



arc magazine

July & August '21

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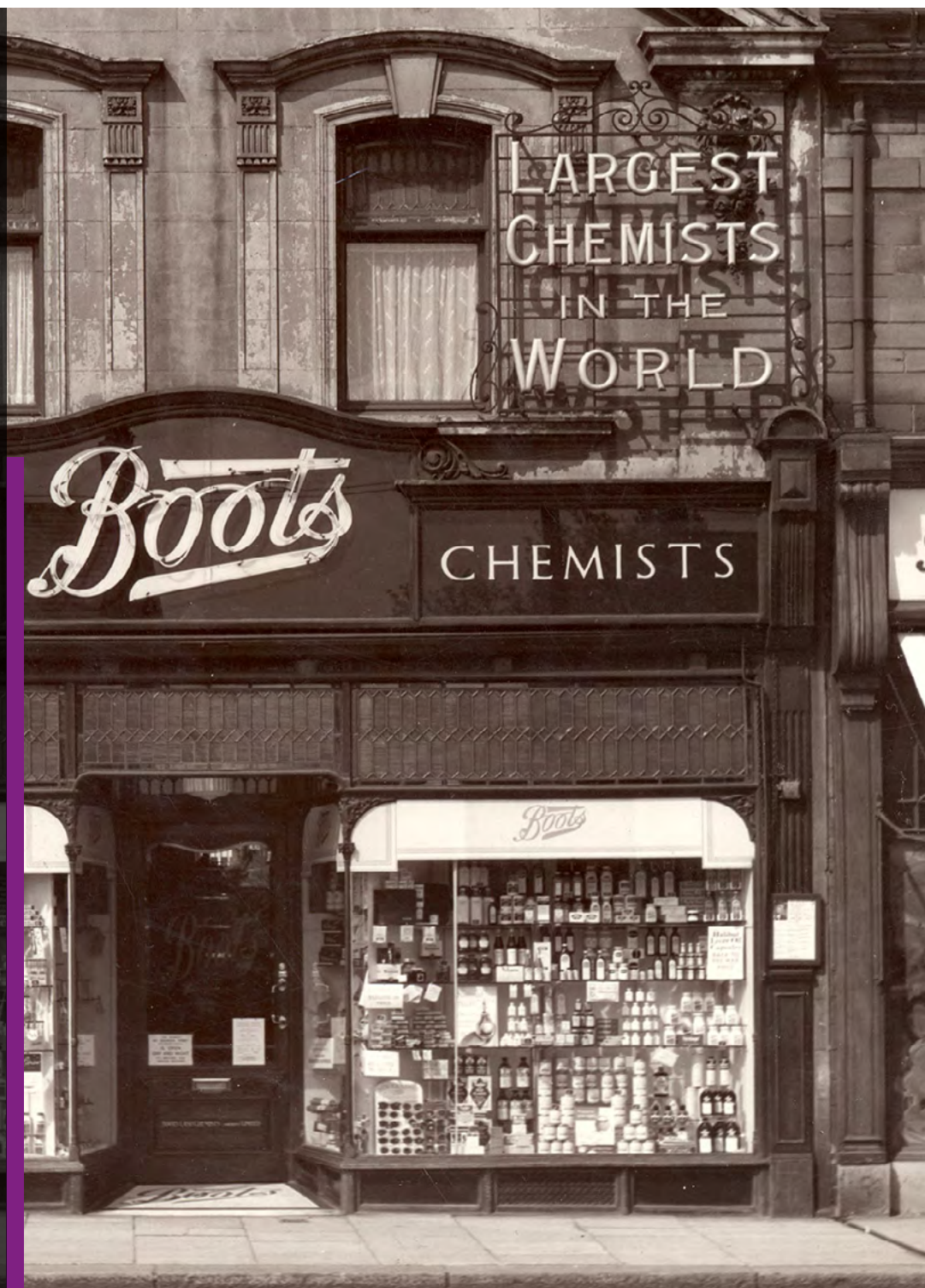
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ARA2021

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

we  records

1st to 3rd September

conference.archives.org.uk

Welcome

arc magazine

July & August 2021 edition



Welcome to the July/August edition of *ARC Magazine*. We've got some great features for you. As seems somewhat inevitable, there is plenty of reflection on the impact of COVID-19 on our sector and what that may mean for us in the short and longer term.

Hannah Jenkinson reflects on a five-year project at Boots Archive to re-catalogue the entire archive collection held at the company's Head Office in Nottingham. Carly Randall and Anita Hollinshead discuss how the Section for Archives and Museums has embraced virtual training sessions. Victoria Stevens explains why she's never looked back after becoming a freelance conservator, and how she's found positives in her pandemic experience. And Paule Yimga talks about her career and experiences as a working mother during the pandemic - a subject close to my heart!

When we discussed the new look and feel of *ARC Magazine*, one of the things I felt was important to keep from the previous style was the contributions of new professionals. Having enjoyed the Section for New Professionals' dissertation showcases, I'm pleased that we have

Georgina Robinson presenting the key findings from her dissertation on why we should all be engaging with climate action as part of our professional duty.

Thanks go to SH Communications and Maria Castrillo, ARA Board member responsible for Publications and Promotion, for their work on pulling together this edition and guiding me through our new processes. Thank you also to all of the contributors for their time and effort in writing pieces for the magazine - it's fantastic to see such a range of topics covered.

I hope you enjoy this issue and that, like Victoria, you are finding ways to keep positive (or at least hopeful) in these challenging times.

Annabel

Annabel Valentine
Joint ARC Editor



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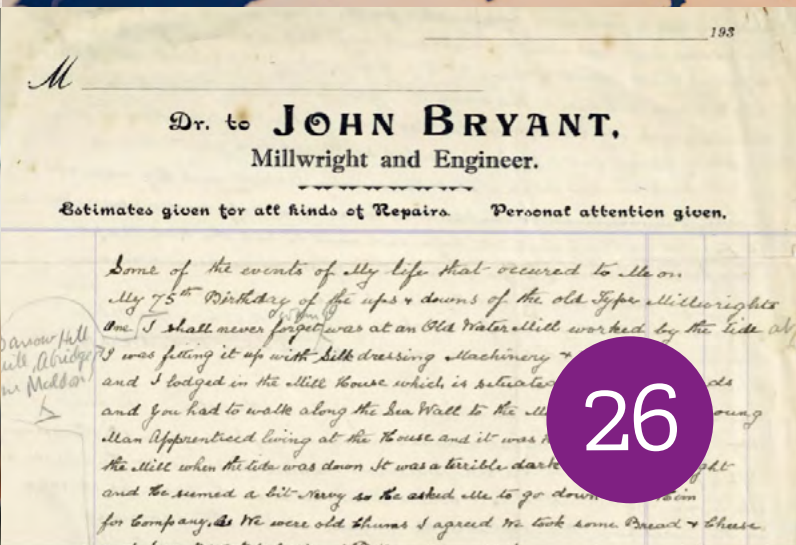
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Boots Archive and The Wellcome Trust:

The right chemistry to transform an archive service

Cover image:

WBA/BT/21/46/1/642/30 Gosforth, Newcastle Upon Tyne store, 1953. Over 3,000 store photographs are available.

