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## Welcome to **ARC Magazine** February 2018

Welcome to the Section for New Professionals issue of *ARC Magazine*. The topics discussed on the pages that follow are as varied as the work being undertaken by those entering the profession. From cataloguing to outreach to records management, there are examples of innovation and best practice that will be of interest to all readers. My thanks go to everybody who contributed an article to the issue and to Sue Halwa for coordinating the content.

The Section for New Professionals has done much in recent years to support the work and development of colleagues across the sector. Sharing good working practices is one example but others are given by Sara Brimble. I would encourage anyone reading this to play a part in our community of practitioners. Whether you're working on something for the first time and in need of some help, or you've got previous experience and knowledge to share, we all benefit from the exchanging of ideas.

Enjoy the issue.



**Richard Wragg**  
ARC Editor

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# opening lines



One of the things that I find most appealing about the work I do is that it is so often a collaborative effort across the generations. Not only are we working with 'old stuff', but very likely we are working with old descriptions, arrangements and records management systems, appraisal and cataloguing decisions. Previous work may have been done anywhere between a year and a century ago and it may have been done on paper, on an early database or on our current cataloguing system.

Sometimes it is appropriate or necessary to revisit that work - and this can be a bittersweet task. It feels harsh to judge a fellow archivist's work as in need of improvement (especially as we're often not in a position to understand exactly why they took the decisions they did), but of course it is then satisfying to make that improvement.

When I was told that I had won the New Professional of the Year Award in 2017, a large part of my pride came from the fact that 2017 was a year in which I undertook a major exercise of the sort described above. In doing so, I feel I may have made my first unique contribution to our collections at BT Archives.

Over 90% of the records we hold at BT Archives are those of the Post Office and its successor, British Telecom (now BT plc). These are immense, long-lasting organisations with complex internal structures. Departments came into being, were reorganised, grew, shrank, gained and lost power and responsibilities and finally disappeared again.

Meanwhile the core work stayed much the same: construct and maintain telecoms networks; provide services on those networks; advertise those services to the public; and organise the labour, finance and supplies to keep the whole thing running.

This makes for an arrangement headache: to organise by provenance means that records relating to the same activity may be spread across the catalogue, making life more difficult for users and staff.

Together with my colleague, Anne Archer, I spent a good chunk of last year addressing this problem by rearranging our catalogue into a functional structure. For the Post Office, we identified 13 functions and 129 sub-functions that remained broadly consistent over a long period of time, even though the details and organisational arrangements of how those functions were carried out may have changed. We then moved all our existing Post Office records series into sub-fonds based on those sub-functions.

Meanwhile, I made the momentous discovery that our cataloguing software allows authority files to also be arranged hierarchically - making them an excellent way to map the organisational history of the Post Office. So, for example, we now have one authority file for the Engineer-in-Chief's Office and another for each of the branches that formed part of that office.

By making links between series-level records and authority files (an ongoing job) we now have the ability to track both the function that records relate to and the part of the Post Office that created them. We're really enthused about the outcomes - and early results are that staff, volunteers and users all seem to like it. It's great to feel that a change you've undertaken has made everyone's life that little bit easier.

But of course this won't be the end of the story. We're documenting these changes, so that in five years, or 50, our successors can review what we did and make the changes that are right for them. And so the cross-generational collaboration will continue.

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**James Elder**

BT plc

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# Professional development news

Take control of your career with a professional development plan.

## Getting started on the ARA's Professional Development Programme

In this month's news I'll explain how members can enrol onto the programme, and how they can qualify as a Foundation, Registered or Fellow member of the ARA.

## Foundation, Registered and Fellow

Foundation (FMARA), Registered (RMARA) and Fellow (FARA) are professional levels of membership that provide designatory letters, known as professional qualifications, equal to those offered by many comparable professions. They demonstrate that you have met an industry recognised standard of knowledge and competency. They are also a public declaration of professional integrity. Foundation, Registered and Fellow also confirm your commitment to continuing your professional development, ensuring your skills and knowledge remain competitive in a competitive job market. We will work to establish these levels of membership as the recognised standard for the sector.

## Which level of membership is right for me?

The ARA website explains the entry criteria for the three levels of membership on the ARA website. Once you are familiar with submission criteria you should then follow the self-assessment process as described in the competency framework webpage. This will help you understand how your current experience can demonstrate how you meet the required competency standards (also known as levels). Self-assessment will also help you identify any competency development you will need to qualify at any of the three levels.

## Programme enrolment

You must complete and submit to the ARA's programme enrolment form so that we can keep you informed of submission dates, and other updates. Candidates for Foundation and Registered levels must have a Mentor to guide their learning and development. A list of mentors will be provided on enrolment, should you be unable to identify your own. The annual enrolment fee is as follows: Foundation (£10), Registered (£35) and Fellow (£50). Members can enrol for free until December 2018.

## Portfolio development and assessment

Once you have enrolled you should then begin planning and collating the evidence you will need in your portfolio. There is no set time limit on how long you should take to collate the evidence. The more competencies you need to develop, the longer your journey will be. If necessary you may use evidence gained over a 10 year period, but you must ensure you show progression during this period.

You must use the ARA's competency submission forms to record your learning and development, as they are structured to help you plan the evidence you will use in your submission. Your mentor will help guide your learning and development as you progress.

Assessments for each level will take place twice a year. Further information is available from the ARA website. The assessment fee paid on submission of a portfolio is Foundation (£50), Registered (£75) and Fellow (£100). The ARA has set these fees as low as possible, and are therefore very competitive when compared with other membership organisations.

We will be accepting submissions for Foundation, Registered, Fellow and Revalidation from Autumn 2018 onwards. Members should enrol now and begin building their portfolios offline. We expect members to be able to upload content onto the ARA's new IT platform before the end of May 2018. Members who enrol onto the programme will receive advance notice of submission dates.

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## Chris Sheridan

CPD Programme Manager

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## Collecting matters

One of the great pleasures of being a new professional working at The National Archives is the ability to be at the heart of the archives sector - and to witness and learn from all of the great work that archivists and archive services do.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in two of our 2017 publications: Archives Unlocked, the new strategic vision for the sector - <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/strategic-vision-for-archives/> and A Year in Archives - <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/a-year-in-archives-2017/>

Both of these publications showcase the innovation, creativity and resilience of archives - sharing the importance of archives in providing evidence, inspiration and impact, perhaps based in the past, but of the future.

I'm proud to be part of an organisation that continues to champion the work of archives, and one that recognises how communities can use records to both make sense of this world, and to imagine a new one.

New professionals are of the future too - we're changing what it means to work in archives. Many of us come to archives through diverse backgrounds, bringing with us new skills and knowledge to help shape the profession of tomorrow.

Many of us may end up in non-traditional archives jobs (I never dreamt I'd be doing developmental work!) and will bring our archival expertise to bear in new ways.

All of us will help stretch and grow the profession so that the sector continues to exemplify the rich tapestry of archives, for now and in the future.

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### Meg Venter

The National Archives (UK)

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<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector>

# Welcome to the New Professionals issue

Just over a year has passed since I sat down and penned an introduction for the last Section for New Professionals (SfNP) special edition of ARC. Now, with another year under my belt as Publicity Officer, I would like to welcome you again to a bumper issue of the magazine. This comes after another successful year for the group; with numerous outreach and training events across the country, increased numbers of people following our 'Off the Record' blog and social media pages, and with our first ever 'New Professional Award', amongst other highlights.

For this magazine, we received an excellent response from our members to contribute, ranging from far and wide - from Aberdeen to the Falkland Islands - and with all three sectors strongly represented: archives, records management and conservation. This magazine is testament to just how diverse and innovative our profession is; for example, Annie Price writes about her cataloguing project of the Syon Abbey Archive, and Sara Lloyd Williams discusses the benefits and challenges of implementing a Digital Mailroom at Cumbria County Council.

We have had input from new professionals keen to share their knowledge about exciting outreach projects involving those in prison; of local governments preparing for the upcoming rollout of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the UK; and of conservators undertaking quarantine measures in archives to reduce damage from pests.

SfNP would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this issue and who continues to support us. We are New Professionals ourselves and are continuously learning from you. Whatever your sector, there are articles here for everyone; to learn from and be inspired by. Enjoy!

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### Sue Halwa

Publicity Officer, Section for New Professionals

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SfNP Committee 2017; image courtesy of the Section for New Professionals

# Section for New Professionals: Chair's update

Sara Brimble reports on the past year's activities.

**T**he Section for New Professionals (SfNP) has been very busy over the past 12 months. We have strived to continue building on past successes and provide an offering to members which not only reflects our values and priorities, but streamlines our focus on the knowledge and skills needed for a career in archives, records management and conservation.

We continue to grow and work for our members, which is reflected in our activities in 2017. We have focused on building our profile across the regions by hosting events in Glasgow, Newcastle and Leeds to reach our members outside of London. These have included our annual Summer Seminar event and two training sessions with a focus on soft skills. We have worked with our Irish Representative to support the work of new professionals in ARA Ireland.

In August the section manned its second stand at the ARA conference. Our Secretary spent an enjoyable day networking and meeting delegates interested in the work of the section. In October we held a joint event with the Section for Business Records at the Marks and Spencer Company Archive which was an incredibly enjoyable and educational day. We look forward to collaborating with other sections and regions over the next year.

Alongside our training events, the Peer Pals Scheme continues to offer members an e-mentoring service. This allows recently qualified professionals to provide guidance to new professionals - from those considering a career in archives to those who are looking for guidance in the next steps of their career. Our fortnightly blog 'Off the Record' continues to provide excellent articles which average around 1000 views per month, enabling new



Summer Seminar 2017 ; image courtesy of the Section for New Professionals

*“ We look forward to collaborating with other sections and regions over the next year ”*

professionals to learn about upcoming events, opportunities and career guidance. The Section is always pleased to have new candidates who are interested in taking part in Peer Pals as a mentor or mentee, and welcomes submissions for ‘Off the Record’.

The Section has been busier than ever and we have been guided by our excellent outgoing Chair Karyn Williamson. Karyn’s final piece of work for the Section was the creation of the ARA New Professionals Award. Our pilot year saw 6 brilliant candidates apply and the winner for 2017 is James Elder (Archives Manager, BT). The pilot was a great success and we hope that the award will be approved and become part of ARA’s Annual Excellence Awards.

