



Archives & Records  
Association  
UK & Ireland

# arc magazine

[www.archives.org.uk](http://www.archives.org.uk)

No: 375

November 2020

ISSN 2632-7171



## Diversity & Inclusion

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# Welcome...



## Welcome to the November 2020 edition of ARC Magazine

In this issue, we are focussing on Diversity and Inclusion in the record-keeping sector. The murder of George Floyd in the USA and the activism of the Black Lives Matter movement in the Spring of 2020 and beyond, have renewed calls to ARA UK & Ireland and to record-keepers, for collaborative working, practical actions and long-lasting changes. Some of the areas where much work is still to be done include dismantling structural inequality among the workforce, supporting underserved communities and fostering more critical thinking about the collections we hold, the stories they tell and, more crucially, where they come from.

In the following pages, readers will find out more about what proactive steps ARA UK & Ireland is taking towards embedding inclusivity and diversity in day-to-day roles, not only within the ARA, but more widely across the sector. The establishment of the ARA Diversity Allies is one of those steps that will aim to effect meaningful change.

The contributions in this issue offer an opportunity to reflect on these matters. More importantly, they are a call to take individual and collective action and to engage with challenging and uncomfortable truths, including the language we use to refer to people, and to describe records, and how we have built and continue to build our collections. In sum, they are a call not to remain passive waiting for change to happen. As Dr Safina Islam reminds us in the Opening Lines, diversity and inclusion is not a once-a-year special issue but a continuous process that empowers people to talk about the issues that affect them.

Thank you to everyone who has made this issue possible. I hope our readers will find these pages useful, inspiring and enjoyable.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Castrillo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

**Maria Castrillo**  
ARA UK & Ireland Board  
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ARC Magazine is the monthly publication of the Archives & Records Association (UK and Ireland)  
Prioryfield House  
20 Canon Street  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA1 1SW  
Tel: 01823 327030

Front Cover: Barber Shop Chronicles (2017).  
Image courtesy of Marc Brenner

ARC Magazine advertising enquiries to:  
[stewart@centuryonepublishing.uk](mailto:stewart@centuryonepublishing.uk)  
Tel: 01727 893 894

Send articles/comments to:  
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ARC Magazine design by Glyder [www.glyder.org](http://www.glyder.org)

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arc  
magazine

No: 375  
ISSN: 2632-7171  
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"Bring back our archives", Tshepho Mosweu, Botswana. Language: Setswana. Courtesy of Thabiso Archie Ramalepa. This image will appear in a forthcoming Museum of British Colonialism virtual exhibition called 'Lost Unities'.

# Opening lines

## Diversity is not a once-a-year special issue

**Dr Safina Islam**, head of the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre and Education Trust, reflects on the need to embed diversity, inclusion and equality in organisational culture and practice in order to effect meaningful change across the heritage sector.



I used to think that diversity issues of magazines and industry journals were a pro-active way of getting like-minded people together; a way to fuel progress by sharing experiences and solutions within a group or sector. But 20 years and several sectors later, I think they're actually part of the problem.

Sidelining Black, Asian and Global Majority voices and channeling them into a once-a-year special issue, segregates us from the mainstream and immediately curtails our voices. Rather than allowing us the freedom to explore our professions, our creativity and our ideas, we're expected to discuss and reflect on our personal experiences in the context of our differences.

For many of my African, South, East and South East Asian diaspora colleagues, these experiences include psychological trauma and deep-rooted struggles to reach senior positions in the face of systemic and institutional racism. Yet the nature of these special issues – usually unpaid and with little or no reward for the emotional labour required – requires us to re-live these experiences with no evidence that the process will lead to change. And, while it can sometimes be helpful to know we are not suffering alone, it isn't a solution to addressing the lack of workforce diversity or recruitment bias.

When diversity, inclusion and equality aren't embedded within the culture and practice of an organisation, the burden of responsibility falls to the people who are already suffering the negative impact of structural inequality. By asking under-represented groups to share their experiences in special issues and projects, we absolve the dominant groups of their responsibilities to bring about change. Rather than developing expertise and dedicating specialist resources to address structural inequality, we package it neatly in an annual special issue.

I specialise in community engagement and inclusion. My role as the head of the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre

*“When diversity, inclusion and equality aren't embedded within the culture and practice of an organisation, the burden of responsibility falls to the people who are already suffering the negative impact of structural inequality.”*

and Education Trust affords me the privilege of being able to speak on behalf of the community organisations I work and partner with, and I have a long career and specialist training to draw upon. But all too often, people are expected to use their lived experiences and speak on behalf of others – alongside their day job, for no additional reward - simply because they have the appearance of someone who fits within a protected characteristic.

Rarely does the discussion lead to solutions, and under-represented professionals from marginalised groups aren't supported to develop their careers. Instead, they go from being invisible with unmet needs to being very visible with unmet needs, for a limited time only. Ultimately, a special diversity issue isn't helping them or others like them to progress.

This year, we have witnessed the cultural and racial inequalities exposed by COVID-19, at the same time as huge numbers of people turned out to protest in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. There is a lot of genuine goodwill and a desire to change, but many organisations made statements in solidarity and support without any evidence of how they were going to follow through on these

**“** Tackling structural inequality isn't neat or linear or a social media hashtag. It's messy and challenging and requires people to acknowledge uncomfortable truths. It's hard work. **”**

commitments. Tackling structural inequality isn't neat or linear or a social media hashtag. It's messy and challenging and requires people to acknowledge uncomfortable truths. It's hard work.

How do we do it, on a personal level? We all need to do the reading, do the listening, do the learning and the unlearning. We need to understand the context of privilege within structural components of organisations, accept that it exists and not be overwhelmed by it - everyone can do their part.

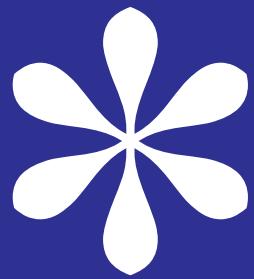
We should ask ourselves, "What can we do in our space?" In my organization (AIUET), we recognised that as well as not having any archivists from an under-represented group, it's a difficult profession to enter. It took time, resources, collaboration, thinking differently and widening the standard application process to ensure we reach more people from a wider range of backgrounds. We appointed a community heritage project lead to our shortlisting and interview panels and recognised experience of working in grassroots community organisations as being valuable.

As a result, we now have three archive trainees of African and South Asian heritage who wouldn't have passed the original selection process.

For a business project to be successful, it should be scoped, with experts appointed and resources allocated. Timelines are developed, outputs agreed, targets allocated to individuals. We need to put the same effort into diversity and inclusion, rather than expecting a few colleagues with protected characteristics to deliver the changes required.

Rather than only talking about diversity once a year, we should create an environment where people feel comfortable enough to talk about issues that affect them as they happen. There are many organisations and sectors leading the change, with experienced diversity and inclusion specialists doing innovative work. And as the archiving sector becomes more inclusive, the people represented in the archives and records we keep will naturally follow.

Image courtesy of Mirage Islam.



## #BAMEOver: a statement for the UK

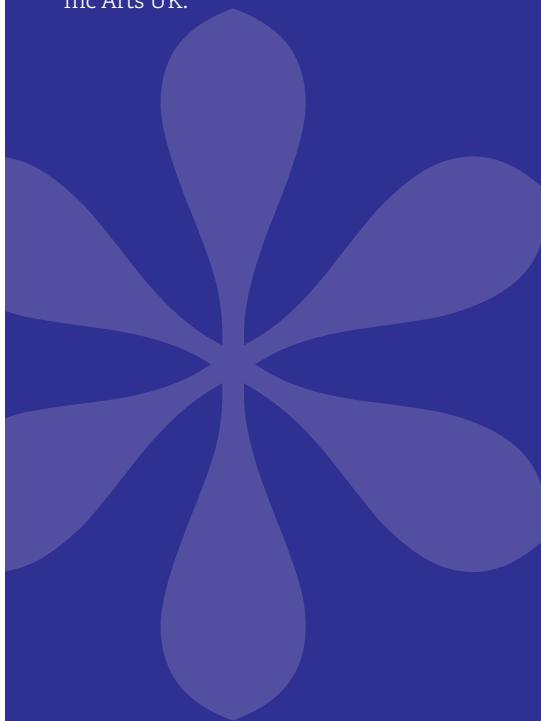
Throughout August more than 1,000 people took Inc Arts' #BAMEOver survey, and on 4th September 2020 over 250 people came together to reset the terms of reference for people with lived experience of racism.

We set out to answer the question, 'What do we want to be called?'

Through our discussion we've come up with a guide to terminology, for use by everyone who wants to be an effective ally and wants to avoid causing further harm through the use of casual and inaccurate language.

You can find our preferred terms of reference for people in the UK here: [www.whatnextculture.co.uk/resource/bameover-a-statement-for-the-uk/](http://www.whatnextculture.co.uk/resource/bameover-a-statement-for-the-uk/) We urge you to use them and share widely.

This article has been published with permission of Inc Arts UK.



# Professional development news

**Chris Sheridan**, ARA UK & Ireland head of Professional Development, outlines the main pathways to diversifying the archives sector workforce, and highlights lessons learned and experiences that can be applied to other areas of the wider record-keeping sector.



The Archives Unlocked strategic vision: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/strategic-vision-for-archives/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/strategic-vision-for-archives/) gave direction to ideas and conversations within the sector on how the archives sector can attract and retain a more diverse workforce. As a result, creating a more diverse and mobile workforce became a key objective in the 2017 workforce development strategy: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archive-sector-workforce-strategy.pdf](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archive-sector-workforce-strategy.pdf). Although the focus is the archives sector, the experiences and lessons learned can be applied to the records management and conservation sectors. This article provides an overview of existing pathways and the opportunities they present.