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opening lines

Alexandra Healey and **Harriet Patrick** from the ARA's Archives for Learning and Education Section (ALES) discuss diversifying and decolonising the curriculum.



Among the many challenges brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic, the last twelve months has seen numerous calls to revisit how the sector works with archives and record collections. Particularly prominent among these has been increased scrutiny on education and learning, and, more specifically, calls to decolonise the curriculum in order to make it more inclusive, relevant, accurate and representative. In August 2020, the ARA's Archives for Learning and Education Section (ALES) submitted a letter to Gavin Williamson, the English Secretary of State for Education, to call for a review of the National Curriculum in England. Similar letters were submitted to the Welsh Minister of Education and the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. We also liaised with archives sector representatives in the Republic of Ireland and teaching bodies in Northern Ireland. Further information, as well as the letters themselves, can be found on the ARA Learning Blog (aralearning.wordpress.com/2020/08/14/decolonisation-of-the-curriculum-alex-healey-ales-chair/).

The Report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities in the UK, published on 31 March 2021, has been viewed as controversial and problematic in many regards; but it does highlight education as being central to creating a more equal society. In Recommendation 20, 'Making of modern Britain - teaching an inclusive curriculum,' the Commission

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The last twelve months has seen numerous calls to revisit how we work with archives and record collections.

recommends that the Department for Education (DfE)

'works with an appointed panel of independent experts to produce high-quality teaching resources to tell the multiple, nuanced stories of the contributions made by different groups that have made this country the one it is today. The resources should be embedded within subjects in the statutory curriculum. These should include lesson plans, teaching methods and reading materials to complement a knowledge-rich curriculum. Using these examples, DfE, supported by the panel of



experts, should design and produce a credible, high-quality, online national library that is continually updated. This online library will be available for all schools to use, complementing and enhancing the content and quality of lessons taught, so that all children can learn about the UK and the evolution of our society.'

The report can be read in full on the UK Government's website (www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities).

While valid concerns about this recommendation exist - well expressed in the response to the report published by the Black Cultural Archives - archivists and other information professionals undoubtedly have a crucial role to play. When archives are used effectively in education settings, students become active and engaged learners with the ability to explore, appreciate and construct history first-hand for themselves. In order for this to happen, archives need to be able to support such work. This requires ensuring that collections are representative and well-described; that catalogue interpretations are accessible and inclusive; and that custodians are aware of unconscious bias and are able to engage with difficult narratives.

ALES maintains a list of useful resources (www.archives.org.uk/images/ALES/ALES_Useful_Resources_2021.pdf) for archives practitioners involved in teaching and delivering learning outcomes to a wide range of users. This document is reviewed annually and our 2021 list was published in April. Among other things, it highlights existing online resources that employ archives successfully for diverse learning. Further subject-, collection- and location-specific resources can be found on our blog post from May 2020 (aralearning.wordpress.com/2020/05/08/really-useful-resources-the-ales-committee/#label/ARA%2FALES/_blank), including

those produced by Black Cultural Archives, Glasgow Women's Library, and the Institute for Engineering and Technology.

Engaging with diverse learning is, of course, easier to do in some cases than others; but even if an institution's archive collections don't appear to immediately lend themselves to such a project, there is value in recontextualising them. A particularly effective example was explored during ALES' first remote lunchtime talk held via Microsoft Teams in November 2020: "Call and Response: the University of Glasgow and Slavery." The University of Glasgow's 2019 'Call and Response' (www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/slavery/callandresponse/exhibition/) exhibition sought to explore the unknown or unexpected ways collections can be related to racial slavery. By opening this dialogue and extending the reach of the exhibition, the University of Glasgow sought to acknowledge the histories of enslaved people and their role in the University's story. A recording of this training session, which looked at the context of the exhibition, how objects were selected and its curatorial and academic collaboration, is available to ARA members on the ALES webpages [here](#).

Such undertakings can feel very daunting; however, some continuing professional development resources are available. Examples include the Centre for Race, Education and Decoloniality (CRED)'s 'White Spaces Project' (www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/research/centre-for-race-education-and-decoloniality/white-spaces-project/); the Imperial War Museum's 'Let's Talk About Empire and Conflict' (www.iwm.org.uk/learning/lets-talk-about-empire-and-conflict); and UNESCO's 'Learning with the Past: Racism, Education and Reparative Futures' (unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374045.locale=en).

Engaging learners with the ability to explore, appreciate and construct history is essential when using archives in education settings
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From the Chief Executive Officer



John Chambers, ARA's CEO, outlines the Board's membership and how it is planning to ensure future sustainability.

The recent Annual General Meeting held a couple of weeks ago means we now have a full Board of Trustees for the first time in a few years. Lisa Snook was confirmed as Chair, Andrew Nicoll as Vice Chair, David Powell as Honorary Secretary and Stephen Scarth as Honorary Treasurer. All had been acting in a co-opted capacity for various reasons. While Lisa, Andrew and David are in their first terms on the Board, Stephen has just completed three years as portfolio holder for Nations and Regions before taking up a new challenge as Treasurer.

Ruth Macleod, Elizabeth Thompson-MacRae and Julie Bon were also elected on to the Board, while Adrian Steel completed his term and did not seek re-election. Adrian was previously portfolio holder for Training and we would like to thank him for his hard work and commitment to this role and as a Board member in general. Having a complete Board of twelve Trustees is good news as it increases our capacity to deliver projects that benefit members.

However, because only individuals who are ARA members can stand for election to the Board, we are concerned that we are at risk of skills gaps on the Trustee Board. We have a relatively small skills base from which to recruit, and changes in organisational structures over the years now mean that many leadership roles across the sector do not require the skills previously needed. We are particularly at risk in recruiting Trustees with financial skills. A recent skills audit of our Trustees identified a wide range of strengths held by Board members but also gaps, including income generation, consultancy, enterprise/business management and campaigning.

Most professional bodies have changed their constitutions across the last couple of years to allow for the co-option of non-members to some places on their Boards in order to increase access to the skills needed. CILIP, Museums Association and Icon to name but three. No one organisation has done it in the same way. However, the recent

Governance Review of the ARA has recommended that we do open the Board to non-members. In my capacity as Company Secretary, I am researching options for the Board to discuss and decide upon. Whatever the Board eventually recommends will be put to a vote of ARA members via an Extraordinary General Meeting later this year.

Other changes resulting from the Governance Review include a return to four-year strategic planning, regular Trustee review meetings and annual skills audits. Board meetings are now more strategic and less involved in routine organisational matters.

The four honorary officers (Lisa, Andrew, David and Stephen) meet regularly in order to progress work agreed at Board meetings. They have developed a governance action plan which has been discussed at Board and will shortly be shared with the membership. Members were invited to comment on the Strategic Plan and will have the same opportunity with the governance plan.

A complete Board, for the first time in some years, is also beneficial for succession planning. We haven't had a Chair have a full period on the Board to acclimatise since Geoff Pick became Chair in 2016.

We are now in a much stronger position for the future, with a full Board and a clear view to the future with a strategic plan to 2025 underpinned by annual operation plans. There's more to be done, but these steps mean the framework and foundations are in place to help us to deliver our vision.

