my project at the Royal Household came to a close, I felt that it was time to diversify my career. I joined the Churchill Archives Centre, which houses Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher's papers. Accessioning new records directly into the archive, invigilating a reading room and working with readers were tasks that I had only previously touched on. Yet, I believe that without my prior records management experience, it would have taken me longer to get to grips with these tasks. The experience I had working with current business records provided me with the confidence to

Churchill Archives Centre, within the grounds of Churchill College Cambridge. Courtesy of Churchill College.



“As records professionals, we need to broaden our scope and capabilities”

deal with new accessions. Crucially, having practical experience of reviewing retention schedules and working with a variety of records made it far easier to assess the scope, content and value of new accessions.

...and back again?

I am very grateful to have experience in both records management and archives. I believe that they have complemented each other well and enabled me to make a stronger contribution within both areas. I would encourage any of my peers to broaden their experience as much as possible, from compliance-focused records management to working in a reading room. As records professionals, we need to broaden our scope and capabilities, and this is a fantastic way to start.

Alight here for sustainable digital preservation

Zoe Fullard gives us the scoop on Transport for London's approach to digital preservation.

My interest in digital archives began before I even started my university course, when I was volunteering on a National Lottery Heritage Fund project. I was boxing up material to be transferred to the archive, which included CDs, DVDs, USB sticks and floppy disks. The project had a dedicated digital archivist, and I was intrigued by this role... How do you preserve a digital record in an environment of rapid technological change? What knowledge and skills do I need to manage digital records responsibly?

Four years following my studies, I now play a key role in the development and management of Transport for London's (TfL) digital repository. But what skills have I developed during this time and what have I learnt along the way?

Working as part of a team of three archivists in a large organisation that increasingly creates information in a digital format has given me the opportunity to be involved in many aspects of our digital preservation strategy. These include:

- testing and setting up system workflows;
- preparing and ingesting material;
- monitoring ingest progress and adapting processes if required;
- devising an ingest plan;
- creating in-house guidance;
- training volunteers;
- liaising with IT;
- assessing viability of file formats in our backlog;
- sharing experiences with the digital preservation community;
- understanding PREMIS and how it can be applied practically;
- developing our born-digital descriptive metadata schema.



Digital surrogate of a staff magazine from 1957 stored in TfL's digital repository. Copyright: Transport for London Corporate Archives: LT000030/036.



One part of London Transport's first fully transistorised computer, installed in 1964 to enhance efficiency and accuracy of payroll activities. Copyright: Transport for London Corporate Archives: LT000030/045.

This is a wide range of tasks that supports the management of the twenty terabytes of digital records we currently have in our custody!

Investigating Errors

I am also responsible for investigating errors and warnings generated by the system. As part of the ingest process, our digital repository links to an external tool that validates the records. If there is a problem with a file, the tool generates a message and feeds this back to the digital repository system, which relays this information to the user. However, the messages generated can be obscure, and I wanted to know what these messages meant and the impact on our records.

When a new issue arises, my first port of call is the system's support desk, comprising technical experts that

undertake a thorough investigation. I always find their responses clear and incredibly helpful, so in response I developed our in-house 'Errors and Warnings Log'. This log acts as a centralised 'translator' document for digital repository system users. It records what the messages mean in layman's terms, whether access and/or preservation is impacted and what action should be taken – if any. Resource allocation is crucial in sustaining digital preservation activities so the aim of the log is to help users identify and rectify problems more quickly in the future, minimising time spent on investigations as they have already been done.

As record keepers, I feel that we are not expected to be the technical experts, and that's ok! But I am concerned when access or preservation of records in my custody is affected, so communicating with the technical experts is a

“we are not expected to be the technical experts, and that’s ok!”

vital skill to expand my technical knowledge and understanding. Developing this specialist knowledge makes me feel better equipped for the future and will ensure that the archives team continues to offer unique skills and knowledge to the business. This will help it achieve its goals, enhance its reputation and comply with regulatory and legislative requirements to minimise the risk of financial repercussions.