I consider myself lucky to have become the new Chair for the Section and get to work alongside an incredibly dedicated and enthusiastic committee who are always working hard to make the Section for New Professionals a success.

We are always on the lookout for new ideas and feedback, so if you have any suggestions, questions or would like to become involved with the Section’s work please do get in touch at [newprofessionals@archives.org.uk](mailto:newprofessionals@archives.org.uk).

I look forward to hearing from you.

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**Sara Brimble**

Chair, Section for New Professionals

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# Cataloguing the Syon Abbey archive

Annie Price reflects on her first role as a qualified archivist.

**I**n November 2017, I started my first professional post as an archivist: arranging, cataloguing, repackaging, and promoting the Syon Abbey archive at the University of Exeter’s Special Collections. The archive originally comprised 114 boxes of material with little or no discernible systematic arrangement into management groups. It had previously been accessed by users through the use of a box list in an Excel spreadsheet; however, this list was difficult to search, inconsistent, and occasionally inaccurate. The position as project archivist, therefore, offered an exciting challenge to arrange and catalogue a large and complex archive, and to create a finding aid that will make the archive more accessible to future users.

Syon Abbey was a monastic house of the Order of our Most Holy Saviour (also known as the Bridgettines), founded in Twickenham in 1415. The enclosed community of Syon Abbey followed the Rule of St Bridget of Sweden and was renowned for its dedication to reading, meditation and contemplation. In addition, it was unusual in being the only English Catholic community of religious to have continued existing without interruption through the Reformation period. Following the dissolution of Syon Abbey under Henry VIII in 1539 the community went into exile, continuing their religious practice in the Low Countries and France before finally settling in Lisbon, Portugal for just over 250 years. The community returned to England in 1861 and spent its final century living in Devon. On account of dwindling numbers and the age of the remaining community members, the decision was made to close Syon Abbey in 2011. In the same year, the archive was transferred to the University of Exeter where it joined other previously deposited

collections relating to Syon Abbey, including printed books and manuscripts from the Syon Abbey library.

The Syon Abbey archive provides a fascinating insight into the management of an abbey and the continuities and changes to life within a religious community from the medieval to the modern period. The archive comprises material from the 15th to the 21st century, although the majority of the records date from the 19th and 20th centuries, when the community returned to England. In addition to English, the archive also contains records in at least ten different languages, including Latin, Portuguese and French. Particular highlights of the archive are the diaries kept by the community between 1890 and 2011; correspondence with more than 45 other Bridgettine communities from around the world; and individual vows of sisters dated between 1607 and 2010, many of which have been beautifully decorated, illuminated and illustrated. The Syon Abbey archive has the potential to be a rich and powerful resource for research for a wide range of users, and particularly for anyone interested in the history of women religious, ecclesiastical history, and women's studies.

Although often challenging, the Syon Abbey archive cataloguing project has provided excellent opportunities to put the knowledge gained through my qualification in archives and records management into practice. As the original organisation of the archive gave little indication of the major functions and activities of the Abbey, my first task was to identify and arrange the archive into sections that reflected the way records had been used by the community. In addition to requiring considerable research into Syon Abbey and the organisational structure of an abbey, this process also involved significant problem solving in regards to where records are best placed and



Postcard of the community at Syon Abbey, South Brent, c.1954, ref: EUL MS 389/PUB/3; image reproduced by kind permission of the copyright holder and the University of Exeter Special Collections



Vow of Sister Mary Richard Stephens, 15 October 1925, ref: EUL MS 389/COM/2/2/3; image reproduced by kind permission of the copyright holder and the University of Exeter Special Collections

“*The Syon Abbey archive has the potential to be a rich and powerful resource for research*”

balancing discoverability against original order. In addition, there are a number of different formats within the archive, including oversized material, medieval documents with seals, artwork, volumes, and rolled documents. This has required consideration of different ways to repackage material and seeking advice from conservators, colleagues and online guidance. An aspect of my role I have particularly enjoyed has been outreach, including the supervision of archives and manuscripts used in teaching, networking with potential users at conferences, and promoting the archive via the University of Exeter Heritage Collections Twitter account using the rather wonderful hashtag: #nuntastic.

The project is due to be completed by spring 2018, by which time the archive should largely be catalogued at file level and searchable via the Special Collections' online archive catalogue. Towards the end of the project I would like to raise awareness of the archive by presenting at conferences and through a small exhibition. Cataloguing the Syon Abbey archive has been a wonderful first post as a newly-qualified archivist, and I believe the knowledge and experience I have gained will prepare me well for tackling any future archive project. I now feel ready and excited to face whatever comes next!

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**Annie Price**

University of Exeter

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Author sewing a new endband; image copyright: Canterbury Cathedral

## An intern's reflections

Lucy Cokes highlights some of the projects she worked on during a fascinating year at Canterbury Cathedral.

As a recent graduate of Conservation in Books and Library Materials from West Dean College, I knew I wanted my first experience as a qualified conservator to be special. It was important that I not only learned new skills about the profession, but increased my confidence and ability to engage with others about heritage. I was lucky enough to be offered a year's internship in book and paper conservation at Canterbury Cathedral.

Canterbury Cathedral is a “place of welcome, beauty and holiness” and is steeped in 1,400 years of history. A lot of this history is reflected in craft skills, such as stone masonry and

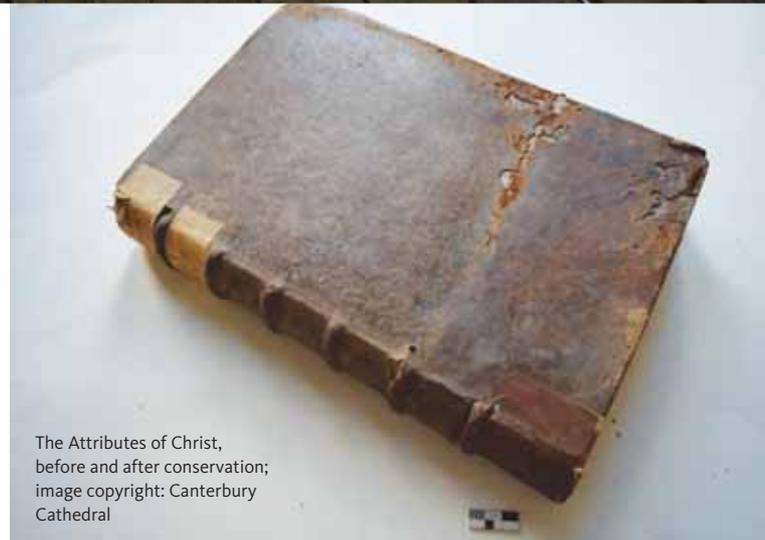


Cleaning masonry; image copyright: Canterbury Cathedral

stained glass. However, it can be argued that the true story of the Cathedral can be found in its vast and varied collection of archival materials dating from the 8th century onwards, some of which I was lucky enough to work on during my time in the studio.

As well as dusting angels, wrapping up flags and couriering artefacts once belonging to a medieval prince, I worked on several books that would be used by visitors, including a 13th-century rural manuscript. A project with which I became intimately familiar was *The Attributes of Christ*, a 17th-century book that had been severely water damaged during the course of its life. When I received it, it could barely be used without risk to user and other collection items: the pages were too friable, and the mould so prolific, that the book would surely fall apart with the slightest manipulation.

It was with such objects that I learnt a fine balance had to be struck between respecting the mission of the Cathedral to “show people Jesus”<sup>2</sup> and the history of the object I was conserving. The main concern with this particular volume was that I could potentially sacrifice evidence of original binding material, which in itself is an uncommon phenomenon for 17th-century books, in lieu of a return to functionality for future users which was necessary for furthering the Cathedral’s mission.



The Attributes of Christ, before and after conservation; image copyright: Canterbury Cathedral





*“I was treated as a fully-fledged member of staff during my internship and that made a huge difference to my learning”*

Author standing in front of a promotional display; image copyright: Lucy Cokes, courtesy of Canterbury Cathedral

I had to make a lot of careful decisions about the actual treatment of the book, and was able to come up with a satisfactory treatment that both renewed the ‘usability’ of the book but also retained its history, and I am very proud of what I have been able to achieve. As the book will be entering into the handling collection of the library, it will be able to be accessed by people visiting the Cathedral, and hopefully emphasise the links between books, the stories they can tell and the Cathedral’s mission.

As my practical skills and confidence grew, I came to realise how important a sense of community was, especially as part of a community that seeks to inspire visitors. Outreach is a hugely important part of our profession, and I was able to increase my outreach skills through hosting visits to the studio and working with Archive staff in outreach events. The Cathedral’s Open Day was also a great opportunity to talk to people and introduce them to heritage and conservation. I also spent a lot of my internship writing a blog about *The Attributes of Christ* and that has allowed hundreds of people a glimpse into how the Cathedral works behind the scenes.

I was treated as a fully-fledged member of staff during my internship and that made a huge difference to my learning: through tasks both menial and unique, from emptying de-humidifiers to conserving 13th-century parchment, I had an excellent time at the Cathedral, learning dozens of new practical techniques, balancing ethical and functional

needs and experiencing how the profession works in a small studio. I think that the most important thing I learnt from my internship is that a place such as the Cathedral is a living, breathing space: it is a place of beauty, of wonder, but also a place where people seek inspiration. I felt like I was able to fit into the Cathedral’s all-important community and contribute to its mission statement by making the stories of the objects I worked on accessible through my blog and by communicating directly with visitors and staff.

The internship has taught me how to both inspire and respect collections and communities, and these are skills that I will take with me in the future.

If you would like to learn more about my conservation journey at Canterbury Cathedral, please see [www.canterbury-cathedral.org/heritage/conservation/book-and-paper-conservation/inside-the-front-cover](http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/heritage/conservation/book-and-paper-conservation/inside-the-front-cover).