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ARA Annual Conference 2021: WE LOVE RECORDS Sustainability, Diversity, Advocacy

One conference; three themed days; five parallel streams; 100 speakers; 20 hours of content; 30 days to catch up on demand from the comfort of your own home!

Our first virtual conference has been carefully designed to provide you with access to many more hours of live and recorded content and commentary, with all sessions available to view for up to 30 days after the conference closes.

A shared virtual experience - join with your team

The online format means that there are more ways to join the conference than ever before. A flat fee of £95 for members and £150 for non-members will give you access to the live conference sessions and to the recorded content which means that, for the first time, you can join all the parallel sessions in your own time.

A new Institutional Pass will allow up to six colleagues to attend together and allows you to extend the invitation to members of your team who would not ordinarily be able to attend.

We hope that our virtual conference will allow many more members, non-members and colleagues from overseas to join us and we look forward to extending a warm welcome to first time attendees.

Continuing the conversation - revisiting key themes

When we last met for our 2019 conference, we agreed to examine our profession and our beliefs. Who are 'we' and why should we 'love records'? This year, through our key themes of sustainability, diversity and advocacy, we will explore these questions and look at how recordkeepers and records can make a difference in turbulent times:

Sustainability (Wednesday 1st September)

If we can advocate about our diverse records, then what do we do to sustain them in the future? Whether it's the energy consumption of data centres, the impact of appraisal in deciding what we keep, the need to develop passive archive storage, or the materials used for conservation, environmental impact is increasingly something that recordkeepers should consider.

Diversity (Thursday 2nd September)

How do we increase diversity and representation in the records and what role do recordkeepers play in this process? How can we represent if we are not representative?

Advocacy (Friday 3rd September)

We may know the value of records, but how do we go about spreading the message to others? How do we convince depositors and potential depositors that we are trustworthy custodians of community memory and how do we ensure that we are? How do we make the case for the necessary investment in staff, IT and projects? Why are archives critical to society and why is proper records management important to businesses and organisations?

Meeting and networking online - schedule one-to-one meetings

While meeting online will not allow us to enjoy many of the more social aspects of conference, our chosen conference platform allows for easy online networking and meeting up. A scheduling function will allow you to make appointments with other ARA members and catch-up with colleagues and friends online.

Intuitive and easy-to-navigate - focus on content

We know that your time is at a premium and that setting aside time to join a conference is as difficult online as it is in person. We have chosen a virtual platform that is intuitive and easy-to-navigate and allows you to focus on the content. Full technical and user support - delivered by real people - will mean that you get online quickly, and help and support will be on hand throughout.

Register today - stay up-to-date

Go to the Conference website (conference.archives.org.uk/conference-registration/) to register to attend. Speaker and programme updates will be posted on the Conference website and on Twitter - #ARA2021 (twitter.com/araconf?lang=en).



ARA2021

VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

we  records

Take advantage of ARA membership benefits offered by Digital Preservation Coalition

The ARA is an Associate Member of the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) and, as a result, ARA members can apply to access DPC events and resources.



While some ARA members may be able to access DPC events and resources through the membership of their employers (you can check if your organisation is a member [here](#)), ARA's membership makes the DPC's resources available to those who might not otherwise be able to access them.

ARA members can apply for an ARA place at any of the DPC events (www.dpconline.org/events) which are noted as being for DPC members only, and the ARA regularly issues member emails inviting applications for events, giving details and a deadline for requests to be submitted. Details of the process are on the ARA website [here](#).

Places for ARA members are limited and the number available to us can vary from event to event. If you are interested, you are strongly encouraged to apply.

For the first time this year, DPC kindly provided some full DPC website logins, which ARA members (whose employers are not members of the DPC in their own right) were able to apply to hold for a period of one year. These logins allow access to recordings of past DPC events as well as other resources. Following a call to ARA members in April this year, a number of applications for the logins were received and we were pleased to be able to offer nine members a login for a year starting in May 2021. We hope the successful applicants will be able to make good use of this resource over the coming twelve months, and there will be another chance to apply for a login next year for anyone who would find it helpful.

If you would like any further information about these benefits, please contact ara@archives.org.uk.

Inclusive recruitment training sessions from The National Archives (UK)

An important topic of discussion in the sector at the moment is how archives can welcome the widest range of people into the workforce. By bringing new voices, backgrounds and experiences into the profession, we can help ensure that archives are more representative of the communities they serve and that anyone can experience the joy of working with our nation's collections.

This is why The National Archives (UK) has launched a new training series on inclusive recruitment, delivered by Creative & Cultural Skills. These sessions, which started in April and will continue until November, are designed to help you adopt inclusive and lawful recruitment practices. These practices will help a more diverse range of talent enter the profession and will support growth in the sector as a whole.

The training sessions cover various forms of employment and each session will be run three times to allow as many people to attend as possible. The first available session is a broader 'Best-practice guide to recruitment,' looking at actions you can take such as making job descriptions more inclusive and introducing a workforce development policy. The second and third sessions are an 'Introduction to apprenticeships' and a 'Manager's guide to apprenticeships,' which will

show that this route into the sector works and how apprenticeships are beneficial to both employer and apprentice. Next up is 'Understanding volunteering' as it is crucial to understand the difference between unpaid work and true volunteering, which can be positioned as a step into paid employment. This session will cover the obligations, expectations and processes involved in setting up or improving an existing volunteering programme and will demonstrate some ways that you can attract volunteers.

The National Archives' fifth training session is dedicated to 'Introducing a workforce development policy.' Ideal for archive leaders, this session will provide practical advice for putting diversity and inclusion at the heart of your organisation. Finally, there is 'Working with freelancers', which will help you avoid poor practices with self-employed contractors. To complement all of these sessions, one-to-one advice clinics will be offered where an archive can receive tailored support for its specific needs.

To find out more information about this training series, please visit The National Archives' website [here](#) or email asd@nationalarchives.gov.uk.



The National Archives (UK)'s new series of training events, shows you how to welcome the widest range of people into the profession
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Icon publishes 'Values of Conservation' research report

The Institute of Conservation's (Icon) objective is to "advance the education of the public by research into and the promotion of conservation items and collections of cultural, aesthetic, historic and scientific value."

In 2020, Icon launched a research and engagement project in response to this mission to ensure that it promotes conservation effectively and makes it more widely understood and appreciated. Icon's 'Values of Conservation' project sought to identify and articulate the values of cultural heritage conservation to society and to consider how these values can be better communicated to audiences. Icon identified a series of values associated with conservation that can be loosely categorised under social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts. The project found that conservators are willing and keen to talk about their work and are potentially already prone to being value-driven when describing their activities.

In March 2021, Icon published its findings of this research in a report which includes a brief toolkit, with recommendations on how the sector can effectively communicate and promote the profession's achievements to others.

Icon hopes the material collected and presented in its report will inspire others to think about conservation from a value-focused perspective. Starting with the 'why' of conservation can help us to embed values within every aspect of our messaging and increase awareness of the profession's impact.

The report can be found [here](#), and an article about the research can be found [here](#).