## University route

All professions have their traditional routes involving the study of an academic qualification at the undergraduate and/or post graduate level. These pathways are important as they ensure a flow of suitably qualified and knowledgeable graduates entering the job market. Many professional membership organisations, including ARA, accredit university courses to formally recognise this academic career route into entry-level professional roles.

**“We need to make sure employment opportunities are available to all, not just those in our established communities”**

University courses that receive ARA accreditation do so by demonstrating how they meet a number of requirements set by the ARA. As with all professions, these requirements need to be considered in the context of changes in practice, skills shortages, as well as employer and academic need. Evidence plays a key role in such discussions, so thanks again to all those who contributed to our recent UK and Ireland skills survey.

As the accrediting body the ARA will continue to work with the university sector to ensure academic routes remain fit for purpose, and implement strategies to help diversify the range of students enrolling onto accredited programmes.

## ARA Professional Registration

In 2017 the ARA replaced the Registration Scheme with the Professional Development Programme, a new approach that offered three routes to professional registration: Foundation, Registered and Fellow.

Foundation is the first level, bringing ARA professional registration within the reach of apprentices, trainees, volunteers, new professionals and existing professionals who do not yet have the level of experience required for Registered membership. Registered Membership remains the established level of excellence for the profession, and in 2019 we removed barriers to enrolment. Anyone working in the sector, regardless of academic qualification, is able to enrol onto the programme and progress towards Registered Membership.

## Archivist and Records Manager Apprenticeship

The record-keeping sector is just one of many professions that have embraced the opportunity to develop an apprenticeship career route. The origins can be traced back to 2009 when the UK Government launched an initiative to create fair access to professional careers and this policy approach remains today. The initiative challenged employers and professionals across the UK to consider how they might create opportunities and support career development.

In 2018 a Level 3 Library, Information and Archive Services (LIAS) apprenticeship was launched by CILIP, offering a new entry point for the wider information management sector.

**“The role of employers is critical in helping bring much needed transparency in the job market”**

In 2019 The National Archives UK convened a Trailblazer Group of key employers, CILIP and the ARA. Its task was to develop a Level 7 (post graduate level) Archivist and Records Manager apprenticeship. This apprenticeship will complement the post graduate qualification, providing a much needed alternative for those looking to enter the sector at a professional level.

ARA consulted members in February this year on the duties and knowledge, skills and behaviours associated with this apprenticeship. The next stage is to confirm the training providers and the end point assessor organisation. Once agreed, the apprenticeship will be launched.

We are now inviting expressions of interest from any ARA member interested in becoming an assessor for the archivist and records manager apprenticeship. If this is something that you might be interested in then please contact me by email chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk.

#### **Bridging the Digital Skills Gap**

Another key initiative from TNA, The Bridging the Digital Gap programme: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/bridging-digital-gap-technical-traineeships-archives/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/bridging-digital-gap-technical-traineeships-archives/) aims to increase digital skills in archives by bringing in new people from different backgrounds to create a more diverse, inclusive, and skilled workforce. Through these paid traineeships, talented technical people are using their skills, energy and digital confidence to help preserve history and find new ways for other people to access and learn from that heritage. The ARA is supporting this initiative by offering trainees free access to our professional development programme and free ARA Membership during their period of enrolment. So far six trainees have enrolled, and congratulations to Jim Costin FMARA and Jacob Bickford FMARA, who both qualified as Foundation Members of the ARA this year.

For those seeking a career in the sector, then whatever route they take they can have confidence in knowing that the ARA's competency framework is flexible enough to recognise all kinds of work experience, both current and future.

But challenges remain. The ARA/CILIP study of the UK information workforce: [www.archives.org.uk/latest-news/600-workforce-survey-2015.html](http://www.archives.org.uk/latest-news/600-workforce-survey-2015.html) published in 2015, highlighted key challenges facing the sector. It also estimated the size of the archives and records sector (not including information management) as 17200. However accurate this estimate is, the sector still lacks insight into how buoyant the job market is; austerity measures will have impacted on job creation, and COVID-19 might further impact on recruitment budgets in years to come. The role of employers is critical in helping bring much needed transparency in the job market. Some roles are advertised via national media and job search websites, but others only appear in the ARCHIVES-NRA list-serv.

We need to make sure employment opportunities are available to all, not just those in our established communities.

# **ARA: Driving change**

**Jenny Moran**, ARA UK & Ireland Diversity Portfolio holder, outlines current plans to embed inclusivity and diversity firmly as day-to-day roles and responsibilities both within the ARA and across the wider record-keeping sector.

Here at the ARA UK & Ireland everyone is welcome. It's as simple as that. As the lead representative body for the archives and record-keeping sector, it is our job to ensure that nobody feels excluded – on the contrary, that everyone feels welcomed and a part of something great.

Inclusivity is at the core of the ARAs ethos, and there are a number of ways in which we promote this ethos.

#### **Industry collaboration to effect change**

Working in collaboration with groups and organisations across the record-keeping and cultural sectors is one of the ways in which we can create lasting change. Once such example of this collaborative approach took place in early June 2020, when we, along with our colleagues in membership bodies across UK museums, galleries, heritage and archives, signed a Joint Statement of Intent calling for an end to racism in the heritage sector: [www.archives.org.uk/news/807-joint-statement-of-intent-for-the-heritage-sector.html#:~:text=As%20signatories%20of%20this%20Joint%20statement%20of%20intent,an%20urge%20our%20members%20to%20support%20our%20efforts.](http://www.archives.org.uk/news/807-joint-statement-of-intent-for-the-heritage-sector.html#:~:text=As%20signatories%20of%20this%20Joint%20statement%20of%20intent,an%20urge%20our%20members%20to%20support%20our%20efforts.)

This work cuts across all aspects of the record-keeping sector – from the archives we collect,

**“ we have taken the lead in lobbying the UK Archives Services Accreditation Committee (AAC) to drive increased focus on diversity and inclusion as part of the Archive Service Accreditation process ”**

curate and preserve and the people who make up our workforce, to the evidence, accountability, research and engagement our collections provide.

As well as signing the Joint Statement, we have taken the lead in lobbying the UK Archives Services Accreditation Committee (AAC) to drive increased focus on diversity and inclusion as part of the Archive Service Accreditation process. The ARA Board instructed its representative on the AAC to ask that diversity and inclusion be fully integrated into the standard. The UK AAC has now accepted this and will be publishing its plans shortly.

#### **Opening up conversations**

Another way in which we are facilitating conversations around what can often be quite sensitive topics is through our ARA Together Online Community: [www.archives.org.uk/ara-together/ara-together-online-community.html](http://www.archives.org.uk/ara-together/ara-together-online-community.html). ARA Together is both an online support hub and a free online community where individuals (not just ARA members) can chat with each other and share openly via text, voice chat and video. Fortnightly calls provide an opportunity to speak to each other about the latest challenges and developments.

ARA Together aims to support and connect individuals with each other regularly and learn from one another as a community, sharing experiences, advice and examples of best practice. In June 2020, we hosted the first of a series of ARA Together calls on the subject of racism in archives. 185 participants joined the call and the takeaway actions that came from the call were “be brave, use your voice and talk to people!”. Even if we are not responsible for policies and budgets, we all have a voice and we can still use this to drive change.

Examples of actions that were highlighted during the call included assessing where we have gone wrong in the past and what we can do to change this in the future; undertaking reading and learning to increase our education and awareness; advocating by encouraging the revision of policies; and engaging positively with all

communities that are under-represented in collections, exhibitions and social media images.

#### **Adhering to industry best practice**

We have also committed to an external governance review of the ARA in 2020/21, which will include an examination of our handling of diversity and inclusion issues. As the leading body and voice for the sector it is our responsibility to conduct this review to ensure that we are meeting current standards and adhering to industry best practice as laid out in the Charity Governance Code.

Regular governance reviews are good practice and while governance is kept under review by the Chair, the Board and the CEO, an outside view is periodically necessary and important. Conducted by an external organisation, the review will assess how the ARA Board is elected and how it functions in comparison to generally accepted methods.

#### **The importance of ongoing training**

Our Diversity Allies network is another way in which we are working to improve diversity and inclusion across the archives and recordkeeping sector. The aim of the network is to develop and embed ARAs work at a grassroots level, undertaking training and providing support for each other, as well as members within nations and regions as training is developed for the sector.

We recognise that many people want to support diversity work but may lack confidence and knowledge, which is why we want to take a staged approach, ensuring that a group can be recruited and trained at the same time. This will give them the knowledge, skills, and support to take diversity forward in the organisation.

**“ While governance is kept under review by the Chair, the Board and the CEO, an outside view is periodically necessary and important. Conducted by an external organisation, the review will assess how the ARA’s Board is elected and how it functions in comparison to generally accepted methods ”**

Our call for interested parties to join the Diversity Allies network attracted more than 20 applications from people across the UK and Ireland. The first Allies meeting took place in early August, giving the newly formed group a chance to meet each other and discuss plans moving forward. The Diversity Allies will work together as a team to undertake and review training courses related to improving diversity and inclusion across the record-keeping sector. These courses will be completed individually but at the same time as the rest of the group, allowing for review and discussion throughout the process.

Should course reviews be positive, the allies will support the ARA to encourage those working in the sector to complete the courses as part of their workplace development or wider CPD. Each ARA Nation and Region has been allocated a Diversity Ally who will report progress to the membership via these geographical groups.