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**Lucy Cokes**

Book Conservation Trainee

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<sup>1</sup> Canterbury Cathedral homepage [Online] [www.canterbury-cathedral.org](http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org)

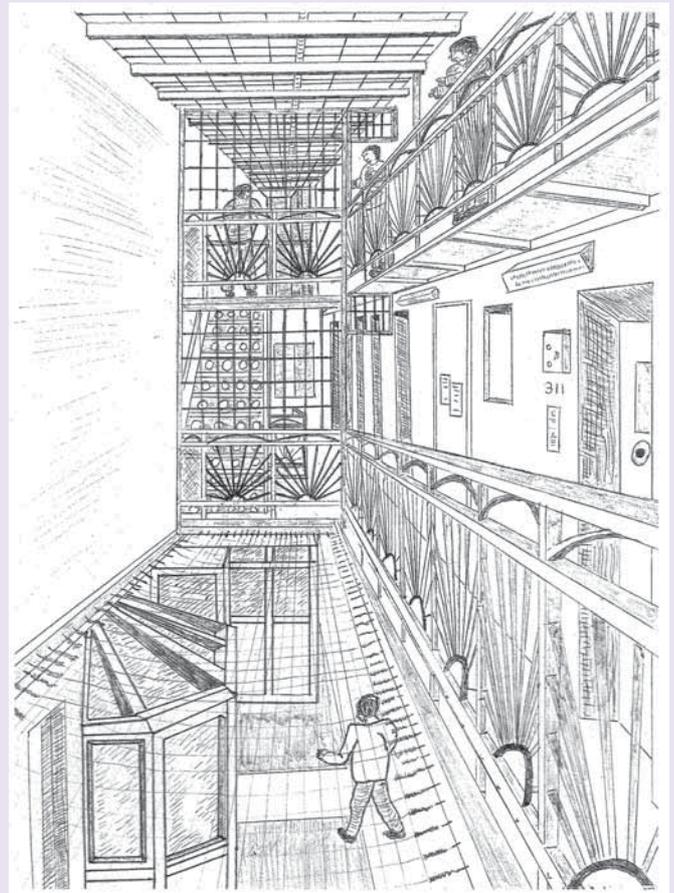
<sup>2</sup> Canterbury Cathedral homepage [Online] [www.canterbury-cathedral.org](http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org)

# Beyond Boxes: more than just a prisoner

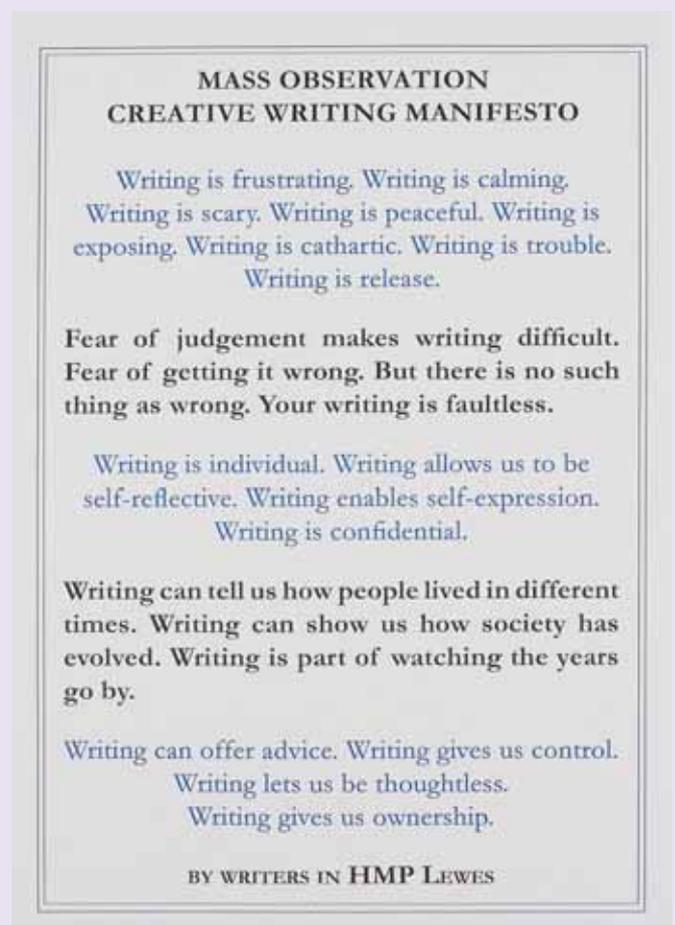
Anthony Mc Coubrey discusses how archives can open barriers to access and engagement.

**T**he archive box plays a pivotal role in the archive. It is the protector, the holder of valuable items and a gateway to information and worlds gone by. But not all worlds are contained in its cubic measurements, for we must consider the lives of its inhabitants beyond the box. Since September 2016, I have been involved in Beyond Boxes, an archival access and engagement project at the Mass Observation Archive. Supported with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the project has been working to connect people in the wider community in the Brighton and Hove area (where the archive is housed at the Keep) with the world of archives. Through our working partnership with The Brighton Housing Trust, Blind Veterans UK and HMP Lewes, Beyond Boxes has, metaphorically speaking, brought the archive to the community it seeks to record and serve. This has involved numerous outreach activities such as talks, workshops, tours and a national diary day event. While the project's outreach activities have introduced those involved to the unknown world of archives, it has also provided us with an insight into the barriers people encounter when accessing archives.

Very early on in the project it became clear that providing access to archives is not, and cannot be, a 'one size fits all' approach. The nature of the project's partnership brought up more questions from participants than the Beyond Boxes



3 December Diary Day: sketch of landing at HMP Lewes; image courtesy of the Mass Observation Archive



Writing Manifesto by the creative writing group at HMP Lewes; image courtesy of the Mass Observation Archive

“Of all the challenges, there is one that stands out - promoting the use of archives to people in prison”

team had answers. “I don’t have any proof of address, I’m street homeless, can I get a reader’s card to view documents?”, or “I would like to do some family history and I can access the archive building, but I have a visual impairment. How can you assist me to consult the material you collect?” These questions not only raised a number of access issues but through working with our partners and engaging with people who encountered the barriers we have collectively worked together to find solutions.

But of all the challenges, there is one that stands out - promoting the use of archives to people in prison. The challenge here was not due to the nature of the prison environment but because the archive and prisoners were locked away, with each kept in the respective environments, unable to meet face to face (for the time being). However, through outreach, both were able to ‘meet half way’. As a result, over the course of weekly sessions across an eight-week block I, along with some colleagues and novelist Kim Sherwood, ran a number of creative writing workshops within the prison library. With the use of copied archive material, the group were introduced to archives and used the material to encourage and evoke their writing. Each week, we explored a variety of writing styles such as letter, diary, fictional and life writing and poetry and discussed a number of topics: feminism, Virginia Woolf, mental health and recordkeeping.

The men’s individual writings from the workshops have now been deposited with the archive and will be on display at Lewes Prison next year. Through their exploration of writing styles, the writing group also collaborated with the archive on commissioning a Mass Observation Project directive questionnaire on the topic of prison. This questionnaire will be sent out to the archive’s panel of writers and the men at HMP Lewes and their written responses will then be held at the archive for public reference, bringing to light experiences and thoughts of prison in 21st century Britain.

The work of Beyond Boxes has allowed the men involved in the creative writings sessions to voice their own experiences, thoughts and feelings on not just prison, but about the wider world that we all live in. Their writings show that they are indeed, ‘more than just a prisoner.’ But more importantly, they tell us that through archival outreach, we can think beyond the box and actively work together with those inhabitants whose lives will finally end up in the archive box.

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**Anthony Mc Coubrey**

The Mass Observation Archive

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# Peer Pals

Fahema Begum encourages readers to get involved with the Peer Pals Programme

One of the things that I find myself telling new professionals is that I was pleased to discover the recordkeeping profession was very generous and encouraging regarding the sharing of expertise and experiences, which made the process of embarking on a career in this sector a slightly less trepidatious one. One of the ways in which the ARA’s Section for New Professionals (SfNP) helps support new professionals ease and navigate this transition into the sector is through the Peer Pals programme.

Peer Pals is a virtual mentoring programme, which was set up by the SfNP in 2013. The programme aims to bridge the gap for those considering a career in the sector by matching them with newly qualified professionals who can provide advice and guidance.

Prospective mentees and mentors are paired according to their experience, skills and interests. Once both parties have agreed to the match, mentees and mentors can contact each other directly by email. Matches can continue for as long as you need them to, with most relationships generally lasting on average between 3-6 months, and will usually involve the mentee and mentor being in contact two or three times per month.

To be part of the programme, you need to be a current ARA member. Mentees should be exploring the idea of archives, records management, or archive conservation as a career; be volunteering in a related institution, a trainee considering a professional qualification or starting a postgraduate course. Mentors must have completed a postgraduate qualification in archives, records management, or

archive conservation in the past five years, and currently be employed in the profession.

### What are the benefits?

For mentees, the benefits include:

- help with specific questions regarding applying for traineeships or postgraduate courses and studying, as well as advice and tips for job applications and interviews
- opportunity to discuss issues relating to particular archival areas, e.g. business archives, health archives etc
- acquiring new contacts in the sector
- opportunity to discuss new professionals' and sector issues.

In turn, Peer Pals enables mentors to:

- develop skills that can be used in supervisory roles and as a precursor to managing staff in the future
- share their knowledge and experiences of the sector
- continue their professional development, and count towards Professional Development portfolio.

Through encouraging the sharing of experiences, we believe that the Peer Pals programme provides a platform to help demystify the process of getting started into the profession. Since its launch, the programme has matched a number of mentees and mentors who have found the relationship mutually beneficial.

Mentee Fiona Hackett, recently graduated with her Postgraduate Diploma in Archives and Records Management from the University of Dundee, describes her experience:

*Taking part in Peer Pals has been a great experience for me. My mentor and I were well matched up. For the last year of my (online) studies in Archives and Records Management, she was always helpful and encouraging, offering me advice and tips on the topics I was studying. She's still there for me now that I've just graduated and am looking for work. As a new professional in the field herself, it's great to be able to learn from her. I'd recommend this programme, because it's well organised and it can really be beneficial to students and new professionals to learn from each other and share tips. The team at SfNP are always supportive too, and the Peer Pals scheme is very well managed. They are always available to answer any queries at all. Go for this scheme if you can! I can't thank everyone involved enough.*

Mentor Helen Ceci, UK Archivist at HSBC, says:

*The Peer Pals scheme has been a great opportunity for me to share my early experiences of entering the profession and to provide answers to the kinds of questions I wish I had asked when completing my course and applying for jobs. Fiona and I have a built a great relationship, and as well as having learnt a lot from hearing about her studies and voluntary work, I have also made a good friend within the sector.*

We are keen to raise our profile amongst archive conservation trainees and students and would welcome and encourage potential mentees and mentors from within the conservation sector to get involved with the Peer Pals Programme.