Icon new report on 'Values of conservation'.

New version of DPC's Rapid Assessment Model released

In April this year, the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) released a new version of its maturity model for digital preservation, the Rapid Assessment Model (or DPC RAM).

First published in 2019 in association with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and based on existing work by Adrian Brown, the model guides organisations to a measurement of their digital preservation maturity over eleven sections, and encourages reflection on future goals.

In order to keep up with evolving good practice and remain relevant to the community, the model has now been reviewed and updated. As well as taking into account feedback from users, the revision has addressed some specific gaps. The model now incorporates topics such as ethics, accessibility, organisational strategy, continuity planning and environmental sustainability.

Like the original model, the new version of DPC RAM is freely available to all. It remains quick and easy to use and is accompanied by a spreadsheet template for recording results and creating visualisations.

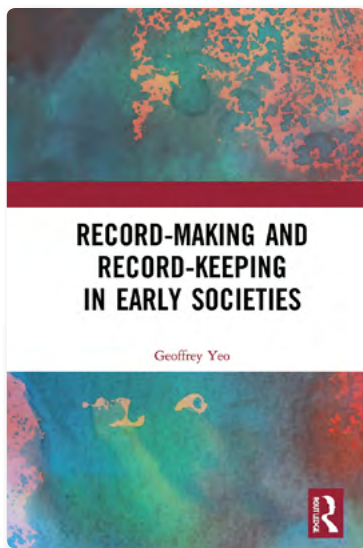
DPC RAM has continuous improvement at its core. Like any maturity model, its value increases when used on a regular basis to check in on progress and inform annual planning. So, whether your organisation is experienced at preserving digital content or is new to this field, if you want a quick and easy way of establishing where you are and setting goals, download the new version of DPC RAM (www.dpconline.org/digipres/implement-digipres/dpc-ram) and have a go!



DPC RAM – a Rapid Assessment Model for digital preservation

New book on the origins of record-keeping

A new book by Geoffrey Yeo, *Record-Making and Record-Keeping in Early Societies* (published in April 2021), investigates the beginnings of human recording practices and provides a survey of early record-making and record-keeping in societies across the world. It investigates the ways in which human activities were recorded in different settings using different methods and technologies.



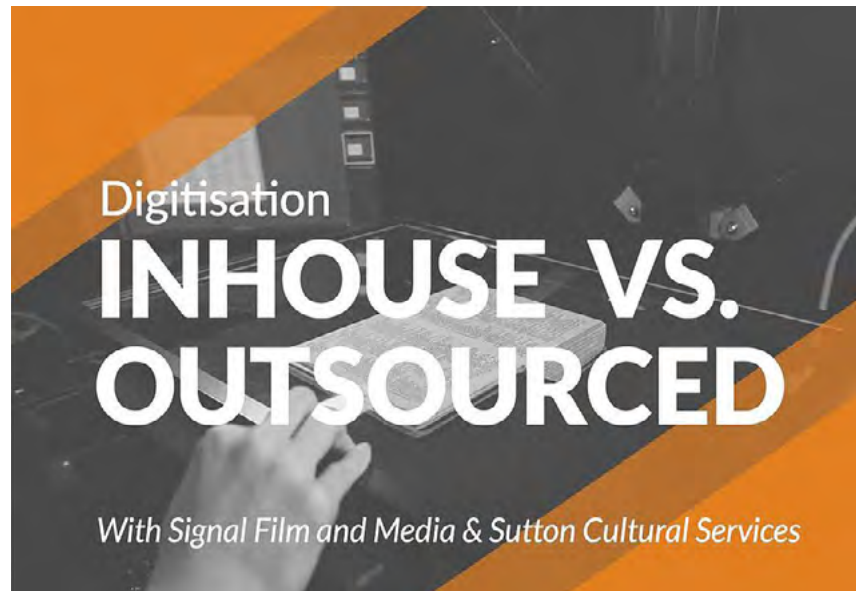
Many archivists are familiar with Ernst Posner's *Archives in the Ancient World*, published in 1972; but this book is substantially different. Posner began his story with the invention of writing about 5000 years ago, but the first records were made long

before writing came into use, and *Record-Making and Record-Keeping in Early Societies* explores non-written as well as written records. Posner's study was limited to Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome, but *Record-Making and Record-Keeping in Early Societies* also investigates record-making and record-keeping in many other parts of the world, particularly China and the pre-Hispanic Americas. Research into early recording practices has advanced considerably in recent decades, and the book draws on recent scholarship in archaeology and anthropology, as well as recent thinking in archival science.

Based on analysis of literature from a wide range of disciplines, *Record-Making and Record-Keeping in Early Societies* offers a distinctive perspective on early archives. It aims, not merely to describe the variety of recording methods and practices used in different societies at different times, but also to engage with a range of questions about the contexts in which those practices arose and the ways in which we might understand and interpret them.

The book is available in hard-cover and also as an e-book. For more details, see www.routledge.com/Record-Making-and-Record-Keeping-in-Early-Societies/Yeo/p/book/9780367150471

Information Resource: In-house vs. Outsourcing Digitisation



Having explored some top tips for writing successful funding applications in its downloadable Funding Resource Pack, which can be found [here](#), TownsWeb Archiving wanted to go further and explore the two main options available for digitising archive collections: in-house and outsourcing.

Consequently, TownsWeb Archiving talked to Abby Matthews (Archive and Family History Centre Manager, who digitised in-house) and Julia Parks (Project Manager, who digitised through outsourcing) about the different methods, the processes involved, the unique hurdles and the successful outcomes of their tried and tested approaches.

This resource (blog.townswwebarchiving.com/2021/04/inhouse-vs-outsourcing-digitisation-projects) provides a neat and thorough analysis, enabling readers to compare and contrast the options, while gathering some really useful hints and tips for getting it right first time.

It should prove helpful to any archive holder thinking about undertaking a digitisation project, supporting them to make well informed choices about the methods that best suit their needs, resources and budgets.

Law firm publishes useful resource on the new UK GDPR

Following the end of the Brexit transition period on 31st December 2020, mechanisms have been put in place to transfer EU legislation into domestic UK law, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The UK's primary data protection laws are now the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. The UK GDPR is the same as the EU GDPR (as that regulation applied in the UK before Brexit), but with numerous edits to enable the legislation to function as a standalone piece of domestic law.

Both pieces of legislation are available on the legislation.gov.uk site, however changes to the texts stemming from the end of the transition period

have not yet been applied, which can make reading and understanding the legislation challenging. Law firm Mishcon de Reya has recently published a helpful unofficial version of the UK GDPR which shows UK GDPR as it exists with all the amendments made and all the 'tracked changes' accepted.

The resource can be found [here](#).

As the publisher stresses, while a useful tool, this is an unofficial publication and does not represent a definitive edition of the legislation. However, as a day-to-day resource, ARA members may find this tool helpful until the legislation.gov.uk version has been updated.

A new tool to navigate the UK GDPR legislation post-Brexit has been published by law firm Mishcon de Reya
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Flying solo: conservation from a freelance perspective

Victoria Stevens ACR explains why she took the plunge into freelance conservation and highlights her commitment to ensuring users gain maximum benefit from collection material, irrespective of the size of the collection.