Understanding Diversity and Inclusion, a course offered by Purdue University via Future Learn: [www.futurelearn.com/courses/diversity-inclusion-awareness](http://www.futurelearn.com/courses/diversity-inclusion-awareness), is the first training course the allies will work through. The ARA UK & Ireland Board and staff have already completed this course and found it an invaluable starting point for self-reflection on the diversity and inclusion issues currently affecting not only the record-keeping sector – but the wider world.

It is hoped that going forward, the network will work together on a range of activities to improve the diversity and inclusion issues faced across the sector.

#### **Paving the way for a more inclusive profession**

The ARA was a key partner in developing the Level 3 Library, Information and Archive Services (LIAS) apprenticeship in England. We are also supporting the emerging Level 7 Archivist and Records Manager apprenticeship in England.

Together with The National Archives (TNA) UK (and formerly with the Scottish Council on Archives), we have partnered in three Skills for the Future projects which aim to improve the diversity of the profession. The current project is the 'Bridging the Digital Gap Traineeships' in England. We hope that these alternative routes into the profession will have a positive impact on making the sector more inclusive. We are also working with TNA UK to develop a programme of diversity training for the record-keeping sector.

Our Professional Development Programme is open to and welcomes all, whether academically qualified or not. All you have to do is be an individual member of the ARA. By removing the barriers for those who can't afford or haven't managed to acquire a university qualification, we hope to reach out to a wider range of individuals and attract and retain talent in the sector.

Looking to the future, we will continue to build upon and expand our work in addressing issues of diversity and inclusion in the record-keeping sector and we would urge our members to support our efforts.

# **ARA UK & Ireland Diversity Allies**

We're delighted to introduce our ARA UK & Ireland Diversity Allies: a pioneering group who are undertaking diversity training with a view to supporting other members to broaden their understanding of the issues and effect real change in the sector. Here they explain what diversity means to them and why they have put themselves forward.

We asked for volunteers to form an initial group and had a fantastic response with people from across the UK and Ireland putting themselves forward. The initial meeting took place on 3rd August with people beginning the Understanding Diversity and Inclusion course together. This free course is offered by Purdue University via Future Learn: [www.futurelearn.com/courses/diversity-inclusion-awareness](http://www.futurelearn.com/courses/diversity-inclusion-awareness). It has already been undertaken by ARA UK & Ireland Board and staff members, and offers training and techniques in understanding the perspectives of others and dealing with difference.

The group has met remotely every week and we will be gathering feedback and looking at next steps including sector-specific training and ways to improve. If anyone reading this would like to take part in our next phase please contact Jenny Moran, ARA UK & Ireland Diversity Portfolio Holder: [jenny.moran@archives.org.uk](mailto:jenny.moran@archives.org.uk)

We'd like to thank the people who bravely put themselves forward and for sharing their personal experiences here.



The concept of 'diversity and inclusion' is about our interaction with others. As such it is about every single one of us regardless of whether or not we attribute ourselves to a diverse category.

Learning to interact in a productive way with others is a complex subject and very much part of our on-going, life-long, personal development journey. I have been working with diversity issues for many years and I joined the Diversity Allies in order to help develop this learning in others.

**Nicola Waddington**

As someone with a disability, I put my name forward to be a Diversity Ally because I felt I had diverse life experience and expertise to offer to ARA. However, I have also been keen to learn from and stand with other minorities, deploying such white privilege and male privilege as I have to help ensure other perspectives get a hearing, without speaking for others or over them.

Equitable and inclusive practice will be needed to ensure career progression for, and retention of, an increasingly diversified record-keeping workforce. However, we don't need to wait for diversification before we start to act in these areas. Doing so will help us to communicate the diverse voices of our records subjects, and to develop relationships with more diverse user communities.

**Philip Milnes-Smith**



Archives are vital in recording the (LGBTQIA and other minority) lives, stories and details that history so often has neglected, or worse, negated. Archives are both the means and

method by which hidden histories can be uncovered, remembered and celebrated. Given how LGBTQIA people have been erased from history and their contributions

to the world obscured, the denial of this heritage makes our ongoing existence seem fragile and not a given. It is vitally important to reassert LGBTQIA and all minority peoples' existence both historically and in the here and now, ensuring that we collect, preserve and make accessible these stories going forward.

Archives play a crucial part in this process. By restoring to history once silenced voices (and amplifying them) history itself becomes more truthful and we can ensure a much stronger (and more visible) future for all. This is the case for minority peoples in the UK and globally. For as long as archives, records and history fail to represent the full diversity of our communities they are failing in their fundamental premise.

**Adam Sach**

I believe that we are capable of being more inclusive than we are but that we must be aware of our biases and be open to seeking out and engaging with different viewpoints, experiences and frames of reference. This will have positive implications for our interactions with colleagues, stakeholders, and the public and also for our record keeping. Developing practical solutions to help diversify our sector and our record keeping is challenging but can be more effectively realised through collaboration. That is why I joined Diversity Allies.

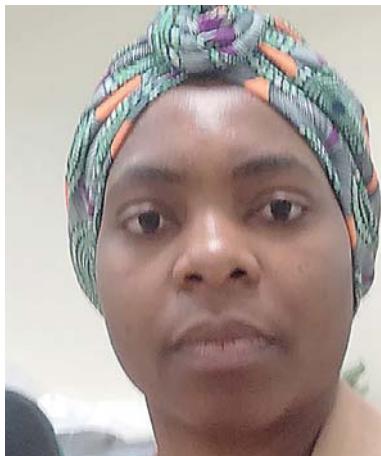
Diversity means 'difference', 'variety'. Dealing with complexity instead of sameness is difficult but it brings a richness with it. As archivists, we have a responsibility of ensuring that all parts of society can see themselves reflected in the records that we hold and that those records tell not just one story but many.

**Lorraine Bourke**

I work for Hull University Archives, and I joined the Diversity Allies because it seemed like a good way to contribute to ARA's efforts towards increasing diversity in the profession while strengthening my own knowledge and skills to use in my day-to-day job. The University of Hull is committed to equality and inclusion, and our University Library is already working on decolonising its collections and catalogues.

The University Archives team has recently been restructured and now sits at the heart of the Library, which has allowed us to realign our priorities to fit in with this important work. For the first time we can really get to grips with addressing the lack of diversity in our collections and work on widening our appeal to potential researchers from all sections of society, knowing that we're supported from the very top of our parent organisation. Although it's early days for us, we're committed to making changes, and I'm looking forward to learning about and sharing best practice with the rest of the Allies.

**Sarah Pymer**



I am Paule Yimga, Information and Data Protection Manager, and I have been recently appointed to the position of Secretary for the ARA Section for Business Records (SBR).

As a native French speaker originally from Cameroon, diversity and inclusion have been major goals either in my career, my workplace and the wider community. By joining ARA Diversity Allies, I am willing to learn and contribute to ARA diversity and inclusion culture and support my nation (Scotland) in carrying this out. It is also an opportunity to play a role in creating an inclusive culture in the record-keeping sector and take action in support of other professionals.

**Paule Yimga**



The Diversity Allies Programme fits really well into my personal ethos of inclusion and the need to balance and involve everyone in their heritage and how to preserve this. Any way to

support and boost confidence in this area, especially in times of heightened tensions will be vital going forward as we all face uncertain times and a changing world around us.

I am a strong believer that, through preserving all these voices and stories in the correct facilities, our knowledge and experiences can aid and engage our future learning through these narratives. They can support our identity, our past and how we can shape our future, but they need to be from a diverse audience in order to start building a balanced record.

**Donna Maughan**

The diversity allies programme was really appealing to me for both personal and professional reasons.

Personally, the Black Lives Matter movement crystallised that I, like all White Americans, have to put some welly into dismantling the racist systems that underpin the country and the wider Western world.

Professionally, I work in an extremely diverse area, but the archival collections reflect an older, much more homogenous community – and that's not acceptable. My professional mantra is that the archive is a place that belongs to everyone, and where everyone belongs, but for that to be true, every person who sets foot in the place needs to see themselves reflected in the stories they find there. Without those reflections – without recognising and celebrating the huge variety of experiences and cultures and backgrounds people have, and how those impact their lives – the tapestry of the past is much less colourful, and much less interesting.

**Patricia Dark**



Understanding and welcoming diversity in the sector is important. For too long our profession has failed to meaningfully engage in a programme of change that will ensure more inclusive recruitment

and working practices. Too often I've been guilty of waiting for somebody else to do something. That isn't to say I think I can change everything by myself, which is why I volunteered to become an ARA Diversity Ally. I appreciate the opportunity to learn with - and from - colleagues and to be able to support the ARA's necessary work.

**Richard Wragg**

I wanted to become a Diversity Ally for a few reasons. Having worked in the sector for over fifteen years, I am very aware of the lack of diversity in record-keeping. I'm keen to try and identify ways to encourage people from more diverse backgrounds to enter the profession, and to try and understand some of the barriers that may currently prevent them from doing so. On a more personal level, I want to identify and overcome some of my unconscious biases, to make me a better colleague and a more empathetic manager. To me, diversity can be both visible and invisible, and it is what makes us stand out as individuals. It should be celebrated rather than ignored. -

**Kate Bevan**

# Backchat...

For this issue of *ARC Magazine's* **Maria Castrillo** talked to **Rachael Minott**, Inclusion and Change Manager at The National Archives (TNA) UK



## **1. To start off, tell us about your background and why you became involved with the heritage sector?**

My first degree was in Art and the History of Art, and so I have always found my practice as an artist as integral to my work in the heritage sector. My first role in the sector was an internship at Reading Museum exploring the World Art collection's imperial links to the development of the town. I applied for this role after displaying one of my art pieces in the museum to explore the authority of museum labels when blurring fiction and fact as a part of my practice.