Further details on the scheme and its guidelines can be found on our webpages, where you can also find application forms for both mentees and mentors. If you are interested in participating in the Peer Pals programme as a mentee or mentor, or have any questions relating to the programme, please contact the Careers Officer at [newprofessionals@archives.org.uk](mailto:newprofessionals@archives.org.uk).

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### Fahema Begum

Careers Officer, Section for New Professionals

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# A day in the life

Sally Swinden discusses her role as a Records Management Assistant at Cheshire East Council.

**T**aking my first professional post as a records management assistant in July 2016 in the world of archives and records management was as daunting as it was exciting. A year later at Cheshire East Council, I believe that I have made strides towards educating employees on the need and benefit for records management and information assurance. I work as a member of the Information Assurance and Data Management Team (IADM) and am involved in a variety of projects ranging from triaging information breaches to actively updating the Council's Information Asset Register in readiness for the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May.

One of the main projects I have been actively involved in is the digitisation of the Council's Highways records and children's social care records. Due to the large volume of retrievals these two services do, as well as the demand to view archived files electronically, a project was set up to commence the back scanning of these boxed records. My role in this project has been in gaining the metadata, destruction date and service area of over 4000 boxed records. Initially I thought that this information would be available on team SharePoint sites. However, it became clear that this information had not been documented at the time these records had been archived. To gain this information involved searching mailboxes and various old Excel spreadsheets. In many circumstances employees had archived boxes under an acronym such as YOS (Youth Offending Service) and I was not certain what this service area might stand for. This involved a number of calls to service areas to ask what the acronym might stand for. Through this work, I have now become known in my team as 'Sherlock Swinden'. Gaining this information has not only resulted in having accurate and reliable information about council residents and assets, but has also enabled the team to decide which service area's boxed records should be scanned first.



Data Protection Officer (Julie Gibbs) at a recent GDPR roadshow

Another recent project which I have been working on is ensuring that the Council's Information Asset Register (IAR) is accurate and up to date before GDPR comes into force in May. The GDPR Working Group in July asked team managers of service areas to review their information assets on the IAR. We asked them to place the following on the IAR:

- Record title
- Record type
- Service Area of record type
- Retention date of record type
- Location of where the record type is created
- What is the legal basis for creating and storing the record type?

By publishing the above information, this will go some way towards ensuring that the Council is compliant with GDPR.

In relation to GDPR, the IADM team have recently undertaken a number of GDPR Roadshows to employees across the Council's corporate buildings. In these Roadshows we presented to employees what GDPR is, how it will affect their current business activities and the corporate approach we

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are taking to be ready for GDPR. We also undertook IADM Roadshows earlier in the year where the team presented to employees information on enterprise content management, master data management and our online information security and data handling training, called SEEDS. We wanted to educate employees on how to safely create and manage information, yet we wanted to make the training engaging and fun. We came up with the title SEEDS, in order to show how we are growing and nurturing information.

A business activity which I have taken on as part of my role is that I assist in triaging the information breaches that are caused by Council employees. We have an incident reporting form that allows employees to report a breach. Once received, these breaches are reviewed by the Council's Information Governance Group and they discuss the remedial action which should be taken to remedy the breach. My role within this process is to actively communicate to incident reporters the necessary actions they should take or whether business change is required to prevent any future breaches. In most cases this involves recalling an email sent securely to the wrong recipient. However in some cases it involves advising teams on sending information electronically via secure email instead of by mail.

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“I have now become known in my team as ‘Sherlock Swinden’”

A closing note that I will leave with any newly qualified or current students reading this article is this: don't be afraid to expand your skill set by actively taking part in current business activities or engaging in upcoming events. I, for one, would not have improved my presentation skills and communication skills if I hadn't become involved with triaging information breaches and presenting at Team Roadshows. You never know when it may come in useful further along in your career!

**Sally Swinden**  
Cheshire East Council



Group of Nurses and patients in ward at Christmas, from the personal papers of Nurse Rose Rushton (C96/P/3); image courtesy of the Royal College of Nursing Archives

# Restructuring the photographic collections of the RCN Archives

Neasa Roughan reports on an archive's approach to cataloguing photographic collections.

Although a very recently qualified archivist, I have worked for the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Archives for three years as an assistant. Before that I spent some time volunteering with the RCN, cataloguing records as preparation for my qualification in Archives and Records Management.

Studying archival theory while undertaking the practical task of cataloguing photographs made me realise that deciding to restructure a large collection in an archive is not something anyone enters into lightly. Physical location, altering catalogue structure and finding aids, continuity of access and physical security are just some of the things one needs to take into consideration before making the final decision to alter a long-standing system. It's certainly not something any archivist would enter into without considerable advance planning. But sometimes collections no longer fit within existing systems of cataloguing and arrangement.

A significant proportion of the RCN archives are photographs, commissioned for press and publicity

purposes, inclusion in annual reports and for documenting events. The RCN already had a long-established library when in 1986 they appointed an archivist initially based in the 'Historical Room' with the old books! This environment no doubt influenced the early decision to separate photographs from their original context and to arrange them by subject. This system was undoubtedly useful for browsing the collection - researchers would commonly ask to see photographs concerning a certain subject rather than an individual. An artificial arrangement developed; photographs were arranged within a series labelled simply 'P', which was separated into sections such as 'Nurses at work and training', 'Portraits of nurses' or 'District Nursing'.

However, as a result of this separation of photographs from their related papers, context was frequently lost. We might have a wonderful portrait of a World War One nurse, but unless there was a cross-reference number written on it we often would have no idea who she was or if we had any other papers related to her life.



Members of the RCN Archives team renumbering part of the photographic collection; image courtesy of the Royal College of Nursing Archives

This clearly diminished the archival value of the images.

Once the archive started attracting donations, the accessioning and cataloguing process was standardised. More thought was given to provenance, and cross-referencing between photographs and personal papers was prioritised. However, the existing separation practices continued. It is probable that restructuring a major part of the archive was simply too large a task for a lone archivist to take on in addition to managing the growing collection of departmental, personal and other records.

Since 1986, new technologies have opened up many new ways of working for archivists. Electronic cataloguing was introduced, making the collections more generally searchable. More staff were appointed, increasing the potential for undertaking larger projects and individually cataloguing photographs. Although electronic systems highlighted the problems, work-arounds were used to make it fit with finding aids. The decision was made in 2016 to tackle the problem of the arrangement of the photographic collection, bringing us in line with sector standards.

Following a scoping exercise, the collection was weeded and we had a cataloguing methodology to test. It was decided that photographs created by the various departments of the RCN should be catalogued within the relevant departmental records.

The restructuring plan for the existing collection also had to cover the steady stream of new donations of photographs. The way in which photographs are accessioned, physically arranged and catalogued had to change too; and in 2017 a new system was introduced. This involved listing photographs in a series under their overall personal papers collection. For example:

Fonds: C96 Papers of Rose Rushton

Series level: C96/P Photographs of Rose Rushton

Item level: C96/P/1 Photograph of nurses and patients in a ward at Christmas

Photographs are now being kept with their original collection and stored alongside the papers they arrived with (in polyester pockets and in separate folders), which ensures their context is clear. Photographs are scanned upon arrival, in .jpeg and .tif format in various sizes, minimising handling. Digital copies are kept on a dedicated server, reflecting their new place within the catalogue structure, but will ultimately be part of a digital repository.

“In 1986 the RCN appointed an archivist initially based in the ‘Historical Room’ with the old books”

Level	Repository	Ref. No.	Title	Date	Date
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN	Photograph of Nurse Ruthven	27/12/2017	1916a, 1917
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN1	Photograph of nurses from Ruthven and her other nurses in an unlabelled ward	27/12/2017	c. 1916a, 1917
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN1	Photograph of nurses from Ruthven and her other nurses in an unlabelled ward	27/12/2017	c. 1916
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN1	Photograph of nurses from Ruthven and her other nurses and a patient	27/12/2017	c. 1916
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN1	Photograph of nurses and patients in a ward at Christmas	27/12/2017	c. 1916
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN1	Photograph of nurses from Ruthven with a group of other patients in an unlabelled ward	27/12/2017	c. 1916
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN1	Photograph of nurses from Ruthven with a group of other patients in an unlabelled ward at Christmas	27/12/2017	c. 1916
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN1	Photograph of a group of other patients in an unlabelled ward at Christmas	27/12/2017	c. 1916
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN1	Photograph of Nurse Ruthven with group of people at a dinner	27/12/2017	c. 1917
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN1	Photograph of Nurse Ruthven with an unlabelled group of people at a dinner	27/12/2017	c. 1916
Photo	Royal College of Nursing Archives	CRN1	Photograph of Nurse Ruthven amongst a large group of people at a dinner	27/12/2017	c. 1917

An example of the revised approach to cataloguing photographs as part of personal papers collections in CALM

Once this way of working was established, the issue of updating the existing collection of photographs still remained. Reuniting photographs with their parent collection can be a lengthy process, and a certain amount of detective work to establish provenance has been necessary.

Working on this project has been extremely rewarding. It has helped me understand the issues faced by archivists when they are faced by complex legacy systems. I have gained valuable cataloguing experience, as well as supervising the volunteers we recruited to assist us with listing uncatalogued photographs. I have really enjoyed working as part of a team, taking on the challenge together, dividing work and making joint decisions on how to proceed. Projects like this one really make you think about how archival theory ties in with real life professional issues.

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### Neasa Roughan

Royal College of Nursing Archives

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# Record keeping in the Falkland Islands

Chloe Anderson reflects on her first month working in a professional role.

Following the completion of a Masters in Archives and Records Management in August from University College London, I have travelled 8,000 miles home to the Falkland Islands where I have taken up my first professional role as Policy Assistant. This article focuses on my first month's experience and reflections as I manage the Government's current and semi-current records, before they are transferred to the Jane Cameron National Archives (JCNA) for permanent preservation.