The people I spoke to before I became a full-time freelancer in March 2017 divided into two distinct and opposing groups. On one side there were the dyed-in-the-wool institutionalists, the PAYE lifers who were horrified that I would leave a good job working in the diverse and exciting college collections of Oxford University to set myself adrift on the capricious sea of self-employment. While on the other hand, there were those who had already taken the plunge into working for themselves: swimming hard but loving it. “You’ll never look back!” they cheerily shouted as they splashed on towards the boundless horizon.

My dive into self-employment was risk assessed: I have always been freelance in some capacity, so I definitely had a life jacket of sorts in an existing client base. I have also always been keen

to contribute to the profession, advocating for conservation and conservators and building up a strong professional network. But ultimately, I took a chance, trusting in my abilities and relishing the challenges that being completely self-determining gave me, and luckily it all paid off. I now have a UK-wide conservation business that supports collections and the people who care for them, enabling the stories all archives contain to be told safely and with the best chance of perpetuity within the resources available.

A consistent approach to collections

Although my work takes me to collections big and small, my approach is always the same: it’s all about the use and the access. Whether I am conducting a full collection conservation



DCMS 19, Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journal*; spine before treatment
©Victoria Stevens ACR, with thanks to The Wordsworth Trust



DCMS 19, Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journal*; spine after treatment
©Victoria Stevens ACR, with thanks to The Wordsworth Trust

audit or working on a small packet of personal correspondence, I am always looking for the treatment route that will allow users of the collection to gain maximum benefit from the material: physically, educationally and inclusively.

Two recent projects demonstrate this very well. For a number of years, I have been the conservation adviser for the collections at The Wordsworth Trust (wordsworth.org.uk/), a rich seam of golden archival treasure encompassing the story of the Romantic poets, one of the UK's most significant cultural movements of the modern era. Following an exhaustive preparation process over several years – including a full collection audit, individual conservation of key display material such as Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journal*, the creation of display facsimiles and the training of the museum's interns in the creation of handling materials for visitors to Dove Cottage – I was delighted to be able to finally install the permanent exhibition at the reimagined Trust museum in April 2021. This Heritage Lottery-funded project is now drawing to a close, and the end result was worth every second of the long preparation.

At the other end of the scale, but no less significant to the custodians of the collection, was the conservation of Charterhouse School's first

edition copy of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, one of Charterhouse Library's key treasures. This neatly bound and tidy copy had suffered the fate of many of its type: the left board was detached through use, making the textblock it had protected so well for over 200 years vulnerable to damage and increasing the risk of disassociation. Thin and neat leather and cord sewing supports make for elegant bindings, but do not contribute so much to the longevity of the book. All the original evidence was still intact: the spine, although showing its age, was complete and the cover was in a sound condition. By determining the potential use of the item prior to treatment – in this case, intermittent display, occasional use for visitor 'Show and Tell' and as an object of interest for the pupils, all under supervision – it was clear that the board needed to be reattached with minimal disruption to the original binding, but in a way that would withstand careful handling for at least the next 200+ years. After treatment, it was supplied with its own custom-made storage box: a suitably comfy and protective chair for this old timer to rest when not on duty.

Finding the positives in challenging times

The COVID-19 pandemic has created both opportunities and challenges. I have enjoyed the

Charterhouse's *The Life of Johnson*: conservation in progress; paring the leather for the spine
©Victoria Stevens ACR, with thanks to Charterhouse School.
©Victoria Stevens ACR, with thanks to The Wordsworth Trust



Although my work takes me to collections big and small, my approach is always the same: it's all about the use and the access.

less frenetic pace and the increased time at home, reducing my monthly mileage from sometimes more than 2,000 miles to nil at the height of lockdown. It has also given me time to connect with other conservators across the globe - a key source of reassurance and support when you work on your own - and enjoy some of the fabulous free training and educational content that has been produced over the last 18 months. It has also given me the chance to develop my tactile outreach and engagement programme, something I have been developing for several years and which is very close to my heart. As a conservator I can really appreciate the extra information handling and touch give to people when trying to understand an object's construction, use and history.

From this emerged Take 5 Engagement Ltd, a not-for-profit company to create tactile archive engagement opportunities using at least five senses, and aimed specifically at an inclusive and neurodiverse audience. This is still in development, but my goal is to be able to offer a programme of workshop-based events free at the point of access to schools, museums and archives. You can follow my journey on Twitter @TactileAccess (twitter.com/TactileAccess).



Take 5 Engagement: tactile access to archives, including connecting people and stakeholders with their collections.
© Jenny Smith, Archivist, Union Sisters of Mercy

The changing landscape for freelancers

Freelance conservation is definitely changing. As more people enter the field via diverse routes, a greater opportunity for increased involvement in decision making and strategic planning for the care of archive collections is emerging. Conservators are not only practically skilled to care for collections, but also have the management tools to help achieve the best outcomes: being freelance gives me a whole suite of skills and experience beyond

the bench. Along with my freelance colleagues, I am a project manager, a policy advisor, a volunteer co-ordinator, a trainer and an outreach officer to name but a few of my roles. I am also able to don a Tyvek suit and help with salvage and emergency response. Through generous practice, dedication to the collections I am privileged to work on and an indefatigable interest in the tales that archives have to tell, I have never looked back.

Victoria Stevens ACR is a freelance library and archive conservator accredited by the Institute of Conservation (Icon). She manages her own UK-wide conservation practice and preservation consultancy, Victoria Stevens ACR Library and Archive Conservation and Preservation Ltd. Victoria has worked in written heritage conservation for over 20 years, mainly in the central library and college collections of the University of Oxford, but also in local government, museum, educational and religious libraries and archives across the country. She is an assessor for The National Archives' (UK) Archives Revealed scheme, a Collections Audit assessor for the Collection Audit scheme offered by the Association of Independent Museums and a mentor for the Arts Council's Museum Accreditation scheme.

Being on top of your professional development is more important than ever before
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TRAINING

Professional Development News

We talk to **Natalie Adams** who recently qualified as a Fellow of the ARA

Please give a brief overview of your career so far.

I discovered archives in my first 'proper' job at the British Architectural Library and volunteered in the archives after hours to explore my interest. Inspired by this experience, I obtained my Masters in Archives Administration from UCL in 1996, after a year at London Metropolitan Archives.

After qualifying, I joined Churchill Archives Centre as a cataloguer of the Churchill Papers. Since 2000, I have been a Senior Archivist and member of the centre's management team, and as of 2018, I have also been teaching archives and supervising postgraduate dissertations for the University of Dundee.

In 2019, I secured a secondment to Cambridge University Library as Systems Archivist to implement a new archive management system that is now used at 30 repositories across Cambridge. In this role, I managed the successful migration of over 875,000 metadata records to the new system (some dating back to the mid-1970s!).



Natalie Adams and her companion working from home.
© Natalie Adams

Why did you apply for Fellowship?