I then entered the museum sector on a National Lottery Heritage Funded (then HLF) pro-diversity traineeship Sharing Our Cultural Life (SOCL), administrated by the organisation today known as Culture&. I worked at the London Transport Museum during and after this training ended, and was involved in Black History Month displays, and other pro-diversity initiatives. While getting

hands on experience in museum work, with a strong collections management (physical care and cataloguing and indexing). I furthered my studies by completing a master's degree in Art of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at University of East Anglia.

I went on to curate two exhibitions (The Past is Now: Birmingham and the British Empire, and Within and Without: Body Image and the Self) in Birmingham exploring decolonial theory through collaborative curation, before taking up the role of Curator of Anthropology (Social Practice) at the Horniman Museum. I have been a practicing artist throughout, using my artwork to help me process my research; as well as taking up the role of Trustee within the Museums Association in 2018, where I sit on the Staff and Remuneration committee and act as the chair of the Decolonising Guidance Working Group. The transition from museum to archives within the heritage sector has been extremely useful and inspiring, particularly from the perspective of users whose experience in archives is so much more intimate than those who visit museums (rather than research collections). I am also extremely passionate about the democratic function of archives and that we work within a mandate of representation and access as a right not a privilege.

## **2. What does your current role at TNA UK involve?**

**Central to my role as the Inclusion and Change Manger** within Archives Sector Development team at the National Archives is collaboration. Collaboration with teams across the organisation to support the delivery of our strategic



*I am also extremely passionate about the democratic function of archives and that we work within a mandate of representation and access as a right not a privilege*

**“ We must not leave those outside the digital world behind while preparing to make them as safe as possible within our institutions, or risk further marginalising people based on age and income ”**

mission 'Archives Unlocked'; and collaboration with those across the archives sector and beyond, to support brave and innovative work, which aims to address fundamental imbalances within archival collections and practice.

My focus is on sustainable change in the sector through confidence building and the creation and distribution of resources to provide information and guidance; support through sharing human resources and expertise, and in some cases in distributions of grants through the existing methods. Key to this is facilitating the formation of networks and relationships with, and between, under-represented communities; those with experience of facing barriers; and key change makers to help the creation of these resources and signpost this expertise.

**3. The past few months have brought to the fore the urgent need to dismantle structural racism and oppressive practices in the heritage field. What do you see as the greatest barrier preventing heritage organisations and those working in them to move from 'words' to 'deeds'?**

This is a sector that is very detail oriented, full of thinkers and persons who are very thorough. I think a lot of what's holding people back from acting is that there are so many unknowns that cannot be answered purely in theory and so each of us wants case studies and examples of practice to follow or learn from, but it can be very lonely to be the one who is experimenting while others wait to learn.

So I think what's missing is more collaborations, where we can work together, learn from each other, continue to talk and process thoroughly what's going on but finding answers through actions. The Archives Testbed funds: Innovate and Collaborate we manage at The National Archives facilitates what I think we need in many ways, opportunities to try things without needing them to be successful, and opportunities to work together.

**4. Following from the previous question, how do you think the heritage industry can develop more inclusive practices that lead to tangible change?**

Even with this I think there is a lack of confidence and a risk aversion in the sector that also needs to be addressed. Part of this lack of confidence I believe comes from the fact that this sector is not as diverse, particularly in

regards to ethnicity, as it could and should be and so there are big gaps in lived experiences and relevant persons to seek out for consultations. So whilst also diversifying our sector we need to listen to those most impacted by racism within and in the periphery of our sector. Listen to their concerns, not react to them, but respond. Work together in a solution oriented manner and reward and remunerate those whose expertise is being shared in this way. But ultimately be active, to not put the effort of this work on those who experience racism but to confront ways in which we may perpetuate structural racism and other inequalities, and change the way we act.

It will be important to form strong networks of expertise outside the sector to give us the confidence to be actively anti-racist, while nurturing those within the sector who have been working on this for years often unrewarded.

With the risk aversion I hope to support this work by creating a tool which can be used to identify risks and potential mitigations at least around discussing potentially upsetting histories.

**5. What consequences do you think the current health crisis may have on how heritage organisations build up their collections in the future and engage communities inclusively?**

All crisis expose inequalities in society and this is no different. I believe one of the repercussions of this pandemic will be felt on who was deemed more vulnerable to the disease than others, and to see that creates a shift in the demographic of our onsite visitors. However this will not be a clear cut distinction because it must also be considered within the disparity in the access to digital skills and infrastructure. We must not leave those outside the digital world behind while preparing to make them as safe as possible within our institutions, or risk further marginalising people based on age and income.

**6. If you could offer a piece of advice to someone new entering the heritage sector now, what would that be?**

Work with others. Grow your confidence in collaborative working and decision making, consultation and democratising authoritative voices. Value lived experience as you value work experience and academic knowledge, in yourself and others. When your work is about and for as many people as possible, speak to many different people, remember to ask who will be impacted mostly by this work and ensure you consult them.

**7. Lastly, what or who inspires you?**

I am constantly inspired by conversations- I treat every conversation as if I am going on a short journey, meeting someone where they are and learning from one another. I am also constantly inspired by art and music, I will listen to specific musicians if I want to embed different types of approaches to my practice. And then in books, if I need to realign my mind and open my perspective I revisit certain books, right now it is the anthology of essays by Audre Lorde, Your Silence Will Not Protect you.

Amy Carpenter and friends in Uganda. Courtesy of Archives Service, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine



# Decolonising the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine archives

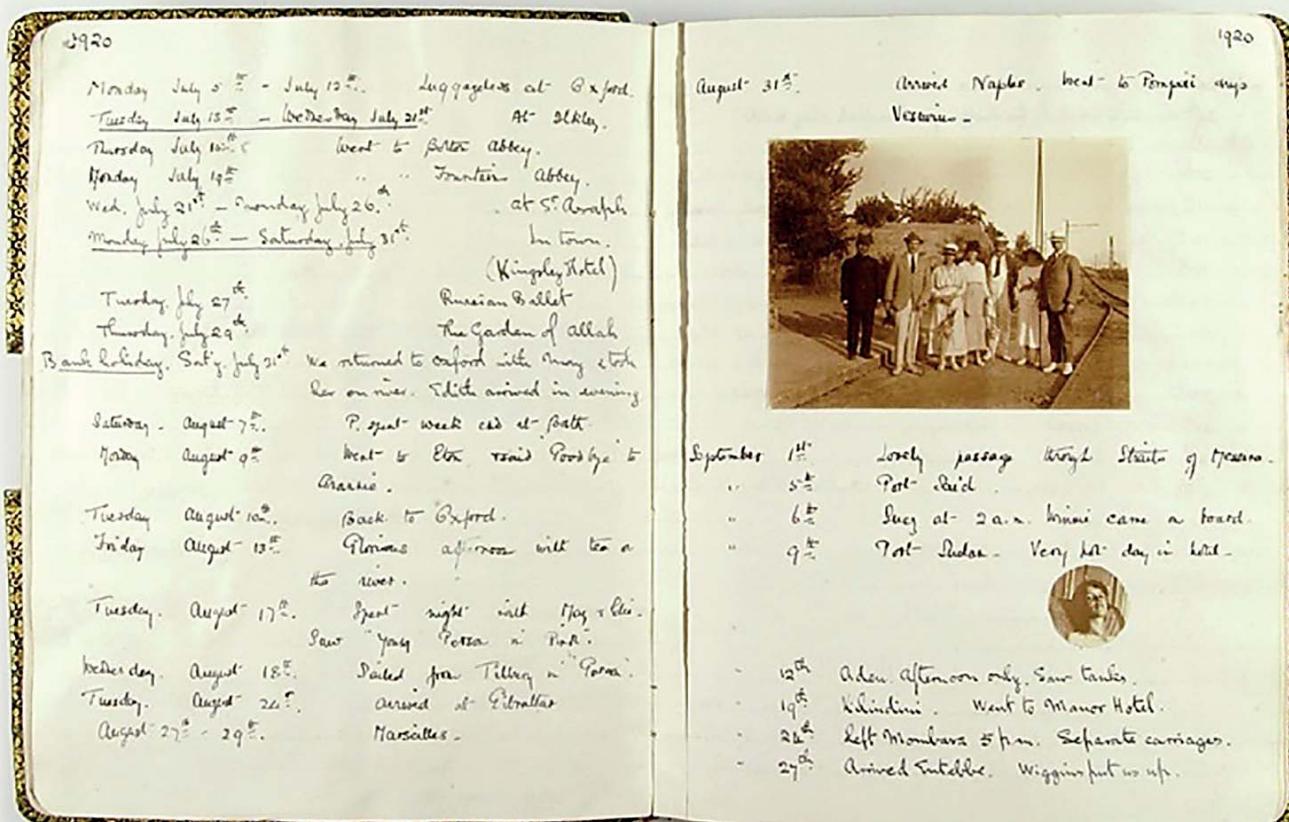
**Victoria Cranna**, archivist and records manager, and **Leila Sellers**, archives assistant, discuss a project to decolonise the archive collections at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine archives.

Within the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) Archives Service we have begun to re-examine the way we work, the stories we tell and the role we can play in promoting different versions of history. This was originally inspired by the work of Lioba Hirsch, a LSHTM history research fellow working on a project entitled 'LSHTM and colonialism: history and legacy'. However, in recent months, like many of us within the archive profession, the global response to the Black Lives Matter movement has further encouraged us to engage with our collections and archival practices from a decolonising perspective.