“Advocacy and communication skills are fundamental”

Working for a business archive, I have experienced first hand that digital information is an asset, and this is a key message that the TfL Corporate Archives continuously communicates across the business. On behalf of the archive service, I have demonstrated our digital repository system to TfL employees at open days, exhibitions, on internal Yammer campaigns and blogs, and when delivering a talk on World Digital Preservation Day 2018. I have also delivered system demonstrations for external record-keeping professionals, such as the National Record Service of The Gambia. Advocacy and communication skills are fundamental to raising awareness of the fragility of digital information and highlighting risks to the business if information is lost. As a result of our advocacy work, one department returned for an in-depth demonstration of our digital repository system to see how it could meet their records management needs. In addition, we acquired one terabyte’s worth of records evidencing TfL’s contribution in delivering a safe and efficient transport network for the 2012 Olympic Games.

“Every day is unique”

It’s exciting as a new professional to contribute to the development of a digital preservation programme, using a multitude of skills to ensure its sustainability. Every day is unique, which appeals to me as new challenges continuously arise when working with digital objects. This offers the opportunity to develop important skills which I will take with me throughout my career.

Tackling health sciences records management

Bob Thompson describes records management in health sciences, an area that places high importance on its records in order to meet regulatory requirements.

Health Sciences or GxP (Good Practice) is a highly-regulated and auditable sector of archives and records management that neither my colleague Rachel Bannister nor I were aware of when we began our careers. The ‘Good Practice’ series of professions seeks to provide companies with operating guidelines, to prove traceability and accountability to regulatory authorities. Documentation is crucial to GxP. It is an exciting sector to be a part of, as the highly-regulated environment means that good records management (known as Good Document Practice or GDP) is at the heart of all the work done at Reckitt Benckiser Health (RB). This means that all records are valued for their legislative and legal ramifications.

“We are not expected to be the experts on these records”

Fundamentally, we manage the research and development records of the health products that RB produces. These records cover a plethora of subjects, from microbiology to clinical practice. We are not expected to be the experts on these records or to appraise their research value; we simply provide the database, structure and access from which the users may confidently store their records and retrieve them as and when they require. However we are expected to be experts on the GxP regulations.



Bob Thompson and Rachel Bannister in the library at Reckitt Benckiser. Photo by Louise Humphrey.

As we are a research and development archive, the nature of our work is long-term retention. For example, the records of clinical trials on human subjects must legally be kept for a minimum of 25 years. Technology in the labs and at clinical trials sites is moving away from paper, including using 'wet signatures', and onto computers, via e-signatures. This method of consent needs to be retained in digital preservation technologies, to maintain the document's authority. All of this means that, in future, our archive must be 'digital ready' in order to protect the original born-digital records. Therefore a compliant digital archive is something that Rachel and I aim to deliver within the next few years at RB.

Audit

Very recently, we were internally audited by our quality department. Auditors can ask us any questions they like on how we run our archive. They base their queries on our internally published Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which describe – in detail – the tasks that we perform in the archive. If we are seen to be doing work outside of these procedures, it will be seen as a deviation from the SOP and therefore something that we can be held accountable for. This was great practice, as

the following week the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) came to audit the whole site. The MHRA is a government authority that can audit any company making healthcare products and medicines. Although the archive itself was not directly audited, it effected us, as numerous teams across the site may have wanted to access their records in preparation for the investigation. Records are needed for a multitude of reasons: for example, staff training files showing that employees have completed certain training requirements. All processes at RB are recorded and retained and can be called upon as evidence at any time by an auditor.

Currently we are holding talks with digital preservation providers about what a digital preservation and records management model at RB might look like. In addition, we are working with our legal team to capture the record types that are created and used at our research and development site, so that they might be included in the future global retention schedule. This will go hand in hand with our digital archive requirements, preparing us for our future in the sector.



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