As a professional whose majority of expertise lies within the archival sector, the jump to records management was quite daunting and not without its own unique challenges. One of the main tasks I tackled at the start was to repack the records being stored. This was done to ensure continuing preservation and provide more efficient access for staff - as some packaging had become very full to the point that safely retrieving records was difficult. As I had experience of repackaging over my five years working within this field, I decided it was a logical and practical first step to improving the efficiency of the current system. However, in contrast to my previous archival-centred experience, where records could be placed straight into the archive store, the semi-current records in this instance were stored in the Secretariat building until transferred to the JCNA by the Archivist. Though typical of the life cycle method used for many paper-based records, a surprising element to this new post was the reality of the separate roles of the Archivist and that of my own. The biggest difficulty

*“Working in such a close-knit community has exemplified the vital role of the records manager”*



The Secretariat; image courtesy of Chloe Anderson, Falkland Islands

was the build-up of semi-current records waiting to be transferred. As storage space was limited and as new files were created and accessioned, there was more pressure on my role to safely maintain both current and semi-current records. I learnt that the lack of direct communication with the Archivist potentially delays the disposition process. Though an element I hope to help improve upon, reflecting on this practice clarifies why it is a less favoured approach compared to the modern continuum model which sees more open communication and collaboration between these two roles and functions.

However, despite the obstacles faced within this environment, the successes and practical experience have been positive and provided me with an opportunity to put my Masters knowledge into action. I have been able to create a more controlled environment for records by changing the temperature of the storage room to meet current standards of practice, and by accessioning records onto the central database I have become very familiar with the classification scheme used for the Government's records. Through managing departmental budgets I have also been able to put into practice the financial skills I learnt on the course. More importantly, however, in such a small working environment it has been valuable to observe the effects repackaging the records have had in making it easier for staff to access records securely and safely. By starting with a relatively small step, I have been able to

show staff working around me how simple it is to look after and preserve the key records of the Government. A more recent opportunity I have successfully advocated for is the creation of a Records Management Policy for the Falkland Islands Government. I hope that this document will provide a framework for procedures, and reinforce to staff and senior management across the Departments the need for records management. Within a country whose identity and democracy is tied to the right for self-determination, the ability to maintain the evidence of Government processes and decisions taken makes support for records management even more crucial.

In all, working in such a close-knit community has exemplified the vital role of the records manager in, not only ensuring staff can always access the relevant files for points of reference and use, but preserving those records which are of continuing historical value. This, my first professional role post qualification, has also illustrated to me the importance of communication within the sector. I hope that my experience and reflections will encourage others to become involved in records management and develop their own skills further, showing that small steps in small places can create important changes.

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**Chloe Anderson**

Falkland Islands Government

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# Professionalism among the professed

Barbara Vesey considers the advantages and challenges encountered by a 'lay archivist' working for a religious order.

**W**hat are the challenges of being a recently qualified archivist working for a religious congregation? How do you reconcile the needs of the collections you're looking after with the ethos and expectations of the congregation employing you? These concerns and the natural urge on the part of archivists to want to share our treasures can sometimes be at odds. Navigating the potentially conflicting requirements of the congregation and of researchers, respecting the needs and preferences of living members of the community and their legitimate concerns around confidentiality, all the while balancing these with a commitment to my own professional standards as an archivist, are the challenges I've faced in my first few years in post.

From the first, it was clear that working for the Society of the Sacred Heart - a teaching Order of Roman Catholic women religious first founded in 1800 in France, and which established primary and secondary schools and Teacher Training Colleges internationally - was going to be very different from my experiences volunteering for local studies libraries and archives while I was studying for the PGDip long-distance with the University of Dundee, and different again from my other part-time archivist's job in a 'lay' repository. To begin with, there was a lot of new vocabulary to learn: Provincial, Probanist, Aspirant, Profession, Chapter, Charism, Gauffring. These were just a few of the words that I had either never heard before, or that were being used in ways that were completely new to me. That last word, by the way, refers to the 'gauffre' - the ruff of starched linen (which reportedly took hours to iron into all those pleats) that was part of the habit that used to be worn by RSCJ - *Réligieuses du Sacré Coeur de Jésus*. The nun pictured is St Philippine



St Philippine Duchesne, RSCJ (1769-1852), original oil painting by Hugo Ritter von Bouvard, 1940; image courtesy of the Society of the Sacred Heart

Duchesne, foundress of the United States branch (or Province) of the Society, the bicentenary of which event will be celebrated in 2018 (see image).

On the plus side, as archivist for the England and Wales Province of the Society, I haven't had to spend any time or effort convincing the 'higher ups' that the archives are significant and that looking after them is important work. The Sisters recognise this and have always kept careful records. Having said that, there is simultaneously a kind of reticence - a degree of self-effacement - on the part of religious women which means it is sometimes necessary to convince them that the history of the Society is of interest to researchers and others outside their community. And there is increasing interest in this aspect of women's history, not least because the nuns witnessed great social change with the coming of Vatican Council II in the mid-1960s, which, in the case of the Society, saw the end of wearing the habit and of being a silent and closed Order.

“Archivists can help the religious congregations whose records we look after by talking to them about the work we undertake”

Grade II listed War Memorial, Digby Stuart College, University of Roehampton; image courtesy of the Society of the Sacred Heart

There is also a virtue in the unfamiliarity which a ‘lay archivist’ brings to the role, which ultimately helps to make the collections more accessible to researchers. I’ve found that being a (ahem) ‘novice’ means I tend to spell things out in great detail when I’m cataloguing, with an eye towards future researchers - and the archivists who will follow me in post - who may not be familiar, as I was not, with some of the terms and ‘shorthand’ used by my predecessors who were themselves Sisters in the Society.

The answer to how a lay archivist can navigate a clear path between respecting the history and culture of a religious Order while doing the same for the history and culture of the archiving profession - all the while balancing both of these with the expectations of researchers keen to gain access to the archives - is ... that there isn’t a single clear answer.

But I think that part of an answer is communication. Archivists can help the religious congregations whose

records we look after by talking to them about the work we undertake and why. We can help researchers by being clear about how religious archives differ from those held by other repositories, and how this may mean more limited access than they might be accustomed to, but also more varied and extensive records than they might have expected to find. For instance, the recently Grade II-listed War Memorial here on campus at the University of Roehampton, established by the Society and commemorating family and friends of the RSCJ (see image).

Last but not least, we archivists can help ourselves as professionals by sharing best practice and taking an active role in groups such as ARA’s Religious Archives Group and Specialist Repositories Group!

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**Barbara Vesey**

Society of the Sacred Heart

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Conservator, Krystyna Olczyk,  
working in the quarantine room;  
image copyright: Kat Saunt



# Preventing dust, mould and pests

Kat Saunt outlines the importance of good preventative conservation measures.

**D**efending collections from mould, dirt and pests is an integral part of our work as archival conservators. While suiting up in masks, coats and goggles to work in the quarantine room may not be the most glamorous aspect of what we do, these preventative conservation measures are just as important as the remedial treatments we carry out.

In this article I will briefly outline how we use our quarantine area and maintain a physical separation between the collection and public areas, how we carry out our cleaning regime and how we mitigate threats to the collection through clear procedures and awareness of how dirt and infestations can be introduced.

We see enough evidence of historic pest damage - rodent

teeth marks in a parchment document, the beetle-bored holes in a book - to know how important it is to make sure our archive environment is uninviting to pests.

Remedying mould outbreaks can be expensive and interrupt service delivery. Even inactive mould can be a threat to health and, once visible mould has grown on a surface, the damage is generally irreversible.

However, dust and dirt also pose a threat to documents. Dust feeds mould, attracts pests, accelerates degradation in multiple ways and, of course, clean items are more pleasant to handle. There's no point digitising or producing a document if its surface is obscured by soot, but a quick surface clean can often bring about a transformation!

“There’s no point digitising or producing a document if its surface is obscured by soot”

Being situated in a modern purpose-built building, we have a great deal of control of the storage environment. We maintain temperature and humidity parameters that inhibit mould activity, discourage pests and greatly slow decay. Our next line of defence is the vigilance of staff and rigorous checking of documents in a quarantined area: when it comes to ingress of dust and other contamination, the most common vector is on the documents themselves. Over a lifetime of potentially centuries, a document encounters plenty of opportunities to be improperly stored, exposed to mould, damp, and pollutants and be generally neglected.

Frequently, new documents are able to go straight into a fresh archive box and join the rest of the collection. However, when a need for decontamination is identified, the document’s next stop is the quarantine room which is set up for safe cleaning of mould and dust.

Mould spores are respiratory sensitisers and can cause allergic reactions; they are subject to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) regulations, and any fine dust can be harmful especially with the cumulative effect of regular exposure. To protect ourselves we work with an extractor fan and treat items on a vacuum table, we also wear personal protective equipment such as face masks, goggles and nitrile gloves. We also make sure to work for only 30 minutes at a time, as it can quickly become claustrophobic. A separate set of tools and materials are kept for use in the quarantine room.

Over the last year we have adopted a weekly document cleaning regime, having identified a need for a systematic approach to this aspect of our collection care, making best use of our time while still being flexible and able to respond to priority issues as they arise - with help from production staff we can intercept and clean a document before it’s produced to a customer in the reading room with no delay in service. We find that two mornings a week in the quarantine room, alternating our 30-minute shifts have allowed us to keep on top of our cleaning. While the work might be repetitive it’s satisfying to see how much we get done, not to mention



Being mindful of how contamination can be transferred around the building and between items, we maintain a physical barrier of separation; image copyright: Kat Saunt

it’s a good opportunity for us to get familiar with the collection.

Our integrated pest management is based on the principle that prevention is better than cure. As such, we take measures not to invite pests into the building by keeping up housekeeping and taking simple measures like restricting food to the staff room. We also monitor with sticky traps throughout the building, checking and recording what we find on a monthly basis. Should we be unlucky enough to take in an item with a live infestation we have a blast freezer to kill off the insects. We also maintain a good relationship with our contracted pest control officer who understands the specific needs of our collection and building.

Finally, I would like to emphasise how beneficial we have found it to have a clear quarantine and cleaning routine. Visitors and staff have been supportive and happy to engage with this aspect of collection care as our procedures are clear and implemented for obvious reasons. Preventative conservation measures like this allow us as conservators to be visible beyond the workshop and involve our colleagues in the archive in caring for the collection.

**Kat Saunt**

East Riding Archives

The Information Management Team; image copyright: Sophie-Elise Anker



# The record in a shifting landscape

Sophie-Elise Anker reports on preparations for the implementation of GDPR in Aberdeen.

**A**t the completion of my degree, and my entry into Information Management, my experience was limited to archives. Whilst I saw this as the direction my career would most likely take, I had concerns that this could place limits on my employability. Taking the Records Management position at Aberdeen City Council was designed to expand my abilities, but I mainly anticipated using existing archival skills in a more current setting. Instead I found myself part of an energetic team who were committed to weaving high-level Information Management skills into every area of the business they work for. The first thing I witnessed here was the speed of the turnover for the records, how quickly they were made, how often used, and how carefully destroyed. This has now spread into the handling of information, which thousands of workers use daily, the records which they can't always

*“I found myself part of an energetic team who were committed to weaving high-level Information Management skills into every area of the business”*

physically hold but which none the less ground much of the work done within the Council.