Fellowship looked like an aspirational target for me. I wasn't sure that I had enough high-level experience. However, the germ of an idea had formed, so I explored the Professional Development Programme website (archivesandrecords.smapply.io/) and attended a presentation by the ARAs Chris Sheridan. In 2018, I attended Accreditation Peer Reviewer training and met Dr Charlotte Berry FARA. When I read that she had qualified as a Fellow I was inspired to think that I could make the grade, but as I was juggling my day job with my work as a tutor, I didn't have the capacity to get started. In summer 2020, the University couldn't run its course due to COVID-19, so I decided to use the extra time I had to work on my application for Fellowship. It was great to have something positive to focus my energies on.

Why do you think continuing professional development is important?

There are challenges we face as professionals today that require new skills, such as digital preservation. As a long-serving archivist, I know it is especially important to find opportunities to develop and enhance my skills in order to stay relevant and meet these challenges. Since I first qualified as a registered archivist in 2000, I have found it useful to regularly step back and reflect on my work. Opportunities to learn something new or to go outside my comfort zone are always the most rewarding for me, even if they may initially seem daunting.

The job market in archives is full of good applicants. At Churchill we routinely received 90 applications for training position vacancies. Candidates who are proactive about their professional development will always stand out so I know that CPD will become increasingly important in the future.

What do you think are the benefits of having qualified as a Fellow of the ARA?

The process of pulling together my application and the evidence to support it was enlightening. I reflected on lessons learnt, what I would do differently in future, how I learn best and what motivates me. My mentor, Dr Charlotte Berry FARA, challenged me to identify and articulate the contribution I had made in collaborative projects and to meet the competence levels needed for Fellowship. That was hard but, ultimately, very rewarding. By the time I finished my submission I felt that whatever the outcome, I was glad I had put in the work because of what I had learned about myself. So, qualifying as a Fellow of the ARA has been the icing on the cake! I received very specific and detailed feedback on my application from the assessors which has been very instructive. Gaining ARA recognition for my career has improved my confidence and I hope it will lead to good opportunities in the future.

What advice would you offer to others thinking of enrolling and qualifying as a Fellow?

Do it! You won't regret it. When you come to draft your competency forms, remember that voluntary work and work outside the sector might also be relevant too. Find yourself a mentor or someone from your professional network and send them a first draft of your first couple of competency forms before you plunge into drafting them in your online application. I wish I had done this!

Remember to give the assessors what they are looking for. There is some really specific guidance available on the programme website (archivesandrecords.smapply.io/res/p/programme-guidance/) for you to home in on, including the word limits for specific sections of the form.



Get the recognition you deserve by being proactive about your professional development
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‘Same but different’: bringing museum skills to the archive sector



Carly Randall, Training Officer at the ARA's Section for Archives and Museums (SAM), looks at the drivers that led to the formation of the section in 2019 and reflects on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SAM's training provision.

“I’m just not quite sure what to do with it...” Every archive holds something that elicits this response from its custodian. It could be anything from a pair of shoes to a taxidermy bear. But what if we could learn what to do with the parts of our collections that don't fit neatly into the category of ‘a record’? The reality is that record-keepers care for what are broadly referred to as ‘object collections’ all the time. From textiles and costumes to large-scale working machinery and statues, the forms our archive items can take are boundless. It is this reality that led to the formation of the Section for Archives and Museums (SAM) in 2019.

The urgent need for more robust support for record-keeping professionals caring for object types more typically found in museums had been informally discussed by ARA's Board in 2016. This laid the groundwork for a panel discussion at the 2017 ARA Conference, titled ‘Everybody is a Heritage Professional Nowadays: Should Archivist and Curator Remain as Separate Professions?’ This panel discussion was chaired by Adrian Steel (then Director of the Postal Museum), with co-chairs Charlotte Berry (then Hereford Cathedral Archivist) and Iain Watson (Director of Tyne and Wear Archives & Museums).

The success of the panel discussion further confirmed the need for a new specialist subject network within ARA that could support record-keeping professionals working with objects.

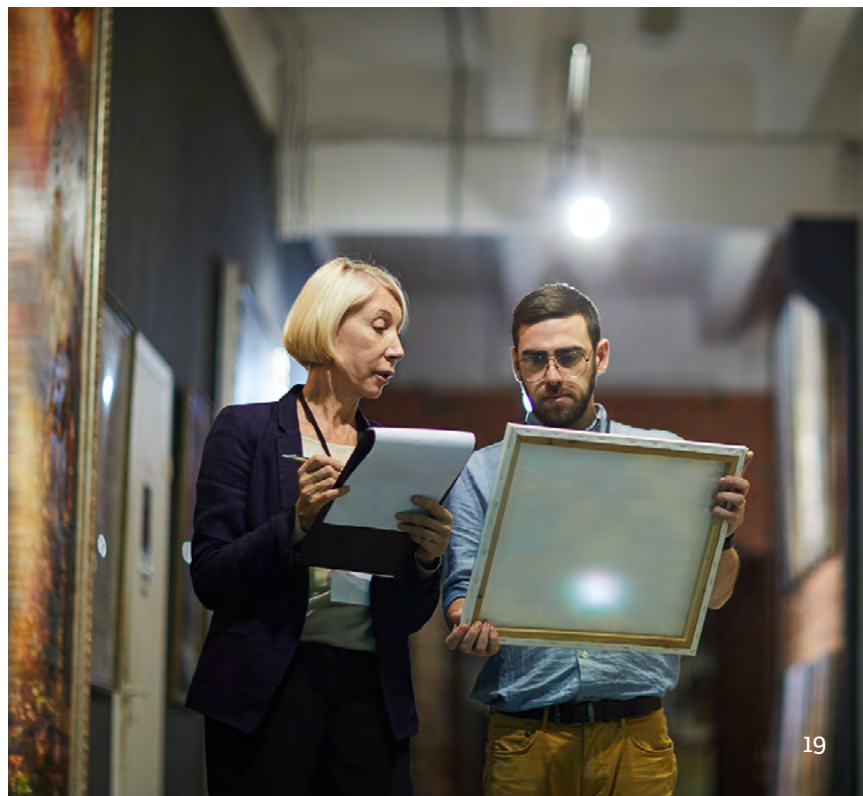
SAM was formally established in May 2019 when Charlotte Berry was appointed Chair. We held our first training event at Tate Britain during the AGM of the ARA's Section for Specialist Repositories. This full-day session, titled ‘Same but different – Museum Collections Management

for Archivists,’ was designed and led by freelance heritage consultant Anita Hollinshead in collaboration with SAM's Chair, Charlotte Berry. This ambitious workshop provided a practical overview of exhibition planning, collections care and documentation within the museum sector. Delegates were also introduced to the current issues and trends affecting the museum sector, as well as new developments in standards governing the management of objects.

In January 2020, we held ‘Same but different...’ again, this time at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection, and plans were in place to repeat the session at De Montfort University in Leicester before the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

When the Government ordered a nationwide

Archive items can take boundless forms, and record-keepers require robust support to help them care for them
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lockdown in March 2020 following the outbreak of COVID-19, the ARA immediately cancelled all in-person events. As training moved online, SAM's training officers faced some major hurdles. While interest was high for more sessions of 'Same but different...', the in-person version of this workshop was six hours long and could not be translated into a virtual format without significant changes in its structure and delivery.