Inevitably, the LSHTM archives are steeped in the colonial history of our School. LSHTM was originally founded as an institution for the research and treatment of tropical disease, in an effort to improve the health of those working in the British colonies. As a result, the histories

*The difficulty in reconciling the celebration of scientific achievement with the true nature of its colonial legacy is something we are beginning to examine within the LSHTM Archives Service*

preserved within our collections are generally those of white, male, colonial explorers, researchers and medical professionals. While there is value in these stories, and



**“ We have developed a set of ‘Principles for Decolonising the Archives’ and an ‘Action Plan’ … The principles cover five areas: cataloguing practice; archival practice; dissemination; education and inclusion. These were created through research from the increasing number of resources available to archivists and team discussions ”**

the contributions these individuals made to tropical medicine – and science more broadly – are an important part of our School’s legacy, they are also reflective of the colonial era in which they were produced, and are necessarily informed by the values and attitudes of the time. The difficulty in reconciling the celebration of scientific achievement with the true nature of its colonial legacy is something we are beginning to examine within the LSHTM Archives Service.

The voices, experiences and contributions of the people indigenous to the countries visited by colonial researchers are often noticeably absent from the record. As a consequence, we risk presenting a one-sided view of history. In the LSHTM archives we have been asking ourselves how we can explore these absences through our existing collections, as well as considering the practical steps we can take to address the structures of racism within the archive.

We propose to engage with the process of decolonisation in a number of ways. These include re-examining items within our collections in a way that seeks to confront and disrupt the colonial narrative. For example, The Carpenter Diary – a handwritten journal detailing the experiences of a British scientist and his wife researching sleeping sickness in Uganda in the early 20th century – has often been used by LSHTM archives as an illustration of colonial life. The diary provides a rich account of the daily lives of Geoffrey and Amy Carpenter as they navigated life in East Africa, as well as the relative luxury of the colonial lifestyle. Inevitably, this version of 1920s Uganda reflects the experiences and privileges of the diarists. As a result, the journal presents an unbalanced account of colonial history.

There is little mention of the local people the Carpenters would almost certainly have met during their time in Uganda. Indeed, their very existence goes almost entirely undocumented, beyond fleeting references that only further underline the colonial attitudes of the time. This is demonstrated within an extract from the diary from 1927 detailing a visit from the Prince of Wales. The diary refers to the ‘natives’, who had “turned out in numbers” to see the Prince, being “very disappointed”

in his appearance. This extract is notable in that it goes so far as to acknowledge the presence of the Ugandan people. However, this is only in relation to the colonial experience and there is a sense that the disappointment referred to has been assumed rather than accurately reported.

By providing a more critical analysis of archival material such as The Carpenter Diary we intend to shift the focus away from the stories and successes of colonial researchers and instead present an account that recognises the imbalance of power inherent in the colonial encounter. This narrative shift will be reflected in the way we promote our collections online via social media and the LSHTM archives blog, as well as through internal school events and external events that engage with decolonising debates within the wider archive sector.

As a starting point, we have developed a set of ‘Principles for Decolonising the Archives’ and an Action Plan’ to provide us with practical steps to achieve the principles.

The principles cover five areas: cataloguing practice; archival practice; dissemination; education and inclusion. These were created through research from the increasing number of resources available to archivists and through team discussions. The archives team is committed to adhering to these principles which will provide a framework for our ongoing work, as we aim to address the bias inherent within the archive, decolonise our collections, and look to create a more inclusive research environment.

The principles will be published on our website and regularly updated as we continue to develop in this important area. For more information please contact [archives@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:archives@lshtm.ac.uk).

# Where are your records from?

In 1969, archivists from across eastern and southern Africa met in Nairobi for the first biennial conference of the Eastern and Central [later Southern] African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ICA). The printed proceedings are full of requests for the return of records removed to Britain during decolonisation. Similar calls have been made in the resolutions of each subsequent conference. But these resolutions are largely unknown or ignored in Britain. The writings of Nathan Mnjama and others have attempted to draw international attention to displaced archives, and in 2017, the Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers (ACARM) adopted a position paper calling for the return of a high profile instance of displaced archives - the so called 'Migrated Archives', which are held at TNA as FCO 141.

Aside from FCO 141, we know that Rhodesian Army records – state records stolen by white nationalists in retreat – have been brought into the UK, though their location today is not widely known. Which other records were created abroad and brought to Britain? A cursory look at a few of our major institutions' online catalogues shows that foreign records are scattered across the country in repositories of all sorts. Were those records brought here rightfully? Should they be sent back?

There is precedent for the return of displaced archives, from very old cases in continental Europe to the most

*A cursory look at a few of our major institutions' online catalogues shows that foreign records are scattered across the country in repositories of all sorts. Were those records brought here rightfully? Should they be sent back?*

**James Lowry**, formerly of the Liverpool University Centre for Archive Studies, highlights the connections between displaced archives and the current conversation about race, and calls upon archivists to take action and return records which belong elsewhere.

*Over fifty years after that first meeting in Nairobi, our colleagues in the Global South are still waiting for us to do the right thing. Let's reappraise our records. Let's deaccession any displaced archives and send them home*

recent transfers from the Dutch national archives to Indonesia and Suriname. There is also a body of archival theory that supports such returns, from the concept of "territorial provenance" elaborated in the UNESCO and ICA documentation of the 1970s, through to the work of Jeannette Bastian and most recently Jamila Ghaddar's thinking about provenance and place.

But neither theory nor practices elsewhere have been allowed to disturb us here in Britain. In the days that followed the toppling of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol, discussions on the ARCHIVES-NRA list-serv grudgingly turned to structural racism in the UK archives sector. Even these discussions failed to engage directly with the British custody of records created in other countries.

How is archival displacement relevant to that conversation about race?

Racism is not confined to countries, institutions, communities, or individuals, but has an international dimension; Britain has played a crucial role in creating the 'global colour line', and we have profited by it. That European archives can ignore, for so long, the calls of African, Asian and Caribbean archivists for records repatriation is evidence in itself that there is a power asymmetry in our favour.

"Bring back our archives",  
Tshepho Mosweu, Botswana.  
Language: Setswana. Courtesy  
of Thabiso Archie Ramalepa.  
This image will appear in a  
forthcoming Museum of British  
Colonialism virtual exhibition  
called 'Lost Unities'.



A woman with short, curly hair is smiling and holding a white protest sign. She is wearing a patterned dress with gold, red, and blue designs. The background shows a street with trees and buildings. The sign has blue text that reads "Bu sang mekwalo ya ditso tsa rona".

Bu sang  
mekwalo ya  
ditso tsa rona

Though the museum sector, the French President, and now the George Soros Foundation are grappling with the restitution of stolen artefacts, British archivists seem unaffected by this turn to repatriation and reparation. Have you looked through your catalogues to identify records of foreign provenance? Are these records rightfully in your custody?

Archivists could usefully ask themselves the following questions about their collections.

- Can I trace the provenance of this record from creation to the present?
- Was this record created in Britain? If not, where was it created?
- Was our acquisition of the record appropriate and ethical? Did the donor have rightful possession of the record and the right to donate it? Was it acquired by force or duplicity?
- Who is this record about? Which peoples and places?
- On the basis of the answers to these questions, is the record more appropriately held in an archive in another country?

We are living in a moment of reckoning with racism and structural inequality. We should not let this pass without looking squarely at ourselves and our own archives. Over fifty years after that first meeting in Nairobi, our colleagues in the Global South are still waiting for us to do the right thing. Let's reappraise our records. Let's deaccession any displaced archives and send them home.

Further recommended reading on the topic:

Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers, The Migrated Archives – Position Paper, 2017. Available at <https://acarmblog.files.wordpress.com/2018/10/acarm-position-paper-migrated-archives-adopted-20171125.pdf> [Last accessed 11 July 2020]

Bastian, J. "A Question of Custody: The Colonial Archives of the United States Virgin Islands", *The American Archivist*. Spring/Summer 2001, Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 96-114.

Ghaddar, J. "The provenance of place: archival 'origins,' Indigenous resurgence and the making of settler Canada", presented at the 2020 Archival Education and Research Institute (forthcoming)

Kecskeméti, C. "Archival Claims: Preliminary study on the principles and criteria to be applied in negotiations" (Paris: UNESCO, 1977).

Lake, M. & Reynolds, H., *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Lovering, T. "Expatriate Archives Revisited" in Lowry, J. (ed.) *Displaced Archives* (London: Routledge, 2017) pp.86-100.

Mnjama, N. 'Migrated Archives: The African experience', *Journal of the South African Society of Archivists*, 44, 2015, pp. 45–54.

Proceedings of the conference of the Eastern and Central African Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ECARBICA). ECARBICA: Nairobi, Kenya, 1969.

# Making a statement: taking personal responsibility for action on structural racism

**Karen Macfarlane**, a graduate in Archives and Records Management from the University of Liverpool, outlines the instrumental value of taking personal responsibility for action on ending structural racism in archives and records as the founding stone to effect meaningful change.

In early April 2020, an invitation to sign a statement to 'End structural racism in Britain's archives sector' was broadcast on Twitter and the ARCHIVES-NRA list-serv. Over 1700 people (of which over 1300 are in the UK) would eventually sign it, committing to its objectives. So how and why has it been created?

In the fallout of #ARA2019 Conference, conversations in the North West region turned to how to act personally against racism in our sector. These conversations led to public meetings in London, Liverpool and St Andrews in December 2019, where we asked ourselves:

- What are our motivations for taking part?
- What needs to change in our workplaces?
- What are the barriers to us challenging our ways of working and the power dynamics within our organisations?

- What individual and collective actions can we take to improve unsatisfactory situations?
- Do we need a collective statement of intent?