The first significant change which has influenced the work of the Information Management Team is the preparation for the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May. As a

local authority with empowered duties of care to constituents, as well as statutory obligations and significant data set holdings, the impact of GDPR was always going to be large. Surmounting all the individual challenges it presents is the task of making everyone who is involved with the processing of data falling under these regulations aware of the oncoming responsibilities. The existing organisational structure would support a downward flow of training and information, but it is here that the second fundamental change facing Aberdeen City Council came into play.

In my first month of work it was announced that Aberdeen City Council would be undergoing a seismic structural change, with some new personnel expected, large-scale budget cuts and a remoulding of the current five directorates into four functions. The move to a functionally-based structure is more complex and re-defining than it sounds on paper, and aims to join up services, currently sequestered in different departments whose functions are the same or face a similar direction. These changes require a shift of attitude about what is done and how it is done, and the ambitions of the Council, to achieve much of this linking up through digital means, would be an information-heavy task, requiring from the employees a great deal of self-awareness about their service's role and undertakings. A further concern for the Information Management team was how we would fit into a functional structure - elements of what we do could be linked to each of the proposed functions.

The response of the Information Management team to these challenges has been eye-opening for me as an example of using circumstance to the advantage of our professional purpose. As a Records Manager within the Council I was well prepared to act as custodian of a wide range of physical materials, but the focus since the announcement of the structural change and

in preparation for GDPR has been on the information assets which sit outside of our stores and are held in more nebulous ways, as well as on the ways of thinking about these assets across the Council.

Utilising our position as a service which can be found at the core of every activity within the scope of a local authority, the Information Management team has spearheaded a series of workshops, presentations and one-to-one assistance to both equip managers and staff for the oncoming changes and to address the need for information-centred thinking throughout this restructuring period. What became clear to the team early on was that a stronger knowledge of the data held by each team empowered us to define GDPR readiness working groups, in which services with related activities and customers can work on the tools they will need, such as developing well-tailored privacy notices. This method of grouping naturally reflects the structure the Council is trying to achieve; reflecting function and combining services by the point at which they touch their customers, rather than the more linear structure to which we are accustomed.

As a result of this programme, the Information Management team can confidently prepare for GDPR; managers can lead their teams into the right area for them structurally, and with a better grasp on their information holdings and what they need to be doing with them. I can say with confidence, that with only four months experience to my name I have learnt the opportunities that can be taken from confusing and complex situations, and that an assumption of a steady pace in a records environment will never match the speed and skills needed in a business environment.

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**Sophie-Elise Anker**

Aberdeen City Council

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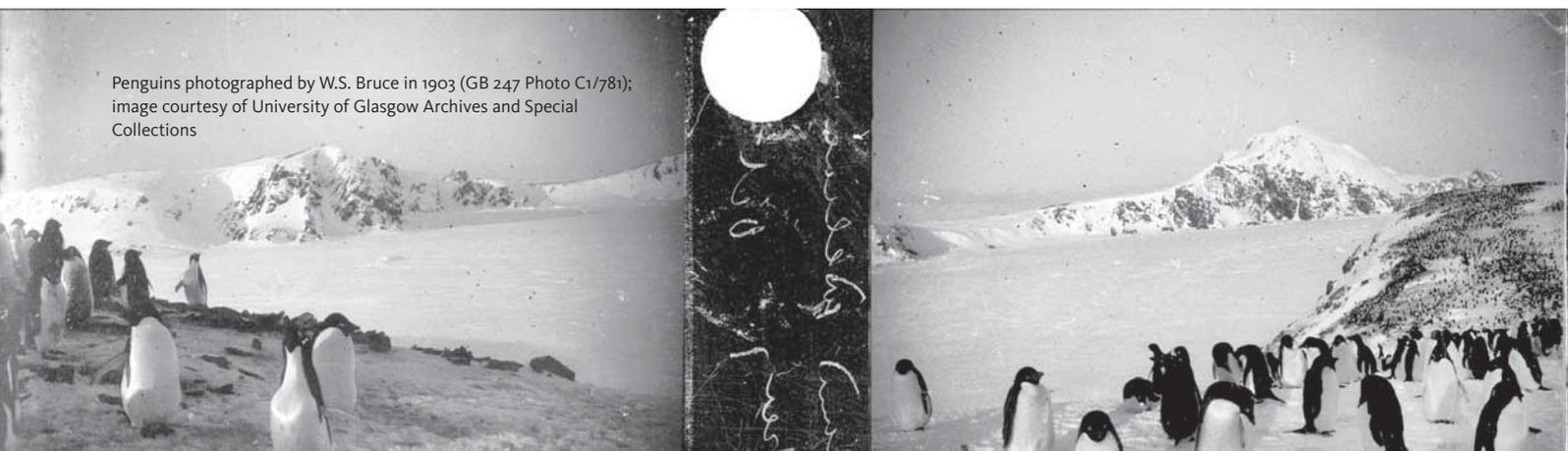
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Penguins photographed by W.S. Bruce in 1903 (GB 247 Photo C1/781); image courtesy of University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections

## Social media, crowdsourcing, and archives

Katie McDonald recognises the value of engaging with social media.

In recent years, social media has brought about immense change in the way we - both as archivists and as individuals - communicate. For archives, this opens up new avenues not only for publicity and marketing, but also in engaging potential users and stimulating new ideas.

In the summer of 2016, I was delighted to be offered a year's traineeship at the University of Glasgow's Archives and Special Collections. While this opportunity has been offered to graduates for a number of years, 2016 was the first time trainees would be working across both the Archives and the Special Collections services. This hugely increased the amount of material trainees had the opportunity to work with, and I was excited to discover the secrets which lay between the rolling shelves and inside the archival quality boxes.

The wealth of material I had access to was a good thing, as during my time as a trainee I was given the opportunity to create and contribute content to the service's various social media platforms. Having knowledge of both collections allowed me to find corroboratory and complementary material when researching blogs and articles, and provided endless content for our Twitter and Instagram feeds.

One of the first projects I undertook in my new role was developing a Social Media Calendar, encompassing everything from University events, to sector-wide initiatives (such as Explore Your Archives week), to nationally and internationally celebrated days, including important events such as International Women's Day, and the ever important World Penguin Day (25 April in



A comparison of fabric samples from 'On artificial alizarin' by William Perkin. (GB 247 Sp Coll 3099); image courtesy of University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections

A comparison of fabric samples from 'On artificial alizarin' by William Perkin. (Chemistry Branch Library, Chemistry Pers J3540 vol. 23); image courtesy of the University of Glasgow Library, Chemistry Branch Library

case you were wondering).

While some 'national days' can seem trivial, social media allows archives to be creative with their collections, and showcase documents and collections from a new perspective. The benefit of social media is that people are already using the various platforms, and followers provide a readymade audience waiting to be enthralled by and publicise the secrets of your collection. This kind of outreach and engagement can also capture new stories and insights, and prompt conversations to be had and ideas to be shared.

Last year, an innovative way of using social media was suggested to us by our colleague Anita Quye from the University of Glasgow's Centre for Textile Conservation. She had discovered that the University held two (supposedly identical) copies of a journal from 1870 - *The Journal of*

“*Social media allows archives to be creative with their collections*”

*the Chemical Society* (Volume 23) - which contained surprisingly different examples of dyed fabric prints. In order to verify that this was not an error between the two volumes, she suggested we use our social media channels to crowdsource further research. After announcing our request, we found that archives and libraries up and down the UK held copies, containing examples of patterned fabrics which varied in their likeness to those in our volumes. We also received responses from Europe and North America, showing not only the variations in fabric, but how copies of the journal had spread internationally since it was first printed. Without the use of social media, this kind of research would have proved much more difficult. Instead, potential research topics in the areas of fashion and textile history, the conservation of textiles, and nineteenth century scientific journals have all been given a starting point for further study.

For New Professionals, social media is becoming a prominent criterion in job descriptions, as employees are increasingly expected to promote their work through these platforms. Volunteers are often asked to blog about their experiences, and building up experience is important in proving your competencies to a potential employer. Social media can provide a platform for networking with other members of the profession, with the virtual sharing of experiences and discussion. Uniquely, social media is also an exciting area where New Professionals may be on an equal footing with, or have an advantage over, their more experienced colleagues. Whether you are joining the profession from another background, or whether you are considering the profession straight from education, social media is a place that encourages ideas and new perspectives, and is an area where anyone with a bit of creativity and enthusiasm can contribute.

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**Katie McDonald**

University of Glasgow

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# Digital Mailroom

Sara Lloyd Williams discusses an unexpected information mapping technique.

Cumbria County Council's Records Management Service launched the first phase of a potentially county-wide flagship Digital Mailroom service at the start of 2017. While not always an easy or smooth process the project has already created interesting results, specifically in understanding Council teams and work practices - information that has and will be invaluable in Record Management processes such as information audits, EDRMS projects, record ownership identification to name a few.

As with any new systems, user integration, software issues and general unexpected situations (where do you send an envelope of transferable tattoos anyway?). But in a time of significant and public decline in Local Authority funding, such a project is key, not only to challenge and streamline Council working practices, but also to place Records Management firmly at the centre of Council practices, solidifying its place as a necessity in hostile financial times.

Going into a project such as a Digital Mailroom can be a difficult task in terms of justifying its long-term benefits; it's almost a project entirely run by hindsight purpose. Originally the scope of the project was to help create a more dynamic and flexible county-wide work force for the council. While the council teams are engaging in different digital strategies to change their working processes, this didn't unfortunately diminish the fact that as a business whose main customer stakeholders were the public, no internal digital initiative would restrict the fact that most people still post forms as evidence. While this may not immediately look like a long-term productivity issue, asking staff members to travel into a specific office, solely to collect forms which, if they received through a digital format they could process anywhere, meant that large amount of business time could be saved with this project.