SAM was also in the process of designing new training events which included practical demonstrations and hands-on activities, but this would leave our trainer delivering practical instruction to a virtual audience she could neither see nor directly assist.

After some consideration, SAM's committee decided to develop a new format for its training sessions. This format combined live presentations and pre-recorded demonstration videos. SAM would later upload these demonstration videos to the ARA website for anyone to watch.

This format was certainly put through its paces in November 2020 when SAM held a new virtual training workshop on handling, packing and storing small and medium sized object collections. Similarly, 'Same but different...' was revamped into two separate three-hour sessions which we held in April 2021 and which were also run by Anita. Switching from sharing a presentation to playing video over Teams proved quite challenging so SAM's training officers and Anita held practice sessions to ensure the session ran smoothly.

These virtual training sessions were fantastically well-received, with delegates remarking on how much they enjoyed the practical nature of the sessions despite the fact that they were unable to attend them in person. Responding to this feedback, SAM worked with Anita to develop a training workshop on marking and labelling objects. This event, held in May 2021, provided delegates with hands-on activities they could try at home with ordinary household items. These activities included hand sewing labels into pillowcases and applying indelible numbers onto old mugs.

Just as archives are similar but different to museums, remote learning overlaps with but is distinct from in-person training. What virtual training lacks in terms of physical interaction, it makes up for by being more widely accessible.

Reflecting on the experiences of the pandemic, the first lesson our training officers learned was to approach virtual training with practicalities and user-friendliness in mind. Pre-recorded



demonstration videos were easier to deliver and gave our trainer a brief respite from speaking. We also found that condensing the structure of our longer sessions made them easier to digest for a virtual audience.

The second lesson we learned was to explore ways to use lockdown to our advantage. By encouraging attendees to practise marking and labelling techniques using what they had at home we were able to offer a more tactile learning experience to our delegates.

Going forward, SAM is looking at ways to effectively integrate both virtual and in-person events into its training offering. Could we hold an in-person panel discussion and also broadcast it live to a remote audience? Could we repackage snippets from an online training session into a bite-sized podcast episode? Asking these types of questions is the natural next step in SAM's mission to provide varied, accessible and affordable training whatever the future may hold.

Carly Randall is a training officer for the ARA's Section for Archives and Museums (SAM) and Secretary for the Professional Development and Training Committee. She has worked as an archivist at the V&A's Archive and Registry since 2019. Carly also presents and produces SAM's podcast, which features interviews with people undertaking interesting work across the archives and museums sectors.

You can follow SAM on Twitter - @ARAArchMus (twitter.com/araarchmus)

November 2020 saw the delivery of a SAM training session on handling, packaging and storing object collections
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Anita Hollinshead shares her views on the impact of the pandemic on her work as a freelance trainer



1. How has lockdown changed the way you approach your work as a freelance trainer?

Lockdown has meant that all the training I've delivered has been done online. It's meant taking a different approach in terms of engaging with the audience - using the chat function or periodically stopping for questions. It's much more difficult to have spontaneous interactions, especially when you're sharing your screen. It's also more challenging to include practical activities. However, it's also made training sessions much more accessible as delegates don't have to travel to workshops that might be some distance away or are difficult to reach on public transport.

2. Will you still offer virtual training as part of your services and how will you balance this with in-person training?

Yes, I think I'll offer a 'blended' mix of virtual and in-person training going forward which will hopefully balance accessibility, reducing the environmental impact of travelling and opportunities for face-to-face interactions. I think we're all getting better at using online training platforms and will continue to develop our skills in this area. Some courses, particularly those with a practical element, are probably still going to be more effective when delivered in-person.

3. What steps did you take to adjust your training sessions to cater to archives professionals and those with little or no formal training in caring for objects?

It's quite tricky when delegates on the same course range from those with considerable knowledge and experience to those just starting to learn about collections care. I provide details of the course content and try to make it clear in the course description whether it's suitable for beginners or those with a lot of experience just looking to refresh their skills and knowledge. I always welcome feedback from delegates and do my best to respond to their thoughts and recommendations when planning training. I also work closely with SAM's training officers to develop sessions. I actively encourage delegates to share knowledge and experience with each other during the sessions.

4. What is one lesson you learned during lockdown about delivering virtual training sessions that you wish you had known at the start of 2020?

That both delegates and trainers would be mostly working from home and that this meant it was essential to take a relaxed and flexible approach as people were juggling family commitments, pets, deliveries and internet issues during training sessions.

Anita Hollinshead is a freelance museum consultant based in Sheffield. Anita is the regional collections advisor for Museum Development East Midlands. She has over 25 years' experience in the museum sector and specialises in collections care and development, funding bids and project management, audience development and community engagement, and workforce development.

You can follow Anita on Twitter - @hollinsheada (twitter.com/hollinsheada).

Online training platforms enable the delivery of more accessible and sustainable training
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Backchat



Paule Yimga, Information Governance and Data Protection Manager at Valeur-Plus LMD, talks to **Annabel Valentine**, ARC Editor, about her experiences of juggling career and home life during the pandemic, and her role as ARA Diversity Ally.

1. Can you tell me a bit about your career so far and how you got into records management and information governance?

My name is Paule Yimga. I am the Information Governance and Data Protection Manager at Valeur-Plus LMD where I am in charge of ensuring company-wide compliance with statutory information governance and data protection regulations. I also develop and implement good records management policies and procedures. I am an ARA Diversity Ally and also Secretary for the ARA's Section for Business Records. I am an independent researcher for Black Digital Archiving, facilitating access to Black history archives in the UK for community groups and researchers.

I graduated from the University of Yaounde in Cameroon, with a first class honours postgraduate degree in Library and Information Science. I have 13 years of experience in the record-keeping and heritage sector. My previous roles include Consultant for the United Nations in Cameroon, Information Governance Officer (Head of Service) in the Cameroonian Civil Service, and Document Management Assistant at Midlothian Council in Scotland, latterly seconded to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry Records team.

Paule Yimga Information
Governance and Data Protection
Manager at Valeur-Plus LMD

2. You recently spoke on an ARA Together Online Community call about women in record-keeping. What do you see as the key challenges for women in our profession?

I have always been passionate about women in the profession and empowering female professionals to progress their careers and access executive level roles. Like many women, I have been a working mother throughout the pandemic and have first-hand experience of balancing the competing demands of home life, childcare, home schooling and professional work.

For women, balancing many often competing demands with senior

roles can be difficult. Careers can be interrupted because of caring responsibilities. Often the bulk of childcare responsibilities can fall to the woman, such as caring for a sick child at home. Women with interrupted work careers often end up on fixed-term, temporary contracts which can also hamper career development. Fixed-term temporary contract employees are not offered as many training and development opportunities or are not always invested in as permanent employees are.

3. What has been your biggest challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic?

I was on a fixed-term, temporary contract as a Document



Management Assistant at Midlothian Council. I had to work from the office until July 2020. My role was then cut and I was made redundant so I had to find a new job during a global pandemic.