The workforce studies published by ARA UK & Ireland and CILIP in 2015 and The UK National Archives (TNA UK) in 2018, ARA 2018's Glasgow Manifesto, plus recent efforts to improve accessibility to accredited courses facilitated via FARMER and its institutions did not go unnoticed. However, progress seeming uncoordinated and slow, the Twitter controversy surrounding ARA's 2019 Conference demanded that we start to take personal responsibility for action on racism, rather than wait for professional bodies and sector leaders to find ways forward for us.

Notes and minutes from the meetings, together with remote contributions through a Slack channel, were combined into a statement, that begins by defining several problems, the first being 'white fragility' and what it means for our profession. It points out that these same patterns of treatment, "denial, defensiveness, and minimisation", are also suffered by other marginalised groups. Of leadership, it calls out a general lack of trust, a failure to own the problem and make change happen, with little diversity in the people who work in our profession, particularly in the higher echelons of management. Entering the profession requires an interest in history and heritage. The teaching of white British history in schools means there is often little to no interest from those who do not see themselves reflected in these versions of history.

The remainder of the statement lays out actions we can take individually, such as:

- Self-education;
- Engaging with more diverse networks;
- Allying ourselves to those who are disadvantaged;
- Speaking out and supporting those experiencing racism;
- Work processes

**“However, progress seeming uncoordinated and slow, the Twitter controversy surrounding ARA’s 2019 Conference demanded that we start to take personal responsibility for action on racism, rather than wait for professional bodies and sector leaders to find ways forward for us”**

- Funding and recruitment;
- How 'white supremacy' has impacted the contents of our collections.

Collective actions, addressing problems at a much higher level, cover:

- Educational curricula at school and in universities;
- Supporting other routes into our sector;
- Supporting ARA in its changes to become more inclusive;
- Supporting ARA and TNA UK in all their efforts to eradicate structural racism, examining our accreditation guidelines, and descriptive standards, and recognising and supporting the return of displaced archives to their rightful owners.

So why make this statement, what's new about it? The statement departs from previous studies and reports. Its tone is direct and to the point, centring personal responsibility and action. There is no watering down of meaning or intention.

For those of us who are lifetime beneficiaries of 'white privilege', it means owning the problems we create and re-create. In its directness, there is a radical empathy towards those in our profession, those (mis)represented in our collections and those in the communities we serve (or don't serve).

Now the challenge will be to check in on our own progress on the commitments, to hold ourselves to account and be open with our peers about whether we were just virtue signalling, or we've done what we said we would do.

**“For those of us who are lifetime beneficiaries of ‘white privilege’, it means owning the problems we create and re-create. In its directness, there is a radical empathy towards those in our profession, those (mis)represented in our collections and those in the communities we serve (or don’t serve)”**

# Understanding privilege in cultural spaces

**Jass Thethi**, Managing Director of Intersectional GLAM, has created this rapid quiz that focuses on the different experiences people from different backgrounds may have in cultural spaces, specifically race, gender identity and sexual orientation.

The quiz is a condensed and specified version of the Privilege Quiz available at <https://intersectionalglam.org/privilege-quiz/>, which includes all other major and intersectional identifiers. Take the quiz and find out...

- |   |                              |                             |  |                              |                             |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. I can turn on the television, open a newspaper and see people of my race positively and widely represented.  | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. I can go to an Art Gallery and will find people of my race creating artworks.   | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I can turn on the television, open a newspaper and see people of my sexual orientation positively and widely represented.  | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. I can go to an Art Gallery and will find people of my sexual orientation creating artworks.   | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I can turn on the television, open a newspaper and see people of my gender identity positively and widely represented.   | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. I can go to an Art Gallery and will find people of my gender identity creating artworks.  | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I can go to a cultural institution and will see people of my race represented throughout history in the objects and archives with autonomy and authenticity.               | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. I can be sure that when told about our national heritage or about 'civilisation', in cultural institutions I am shown that people of my colour made it what it is.             | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I can go to a cultural institution and will see people of my sexual orientation represented throughout history in the objects and archives with autonomy and authenticity. | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. I can be sure that when told about our national heritage or about 'civilisation', in cultural institutions I am shown that people of my sexual orientation made it what it is. | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I can go to a cultural institution and will see people of my gender identity represented throughout history in the objects and archives with autonomy and authenticity.    | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. I can be sure that when told about our national heritage or about 'civilisation', in cultural institutions I am shown that people of my gender identity made it what it is.    | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered 'yes' to these questions have you considered that privilege plays a large role in your life?

This is not inherently a bad thing:

Understanding privilege creates a way to attempt to equalise the institutional power structure that creates marginalised and underserved groups. We have the ability to use our own privileges to assist in empowering those who need it.

The first step to doing this would be to gain a better understanding of the different challenges different people have – look into the work of LGBTQIA+, differently abled (mentally and physically), neuro-divergent, working class and BAME people.

To find out more on how to do this visit  
<https://intersectionalglam.org/online-courses/>



**“** Understanding privilege creates a way to attempt to equalise the institutional power structure that creates marginalised and underserved groups. We have the ability to use our own privileges to assist in empowering those who need it **”**

# What is diversity?

Diversity and equality matter in our society and have an impact on everyone.

**Nicola Waddington**, ARA Diversity Ally and consultant archivist at Archives Alive, writes.

The concepts of equality and diversity are an integral part of modern society, but what actually are these terms? How does 'diversity' relate to 'equality'? If we are being 'diverse', what does that really look like?

'Equality' is defined as being 'the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities' ([www.lexico.com/en/definition/equality](http://www.lexico.com/en/definition/equality)). This concept has been made tangible via the Equality Act, 2010. This defines the nine Protected Characteristics against which unequal treatment is unlawful; being age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity ([www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/equality/focus/2.5491/protected](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/hr/equality/focus/2.5491/protected))

Equality is the 'intellectualised' concept of what success should look like. 'Diversity' is the 'practice' of achieving that equality, and is about our state of thinking and approach to other people ([www.lexico.com/en/definition/diversity](http://www.lexico.com/en/definition/diversity)). As such, it is something that we do, via our thought processes, rather than intellectualise and theorise. So what does that look like?

## Diversity is:

- A creative process that builds capacity along equality lines. It creates growth, and if done successfully, brings out the best in us. It builds a future from the starting point of the present. If this goes wrong then we hark back

to the past, subsume ourselves in guilt and focus on destruction of the past (if that is actually possible without time travel), rather than the construction of a future.

- Pervasive. Once we have developed helpful thought processes, diversity will become automatic in our subconscious.
- Everyone's responsibility. We all need to behave in an inclusive way to others, regardless of whether or not we belong to a group with a Protected Characteristic ourselves. This has created many tensions over the last thirty years – one simplistic example is that the attitude to women is more restrictive in some cultures than in others. Yet under the Equality Act, 2010 that restrictive attitude is illegal.
- About unity. Conversations in society until now have included the concept of 'me'. People have been encouraged to think about themselves, leading to the concept of 'I'm this', 'I'm that', 'I'm gay', 'I'm straight', 'I'm black', 'I'm disabled' and so on. It has led in many cases to a sense of isolated and competing pillars of difference. True diverse thinking goes deeper than this and connects to our human similarities. We are all human beings no matter what we look like, who we choose as our life partners, or how our body works (or doesn't). We all feel hungry if we don't eat or thirsty if we don't drink. We all need to earn money to support ourselves, and we all have our hopes and dreams of what we'd like to achieve. No-body is responsible for guaranteeing our success in life, but we all have a role to play, for example in our employment practices, in ensuring we have created a level playing field for those things that are within our control.
- An interaction. We cannot be diverse to ourselves, so diversity only comes into play when two individuals interact, or an individual interacts with an organisation or business. It involves our asking ourselves how we are coming across and how we are perceiving what is coming back at us.
- Something with grey areas and linked to perception. One of the hardest aspects of the diversity discussion is around both human perceptions and also our level of personal development. Personal development here means that progressive journey we all travel on, at varying speeds and with varying degrees of success, that turn us from self-focussed children to adults who are able to understand not only context but also the events and dynamics of life that are way bigger than ourselves.

**“**We cannot be diverse to ourselves, so diversity only comes into play when two individuals interact, or an individual interacts with an organisation or business. It involves our asking ourselves how we are coming across and how we are perceiving what is coming back at us **”**

Until we understand and engage with this learning journey, our default human setting to explain our failure at something (such as getting a particular job) is that people are against us. If we have a Protected Characteristic then this sense is much stronger. This enters a grey area – did that person with a particular characteristic not get the job because of discrimination or because they themselves did not perform well against the other candidates. It is an area that is very hard to define.

An easy argument at this point is that the person with the Protected Characteristic has not had the same opportunities as others due to a discriminatory society. However, it is more complex than that because our rate of development is not solely affected by the availability of external opportunities. It is also affected by genetics, parenting style and the presence or absence of traumatic life events.

Diversity therefore is a complex subject, full of the vagaries of humankind. It is about thought-processes, perceptions, interactions. It certainly involves us all, it will be here for the long-term, and it is unlikely to have any defined end.

# Last of the summer white

Black Lives Matter 2020 has rightly brought about a step change in the debate about diversity, globally and within the archives sector. We are seeing issues aired which are new to many of us, as the older generation of archivists, brought up on Jenkinson and ideas of neutrality. We feel that a generation gap of understanding may be developing.

Here, two members of the profession, one a BAME archivist, talk about some of the issues in an attempt to understand the current situation, to outline some challenges and to provoke debate in the virtual staff rooms and zoom calls of the profession.