While this has been the case the unforeseen implication on information management and security for the council, especially in the age of GDPR preparation, has been extremely successful. It is without doubt, that the majority of mail received within public bodies such as Local Authorities is sensitive personal data - forms

“*The final benefit to this work is the increased visibility of Records Management*”

containing medical evidence, personal names and contact details to name but a few obvious examples. By working alongside teams to map out the working practices of council directorates and then teams, to make sure their digital pigeonholes are consistent with current working practices - issues such as information ownership and content restriction have been addressed, making auditing handling of personal data arriving to the council undoubtedly safer.

Additionally, the mapping work done with teams for setting up their digital pigeonholes has allowed us to receive vital contact points for projects such as historical disposal work, information audits, and EDRMS projects the council will be undertaking within the next year. While each project will need an individual development plan, the ground work for the basic work flows and ‘who does what’ has been mapped out with day-to-day working. Anyone who works in Local Authorities can sympathise that the nature of best working practices means that teams are fluid; a team you talk to a month ago may not be the same one you talk to next week! The Digital Mailroom has given us a solid grasp to be able to keep track of team changes and working practices that require the gathering of personal records in real time.

The final unseen benefit to this work is the increased visibility of Records Management. Digital Mailroom is a digital ICT project; it is by now fully managed and run on a day-to-day basis by Records Management. When dealing with queries or making initial pre-launch communication with teams, we do not hide the fact that this project is run by our department. While this may not seem significant in statement, what it has given us is a dialogue with teams who have not previously needed to contact us, allowing us to expand on our purpose and scope within the council’s working purposes.

The feedback we have received on Phase 1 was undoubtedly positive, with teams benefitting from an easier flow of information sharing and a streamlined work process. Taking the lessons of the information security and capturing that we discovered could be utilised by hindsight analysis of Phase 1 the project lead to the Records Management/ ICT GDPR compliance strategy. As we head into our second phase of Digital Mailroom next year the future of the project appears bright.

**Sara Lloyd Williams**

Cumbria County Council

# A year in the life

Matthew Goodwin gives an account of the work of a new professional outreach archivist.

It has been just over a year since I finished my Master’s course at Liverpool and started my new role as Outreach Archivist at Hampshire Archives and Local Studies. I was surprised when several friends in the archive community told me that my job would be boring since it didn’t include any cataloguing! However, the activities of the past year, including hosting special events, workshops, talks, behind the scenes tours, social media, an open day, writing various articles, a community archive forum and much more, have, in my opinion, been anything but boring. It has been a steep learning curve, at times daunting and terrifying, but always rewarding and enjoyable.

Last year marked the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen’s death and I was asked to highlight the wide ranging collections Hampshire Archives and Local Studies holds about the writer and her family. I must admit, to the horror of many, that I’m not a Jane Austen fan and wasn’t at first thrilled by the prospect; however, this changed when I began to delve into our



Hyde WI @hyde\_wi · Apr 5

Thank you Matthew @HantsArchives for a fascinating evening. #janeausten #fakemarriages #winchester #iamwi



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Hyde WI posting on Twitter about their behind the scenes tour of Hampshire Record Office; image courtesy of Hampshire Record Office

www.archives.org.uk



The Madding Crowd performing live Regency music; image courtesy of Hampshire Record Office

collections. Items include a fake marriage entry written by a teenage Jane Austen, letters she wrote concerning her novels, music books she used and a diary entry by her sister-in-law recording Jane's final moments and death on 18 July 1817. The array of documents provided a fascinating insight into Jane's life and I couldn't help but be drawn in.

The anniversary led to various projects including a collaborative touring exhibition with Hampshire Libraries and an article for *Who Do You Think You Are?* magazine. However, the highlight of the year for me was arranging and hosting a special evening event in July which included an exhibition of documents about Jane and her family, live Regency music from The Madding Crowd and a special guest lecture from Professor Emma Clery. The event proved immensely popular with over 70 people attending and was sold out. It was wonderful to see so many people enjoying the evening and engaging with the documents on display.

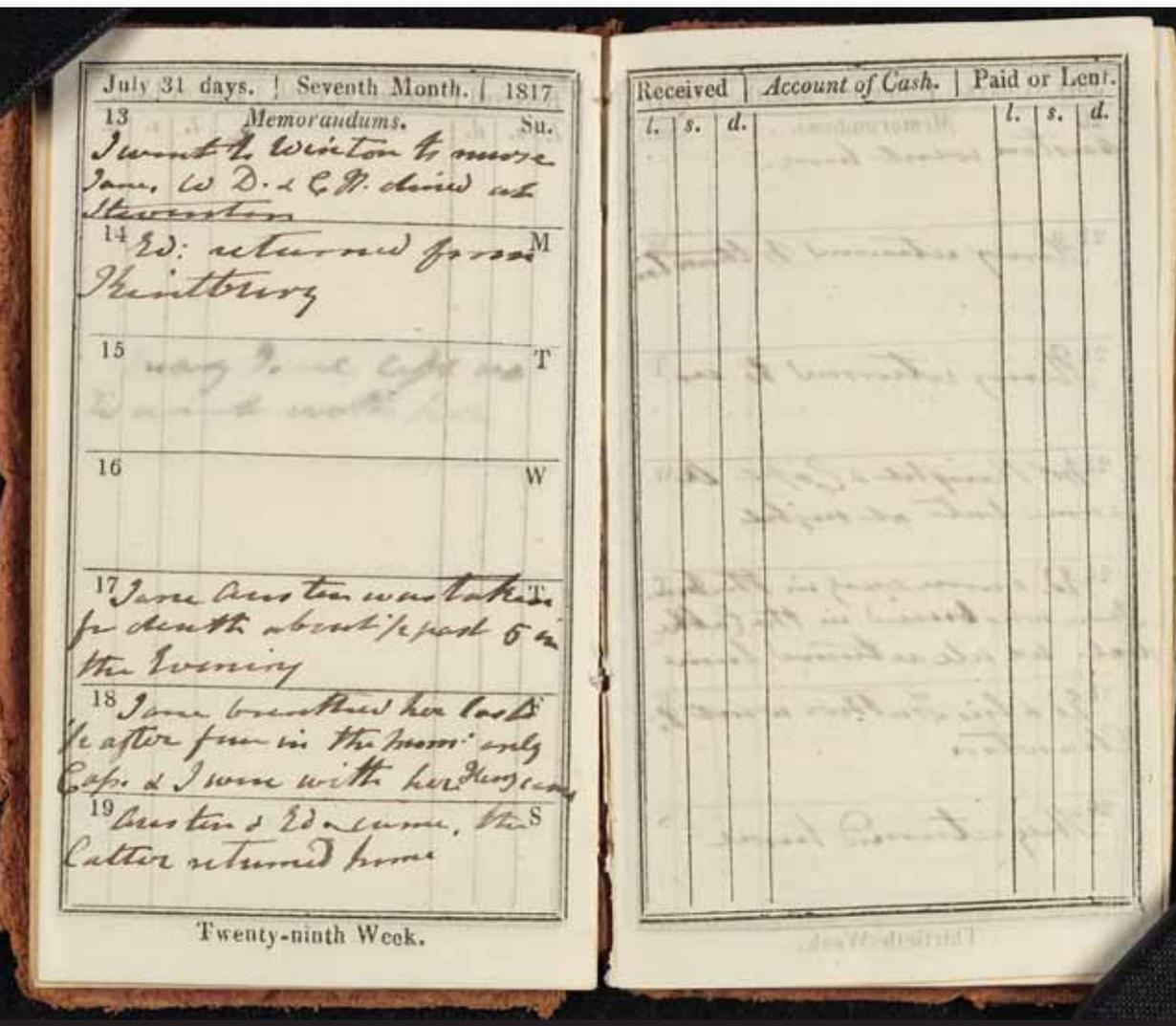


Visitors looking at part of our Jane Austen display; image courtesy of Hampshire Record Office

I have also worked with several different community groups and local organisations over the past year including Phoenix Theatre Group, Eastleigh Mencap, New Forest National Park Authority, Sparsholt College, and various local history groups. Voices for Heritage, an HLF-funded LGBT oral history youth project organised by Y Services, has been one of my favourite initiatives to work with. As part of the project I delivered oral history training sessions to the youth group and also provided behind the scenes tours, highlighting how LGBT material could be found in the archives and where their interviews would be eventually stored. It was a particularly rewarding experience helping young people engage with their own heritage. The culmination of the first phase of the project is an evening event hosted at Hampshire Record Office. The oral history interviews will be officially transferred to the archives and there will be a special guest talk, an exhibition of LGBT documents and behind the scenes tours.



Pupils from Barncroft Primary School and Oaklands Catholic School on a behind the scenes tour; image courtesy of Hampshire Record Office



“ I must admit, to the horror of many, that I’m not a Jane Austen fan ”

Mary Austen's diary entry about the death of her sister-in-law, Jane Austen; image courtesy of Hampshire Record Office

Social media has been another element I’ve enjoyed, sharing original content to reach new audiences on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. In addition to this, I have launched a Hampshire Archives and Local Studies weekly blog covering topics from the Winchester gun riot to Bake Off! In only nine months we’ve had over 3,500 visitors to the site.

The last year in Hampshire has presented me with many opportunities, not least the chance to meet new people and, hopefully, inspire and inform them about archives and the work we do. It always amazes me how many people don’t know what archives are and how they are always surprised, and delighted, at what they can discover. This has been very apparent on the behind the scenes tours of the archives I’ve hosted which include a visit to the conservation department, a display of documents, a tour of the building and an archive filmshow. Members of Winchester U3A Local History Group 6 said they: “were amazed that you have such a resource of valuable, historic documents

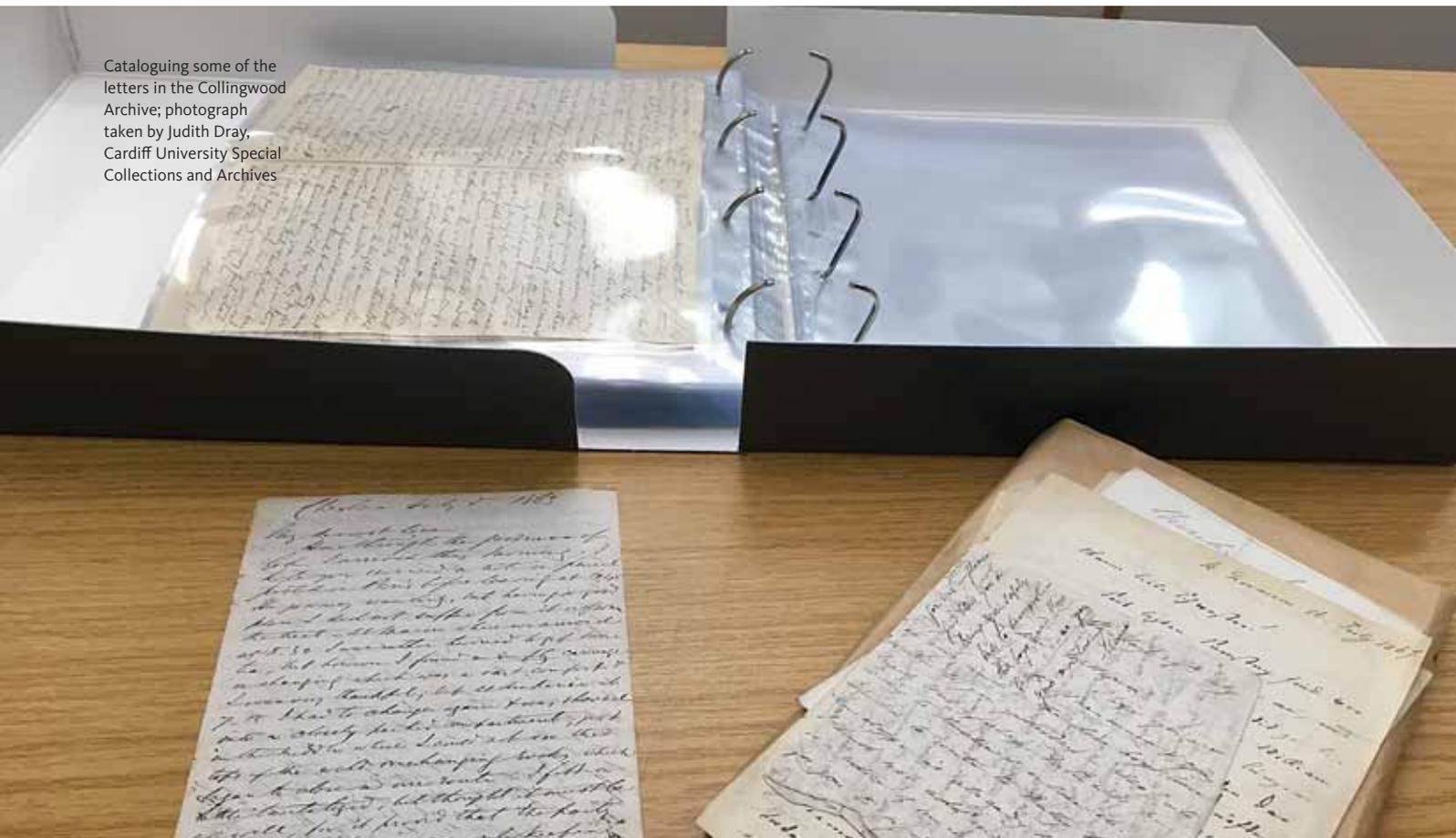
and charters that we were allowed to handle” and “had not realised what was available to the public.”

2018 looks set to be another exciting year with plans for special events surrounding the 70th anniversary of the NHS and the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. In addition to this, we’re also planning another Heritage Open Day themed on women and a transport event, as well as more workshops. Hopefully we’ll be able to inspire more people about archives. I can definitely say that my experience as an outreach archivist has never been boring.

**Matthew Goodwin**

Hampshire Archives and Local Studies

Cataloguing some of the letters in the Collingwood Archive; photograph taken by Judith Dray, Cardiff University Special Collections and Archives



# Cataloguing and outreach

Judith Dray explores the Collingwood Archive at Cardiff University

**B**ack in May, I started my first professional contract as the project archivist for the Collingwood Archive in Cardiff University's Special Collections and Archives. The archive centers on W. G. Collingwood (1854-1932) and his descendants. W. G. Collingwood was an artist, author, professor of fine arts, Norse scholar, and John Ruskin's friend and secretary. His wife, Edith Mary "Dorrie" Collingwood (née Isaac, 1857-1928) was also a notable artist and their children went on to become painters, sculptors, and in the case of R. G. Collingwood, a prominent philosopher.

## First Steps

My year-long post is funded by a National Cataloguing Grant provided by the National Archives (UK). I am tasked with cataloguing the correspondence (over 4000 letters) and organising engagement opportunities to raise awareness and encourage people to interact with the archive. Balancing cataloguing with engagement is a challenge new professionals are increasingly likely to face. Both are necessary. There is little point cataloguing

a collection if nobody knows it exists, and there is no point raising the profile of a collection that has not been made accessible by cataloguing. As the recent 'Archives Revealed' statement put it, "An archive without a catalogue is like a room without a door: there's no way of finding out what is inside." Cataloguing is the first thing to be done: it is the way in to the collection.

I had to find out what was in the archive before I could share it with others so I started reading the correspondence, some of which had been sorted before the collection was deposited. During the first few weeks, I concentrated on the boxes set aside as being of particular research interest. These boxes included correspondence with notable people such as John Ruskin, Arthur Ransome, E. M. Forster, and even a letter from Beatrix Potter, and many more gems besides.

I began listing straight away and adding structure as soon as possible. I am producing item level descriptions so I need to decipher and read every letter. While this

is time consuming, a consultation with researchers and potential users indicated that this would provide optimal research value. It has also allowed me to completely immerse myself in the collection.

### Outreach and the Collingwood Children Project

When cataloguing was well underway, I began planning outreach activities. The archive is very visual: many of the letters are illustrated and I had spent some time looking at the sketchbooks, artwork, and juvenilia. This presented the perfect opportunity to organise an arts-based outreach project. We invited in Louise Jensen, founder of a local participatory arts group, to come and work with us. Together, we spent some time looking at the collection. We were especially drawn to the juvenilia annotated by the children's mother and thus, Collingwood Children: Artists in the Making was born.

We would organise a series of workshops for people experiencing or recovering from mental health issues. Participants would investigate the lives, careers and artistic development of the four 'Collingwood Children' - Dora (1886-1964), an artist who lived for many years in Aleppo; Barbara (1887-1961), a sculptor and wife of pioneering aviator Oscar Gnosspelius; Robin (1889-1943), Roman-British historian and influential philosopher of British Idealism; and Ursula (1891-1962), midwife and artist. Participants would create their own artwork in response to their own research into the collection.

The project took place as planned, greatly aided by generous funding from the Welsh Government through Archives Wales as part of the Explore Your Archive campaign. We held an introductory session in Special Collections and Archives where participants could see and learn about the family and the archive. Future sessions took place in a local community centre. The participants created miniature concertina books (inspired by the miniature paintings produced by the children's mother) of original artwork influenced by the family's art and lives.

Finally, the participants' work was exhibited at a celebratory event held in Special Collections and Archives. This was open to the public and gave participants the opportunity to showcase their work to family, friends and peers. I also gave a lecture on the archive and curated a guided viewing of some of its treasures. It was attended by participants, staff and students from the University, and the wider public.

It was inspiring to see people interacting and engaging with archives, many for the first time, even carrying out



Watercolours of Coniston Lake created by Collingwood Children participants based on Collingwood juvenilia; photograph taken by Judith Dray, Cardiff University Special Collections and Archives

their own research outside sessions and returning to see the archive again: they seemed genuinely inspired to explore archives, both in terms of research and creativity.

### Next Steps

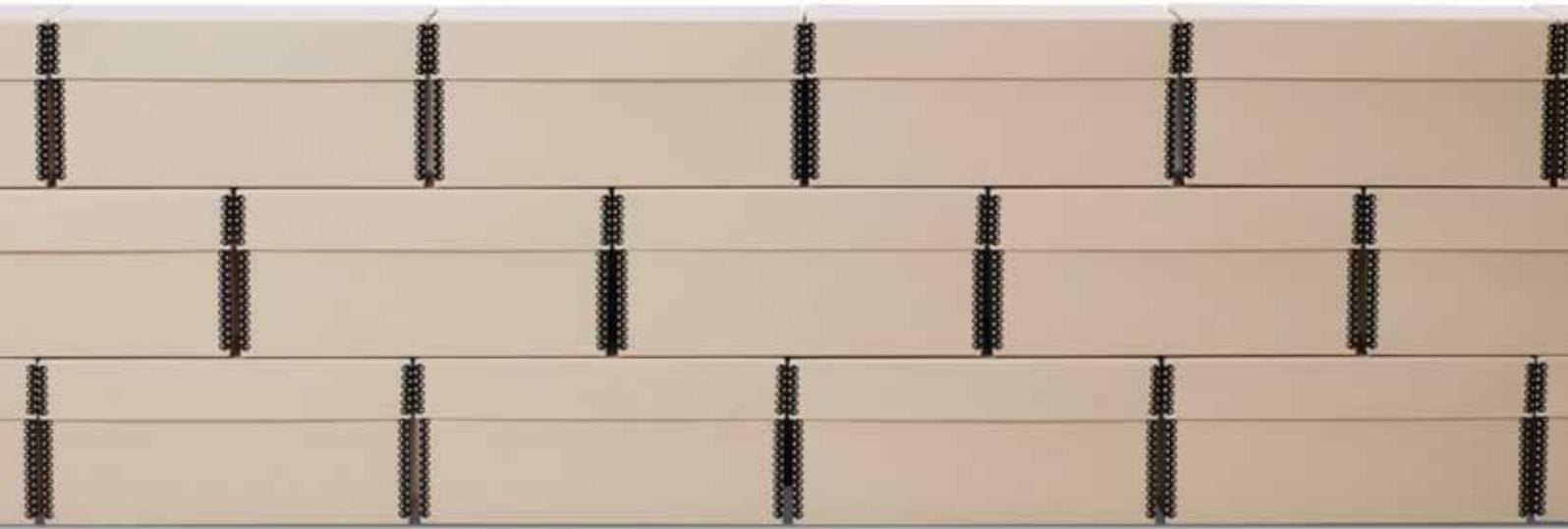
This programme of events was an important step in publicising the archive and encouraging audience interaction, but there is much more to do. Future plans include school visits, an academic conference and an exhibition. And of course there is still cataloguing and packaging to be done. It is easy to get behind on cataloguing while planning and organising outreach so it's important to get a head start and to make time for it after outreach has begun. It soon became obvious that my first year as a professional archivist was going to be a busy year, but definitely a rewarding one.

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### Judith Dray

Cardiff University

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