**F:** The pace of the debate has taken me by surprise, and changes in terminology. You don't know what you can say anymore. When did 'people of colour' come in? You don't want to use a term wrongly through ignorance, and then find people coming at you with pitchforks and flaming torches on Twitter.

Another aspect it's challenging to process is the strength of feeling, which is like nothing I've experienced before. I'm now realising that it's not enough to have had your opinions moulded by opposition to Thatcher in the 1980s, and to be a liberal, enlightened, Radio 4 listener.

**R:** Radio 4? I hope you wear cardigans, drink milky tea and have a cat. But leaving archive stereotypes to one side, I agree: I don't think I've seen anything as focussed and global before either. It's taken me by surprise too and I've always considered myself alive to the issues and committed to positive action.

**F:** I think there is a danger of getting distracted into acknowledgement and gestures instead of proactively doing something about it. But my question is, what should I be doing? It's clear that what we have been doing, and doing for twenty years - applying equalities policies, addressing gaps in our collections, and generally conducting yourself as a decent white liberal middle class human being - is not enough anymore.

**R:** Well since we haven't seen much diversity in the profession or in our collections as a result it's clearly not enough and presumably never was. Didn't our last survey say we were 98% white or something?

**F:** It's difficult to engage with an issue that doesn't directly affect you. I've never been the victim of discrimination but at the same time I don't think I've ever knowingly discriminated against anybody. And given everything else I've got to do in a busy life, proactive anti-racism didn't seem especially urgent to me and when I've encountered racism I have challenged it.

**R:** But this is exactly what we're saying: you've done things when racism has found you but not gone out looking to address it. I'd also say if you're trying to be a good archivist shouldn't the lack of progress be something that affects you?

**F:** This is true but I find tackling this difficult and even frightening.

**R:** Just lighting my flaming torch...

**F:** I'm serious. I suppose it's new, it's unfamiliar, it's uncomfortable. There's nothing so comforting as a well-worn prejudice. And being totally honest, it seems so far removed from my life. I live in one of the whitest cities in the country. I have no friends of African heritage and perhaps I'm not aware enough of anything that needs to change that I could change.

I also resent being called a white supremacist when that is a term synonymous with organisations like the Ku Klux Klan, and it is hugely unhelpful when trying to engage people to tackle racism to equate them.

**R:** It's a horrible thing to call someone and whilst it's intended to describe the current status quo, to me white supremacy is an ideology and an active belief. White privilege though is something that people have and might not recognise. Having privilege is not the same as believing white people are superior or wanting to dominate other races.

**F:** We should recognise that white people have an advantage but I think we need to use a term that is equally powerful but less loaded, such as 'white primacy'.

**R:** I hate debating the correct terminology as it always seems like a distraction and a way of not doing anything. I once spent an hour discussing the difference between outputs and outcomes without ever getting to the actual point of the meeting. However, in this case, I think white supremacy immediately sets up a barrier to people listening and engaging and it's going to be difficult to solve racism without involving white people. But, we can't press the pause button until we have the correct term.

**F:** This brings us back to what can I actually do? Having seen recent online debates I think many of us feel the safest thing to do is to wait to be told what to do.

**R:** And who do you think should tell you? This feels a bit like asking the people who didn't cause the problem to fix it, whilst those who are complicit sit around waiting

**“**Couldn't you begin by looking at terminology in your catalogues for example? Remember it's not just about race and ethnicity. I don't suppose you want to advise a person in a wheelchair to search for 'The Cripples Guild' or a student to look under 'unnatural acts' for LGBTQIA material. How would you feel if these terms were applied to you? **”**

for instructions and then come up with reasons about why it's impractical, there's no budget, there's no capacity. We've heard it all before.

**F:** Well some guidance from the regulator and the professional body would be a good start.

**R:** But isn't this a passive way of looking at it? Couldn't you begin by looking at terminology in your catalogues for example? Remember it's not just about race and ethnicity. I don't suppose you want to advise a person in a wheelchair to search for 'The Cripples Guild' or a student to look under 'unnatural acts' for LGBTQIA material. How would you feel if these terms were applied to you?

**F:** Granted. And decolonialising, if that is the term, our collections may be a good start. As archivists we want to encourage people to use our archives and I wouldn't want our catalogue descriptions to be discriminatory or turn people away from the start. Perhaps that's where to begin, by reviewing our lists and use more widely acceptable terms. We need to regain trust in archives.

**R:** I think that's a nice way of putting it and a good aim. No one is saying it's easy but this feels like an important moment, not just for archives and heritage, but for the world. We want to be the change not just try to collect it in twenty years' time.

**F:** So a choice between present comfort and future relevance!

**R:** Or even present relevance, given how fast things are moving, but don't worry, you'll be retired and all those young archivists will have to do it.

Barber Shop  
Chronicles (2017).  
Image courtesy of  
Marc Brenner



# Exploring the Black Plays Archive at the National Theatre

**Nadine Deller**, PhD candidate and **Erin Lee**, head of Archive at the National Theatre, reflect on how the Black Plays Archive project has led to collaborative working practices and new research methodologies for theatre archives.

The Black Plays Archive (BPA) was founded in 2009 with the website launching in 2013 to document the first professional production in the UK of plays written by black British, African and Caribbean playwrights. It is a website featuring a union catalogue tracking every production, venue, dates, cast and creative team. For each production there is also information of catalogue items that are available from archives across the country. So for Barber Shop Chronicles by Inua Ellams it will tell you

to go to the National Theatre Archive (NTA) to watch the recording or read the prompt script, but for The Island by Athol Fugard it will tell you to go to the Victoria & Albert Museum, which holds the archive of the English Stage Company.

The project was initiated by the playwright and former National Theatre Associate Kwame Kwei-Armah, currently the Artistic Director of the Young Vic, who expressed

Barber Shop  
Chronicles (2017).  
Image courtesy of  
Marc Brenner



a wish to explore and engage with African, Caribbean and Black British writers produced in the UK, a number of which had been largely forgotten. The project was supported by the Arts Council England in partnership with the Black Cultural Archives, and it is based at the NTA. The BPA website was launched online with essays, readings, and interviews and the National Theatre (NT) has continued to promote the BPA with physical and digital exhibitions, accompanying events and lecture series.

In order to broaden the reach of the BPA and encourage the studying of these texts within academia, the decision was taken to partner with the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD) to apply for a Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) through the London Arts and Humanities Partnership (LAHP). These funded CDAs are designed to promote research that has direct impact on cultural institutions. We advertised widely through academic, community and performing arts networks, which resulted in a strong field of candidates. Nadine Deller is our first PhD candidate and is coming to the end of her first year of study.

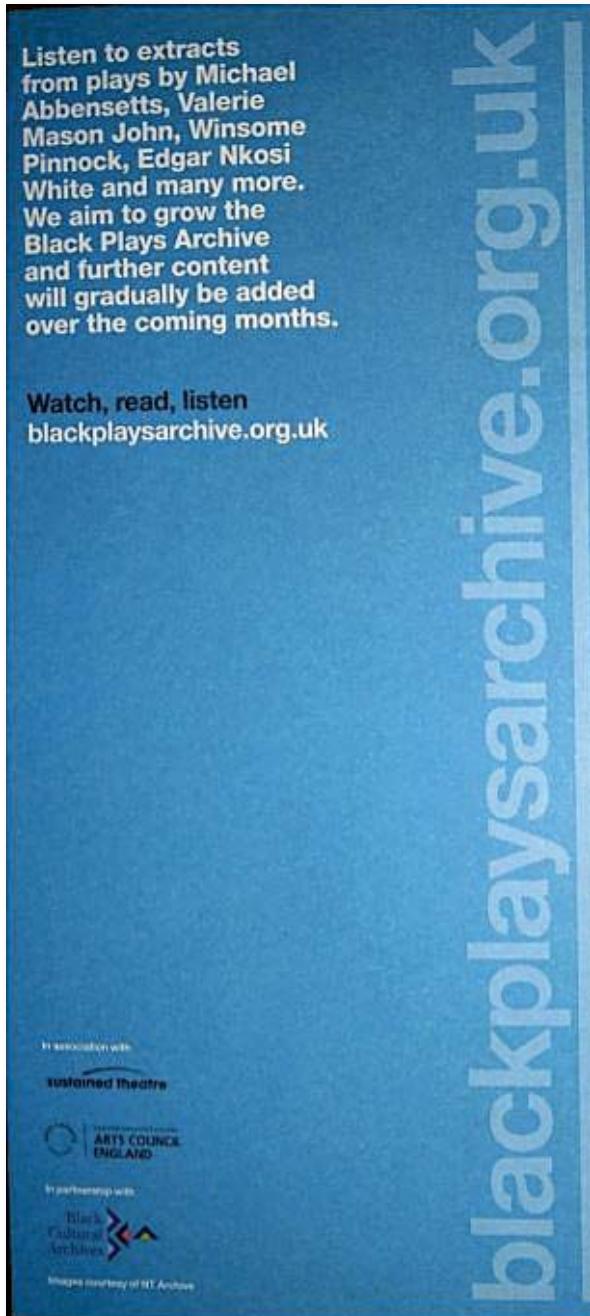
#### **From Nadine's perspective:**

This CDA has brought a multitude of opportunities: original, collaborative, and impactful research, professional development, and invaluable insight into the theatre industry. Furthermore, it sets a precedent that Black and Global Majority voices in academia and cultural institutions are not just valuable, but vital. My thesis is titled 'Deviancy and potential in black women's heterotopias on the British stage'. The research problematises the position of black women playwrights in the BPA by interrogating the BPA's archival modes, questioning the tensions in maintaining an archive on black theatre at the NT. Moreover, the thesis undertakes a spatial analysis of black women's plays in the BPA. An exciting outcome so far during this PhD is 'That Black Theatre Podcast', a podcast on black theatre history within the BPA, which includes archival material and interviews, which launched in September 2020.



Poster for Barber Shop Chronicles. Designed by National Theatre Graphic Design Studio with an image by Dean Chalkley

*In order to broaden the reach of the BPA and encourage the studying of these texts within academia, the decision was taken to partner with the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (RCSSD) to apply for a Collaborative Doctoral Award (CDA) through the London Arts and Humanities Partnership (LAHP)*



Black Plays Archive leaflet.  
Image courtesy of National Theatre

**“** This CDA has brought a multitude of opportunities ... Furthermore, it sets a precedent that Black and Global Majority voices in academia and cultural institutions are not just valuable, but vital **”**

#### From the NT's perspective:

The CDA partnership provides the NT with a passionate student with the capacity to work on projects that might not otherwise be possible due to the daily requirements of an archivist's job. Nadine brings a new perspective on the work of the BPA, questions our methods and decisions prompting productive conversations about the project, its purpose and its future. We have a second candidate, Esmee West-Agboola, beginning in October this year and we are looking forward to further CDA applications in the future to build up a cohort of researchers around the BPA. The resulting public engagement and academic outputs will promote the BPA and solidify its standing as a resource to be used for research, inspiration and teaching at school age and beyond.

You can explore the BPA in more depth here:  
[www.blackplaysarchive.org.uk/](http://www.blackplaysarchive.org.uk/)

# All those years of upper middle-class urban oppression

**Philip-Milnes Smith** reflects on how educating ourselves on empire and colonialism as well as on race and racism will be instrumental to do our jobs more effectively, and to engage and stand ally with colleagues, service users and communities.

In the 1999 film *10 things I Hate about You* (based on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*), the English teacher Mr Morgan mock-sympathises with his student Kat using the words in the title of this article. She had complained that the curriculum ignored female writers and perspectives, and he was reminding her that, in her all too comfortable position, she has not even noticed that it also ignored Black writers.

When the call for content came out for this Diversity and Inclusion issue of *ARC Magazine*, I was reluctant to offer my thoughts as a middle-aged, middle class, white man. Like many other white people, I imagine, it had, for most of my life, never occurred to me that skin colour had any relevance. It was only the meaningless external characteristic that people have in mind when they quote Martin Luther King dreaming about people being judged instead by the "content of their character." This attitude meant that when I worked in multi-cultural schools in, or drawing from, deprived wards, my thinking included class, culture, religion, and language differences rather than race and ethnicity.

My own education had not helped. I had attended white majority schools in white majority areas, where predominantly white teachers taught us a white British curriculum. Like Kat in the film, I was disappointed with the set texts in English – but only because I wanted to study Dickens rather than Durrell, and war poetry rather than the suburban Betjeman and poems about animals. There were barely any non-British Europeans in my social and economic history GCSE, let alone anyone from Asia, the Americas or Africa. We particularly studied a local mill and considered the experience of those exploited and maltreated there – but at no point was cotton anything more than a resource that had to be imported. I do remember the triangular trade being mentioned in one lesson, but only in economic terms.

There is some truth in the idea that archivists can archive anything, and subject knowledge can follow. However, I

think there must be a place for everyone in the profession to reflect on what we have never realised that we do not know because we have never learned it. It is not enough to know our records and their creators. We have to consider a broad context of creation that is not limited to our organisation or nation. The Glasgow University Call and Response exhibition had a great example of what I mean: a technical drawing of a valve [www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/slavery/callandresponse/exhibition/valeroyalestate/](http://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/slavery/callandresponse/exhibition/valeroyalestate/). This is not only the record of Mirrlees Watson Co Ltd and the people who signed and endorsed it, but of the sugar plantation in Jamaica that required the spare part, and thus the enslaved people being exploited on that estate. As David Olusoga noted towards the close of the first episode of this year's series of *A House Through Time*, "Their names don't appear in any of the documents – they are invisible – but we cannot tell the history of this house without remembering them."

I understand exactly why 'White Privilege' was useful in sociological analysis. But it has not transferred well to the person in the street, and I am guessing that includes some recordkeepers. Even if, for example, we engage in Peggy McIntosh's Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack exercise, we may well leave thinking about how lacking in privilege we are in some areas, while missing the pervasive structural normativity of whiteness in society. Our profession is diversifying, but I think we have more learning to do, informed by the lived experiences of people whose skin colour is clearly visible and meaningful to the people they interact with (however often they are told, "Oh, I don't see colour"), and who are descended from enslaved people and others who were subjugated by British or other European empires. In the meantime, it is down to us to educate ourselves about empire and colonialism and race and racism. Then we can not only do our jobs more effectively, but we are also better positioned to stand ally to colleagues, service users and communities.

# The British Library for Development Studies (BLDS) Legacy Collection Project

**Caroline Merchant-Wallis** and **Daniel Millum**, BLDS metadata and discovery officers, University of Sussex Library, explore decolonisation strategies for cataloguing library collections, and how engaging under-represented audiences and users is instrumental to create more inclusive metadata and enhance accessibility.

We are currently working on a 3-year Wellcome-funded project to catalogue and promote the British Library for Development Studies (BLDS) Legacy collection. When we saw *ARC Magazine's* Call for Papers, our initial response was in many ways a microcosm of our concerns relating to the project as a whole – how could we as non-BAME librarians ensure that our contribution would be a positive one, and not simply another way in which the effects of the lack of diversity in our profession were perpetuated.

What we decided was to attempt a piece highlighting the practical issues arising in a project of this sort whose explicit remit was to incorporate the principles and approaches of library and classification decolonisation, particularly in terms of the metadata and organisational structures applied to the collection.

The BLDS collection is located in the basement of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex, and tracks the unfolding story of international development and health systems in the Global South over the last half century. The collection is one of the most comprehensive in its coverage of government and official sources, particularly published in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia between the mid-1960s and mid-1990s, with selective coverage of other countries that were key sites of development and health research and innovation during this time (Francophone Africa, the Middle East, North Africa and South/Central America).

A year into the project we have encountered a whole series of decolonisation/diversity-related questions, which can roughly be grouped under issues relating to: the original collection of the material; the physical organisation of the material; metadata; the involvement of academics and researchers; and the physical accessibility of the collections.

The history of the acquisition of the BLDS Legacy materials would fill a basement in itself, but one central factor was the involvement of IDS researchers and

contacts, who during their field research in different countries would gather relevant materials for the collection. This obviously poses the question as to what extent (largely) white Western academics had the right to 'save' these rare and sometimes unique materials. Gerardo Serra (Sussex Collections blog post, forthcoming) also gives the example of government publications from countries like Somalia where civil war subsequently destroyed institutional archives, highlighting the fact that some research is easier done at IDS than in (for instance) Somalia itself, and the need therefore to make the collection available in the originating countries.

The organisation of the collections is another way in which aspects of coloniality (see Aníbal Quijano 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality': [www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09502380601164353](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09502380601164353)) are physically expressed – most basically as the materials are ordered by country, with all of the colonial/imperial implications of this approach, but more overtly by the existence in some instances of parallel collections (for Rhodesia AND Zimbabwe, for instance), which have required us to decide between traditional archival approaches (preservation of original order) and the principles of decolonisation.

The main task of the project is to devise and apply suitable metadata. Only part of the collection was catalogued and that does not meet current standards. We have therefore made a series of decisions regarding which classification system/class-marking approach to employ during which we have been acutely conscious of the need to balance the requirements of compatibility with the University of Sussex Library system (where Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and Library of Congress (LOC) class-marks are used) with the realisation that many LCSH and class-marks are out-dated, Western-centric and even highly inappropriate and offensive.

We have attempted to be guided by previous research in this area (see Christine Bone's 'Modifications to the Library of Congress Subject Headings for use by Manitoba



BLDS 'Show and Tell' event, 7 February 2020. Reproduced by kind permission of Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex Library.

archives', <http://library.ifla.org/1328/1/151-bone-en.pdf>) in terms of considering whether our approach might be to modify the LOC system to render it more appropriate to the collection in hand. LCSH obviously continue to be challenged and revised, but we are still coming across terms (for example 'Indian people of Central

**“ A year into the project we have encountered a whole series of decolonisation/diversity-related questions, which can roughly be grouped under issues relating to: the original collection of the material; the physical organisation of the material; metadata; the involvement of academics and researchers; and the physical accessibility of the collections ”**

America') which are currently authorised but which are problematic (in this instance we have replaced with the LCSH alternative 'Indigenous people' - an improvement but still potentially questionable).

We also recognise that as non-subject specialists we will require the input of experts. Although there has been an enthusiastic response to our promotion of the project thus far, it is important for us to recognise that if we are to fulfil our remit we need to find ways of ensuring that academics, students and researchers in the countries of origin of the collections are also involved.

This also relates to the physical accessibility of the collections – even once the current crisis abates there is no avoiding the fact the vast majority of interested scholars from the Global South are unlikely to make a visit to the BLDS basement. Whether it be through the production of lists, copies or full-scale digitisation, this is another set of issues which needs addressing if the project is to be successful.

We recognise that this whistle-stop BLDS tour has been a lot more about questions than answers, and in fact one of the main motivations for taking up this opportunity was to get feedback from interested readers who might help us end up with a collection catalogued according to the principles of decolonisation and which engages under-represented audiences and users – so please do get in touch with us at [bldslegacy@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:bldslegacy@sussex.ac.uk).

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DISCOVERED  
FOUND  
DETECTED  
CONNECTED  
ENGAGED  
UNEARTHED  
LEARNT

EXPLORED  
DISCOVERED  
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