Like me, women have been impacted more negatively by the COVID-19 pandemic than men. According to a McKinsey/LeanIn.Org study (www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace) on women in the workplace, published in September 2020, women are more likely than men to have been laid off or furloughed, and, as the boundaries between work and home have blurred, more than 1 in 4 women have contemplated downshifting their careers or leaving the workplace entirely.

4. How do you think being a mother has affected your experience of working through a pandemic?

Being a mother during this time, while rewarding, has been exhausting, challenging and draining. In my experience, recognition of the extra support working parents needed was initially lacking from my employer. It did come, but it took a while for the recognition of the extra burdens that a working mother was struggling with during the pandemic.

I have always worked a 'double shift' - a full day of work followed by hours spent caring for children and doing household labour. The support that normally made this possible - including school and wrap-around childcare, such as after school activities and clubs - were upended and, in some cases, removed for long periods. During the pandemic, I supported my children with their school work, completed my own workload and found a new job while also volunteering for the ARA and keeping up with training and

development opportunities for my career development.

5. What positives or lessons learnt will you take away from the last year?

Working from home has given me greater flexibility and opportunities to attend training and to volunteer for the ARA. I strongly value the opportunity that arose for me to volunteer with ARA as Diversity Ally and Secretary for the Section for Business Records. I also had the opportunity to complete some training, progress my professional qualification application and take a step forward in my career progression.

ARA Scotland's meetings have been particularly easy to access as they often run at 7.30pm online. This is a good time for parents with young children as the children will be in bed.

6. Do you have any tips for other parents balancing work, homelife and childcare during the pandemic (and after!)?

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Don't compare yourself to others! Just find your balance and do what works best for you.

7. Can you tell me what inspired you to become one of the ARA Diversity and Inclusion Allies and what the role involves?

I am a native French speaker originally from Cameroon, a multi-ethnic country in Central Africa. Diversity and inclusion have always been a major concern for me in my career, in my workplace and in the wider community.

In particular, I am an immigrant woman with a foreign qualification. My first language is not English and I have had to gain fluency, as well as English language qualifications, to access a career here. My work experience

was not immediately understood here because the structures and the organisation of the sector in Cameroon are different. It can be difficult to access the right kind of support to develop an understanding of the sector in the UK and also transfer your skills and professional qualifications gained elsewhere.

I noticed that I was struggling to get my own voice heard and to give my opinion in various environments in the UK. Being a Diversity Ally for the ARA gives me the opportunity to connect with fellow professionals on a topic of interest to me. It allows me to raise awareness of struggles of people who, like me, are trying to start a career in the sector. It is also an opportunity for me to share my own experience on subjects such as decolonising catalogues and dismantling oppressive practices as I carried out this work in Cameroon. I worked on the former British Colonial Archives for a British Library project in my native country, so I have direct knowledge and experience in these areas.

8. 'Build Back Better' has become a phrase used by several different organisations since the beginning of the pandemic, how do you think our sector can embrace this in the coming months and years?

Promoting best practice, diversity and inclusion across the whole of the archive and record-keeping sector is essential. There is a need at this time to review how organisations and the ARA can better support the full range of roles within the sector.

I feel that a more diverse sector that recognises experiences and skills from different origins would 'build back better.' These concerns should be included in the strategic visions of organisations. More inclusive workplaces, recognising the needs of all employees, would lead to more productivity.

Do information professionals have a duty to the environment?

Georgina Robinson, an archivist at Eton College Archives, shares a thought-provoking insight into the topic of climate action in record-keeping.



When joining the ARA as an archives and records management student, I read the professional Code of Ethics and was intrigued by the following duty: “Insofar as it is within their power to do so, members [of the ARA] should minimise the adverse effects of their work on the environment.”

This was the first time I had considered the impact of record-keeping on the environment, or that as an information professional I had an ethical duty to minimise that impact. Curious to find out more, I undertook initial research into the UK archival literature and found that, despite this ethical imperative, environmental sustainability was little discussed or practised in the sector. To confirm whether this was the case, I decided to make climate action the focus of my MA dissertation.

My study found that 68 out of the 70 information professionals surveyed agreed that we have a professional duty to the environment. In many cases, however, this sense of duty had not translated into sector-specific climate action, focusing instead on green habits, such as switching off lights or computers when not in use. I believe that with increased discussion about this topic we can start to address the issue and make real change. I am, therefore, going to take this opportunity to relay some of the key points that arose from my dissertation in relation to our ethical duty to the environment.

1. Climate action supports our duty to preservation

Climate change will have a disastrous impact on cultural heritage. In 2018, 1,232 archival repositories in the US were assessed and, by the year 2100, 98.8% were projected to be affected by at least one climate risk, such as hurricanes, fires or floods.¹ In the UK, even if the government meets its net zero target

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the national infrastructure must still adapt to a changing climate as sea levels will continue to rise beyond the year 2100.² Just as information professionals have a duty to preserve irreplaceable records, so too must we adapt. Long-term disaster planning can prepare archives by actively assessing what threats climate change pose and preparing accordingly, rather than planning for hypothetical ‘acts of God’.³

Climate action can also support preservation by proactively working to prevent or minimise the impact of climate change through reduced emissions. One main energy consumer in an record-repository is the pursuit of preservation, specifically through environmental control (HVAC units, for example) and the storage of digital records on servers.

However, the solution to this issue cannot be to stop our work as this would undermine our duty to preservation. Instead, changes must be made in how we manage and store records, from implementing passive storage conditions to reducing the size of digital collections or using low energy servers.

2. Climate action through preserving environmental records

Information professionals can support the fight against climate change through knowledge sharing by selecting, preserving, cataloguing and encouraging the use of records about the environment.⁴ The National Archives (UK) has demonstrated this form of climate action through the expansion of environment collections, which enabled the Met Office to study climate change using historical ship logs.⁵

The provision of access to public authorities’ environmental records was ratified in UK law in



68 out of the 70 information professionals surveyed agreed that we have a professional duty to the environment.

Careful planning will be essential to mitigate to risks of climate change on record-keeping
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2004.⁶ Selecting and preserving records about the environment can ensure accountability for organisations as evidence of environmental decision-making may be of high research interest in the future.

3. A crisis of purpose

The projections from a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2018 warned that if greenhouse gas emissions stay on the current trajectory, global average temperatures will reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 and 4°C by the end of the century, if not more.⁷ To put this in perspective, global average temperatures today are 1°C warmer than they were in the 1850s, which has been enough to change rainfall patterns, cause sea levels to rise and increase the likelihood of heatwaves, floods, droughts and fires. A temperature increase of 4°C or more would cause a cataclysmic loss of life on earth. Climate change therefore presents a crisis of purpose for those in the information sector, as we are preserving records for future generations when there is the possibility of a future without humans.⁸ Therefore, we should be making every effort to help prevent and prepare for such an outcome.

Overall, the sample of information professionals I surveyed felt strongly about the importance of climate action in record-keeping. However, an enormous amount of work must be done if we are to translate this into effective sector-specific action. If we are to protect our past and our future, information professionals must recognise the threat that climate change poses to our duty to preservation and acknowledge that we, too, have a duty to the environment. A balance must be found between our climate-endangering activities and the

pursuit of environmental sustainability. As Ernest Conrad said, “an increase in extremes of weather is far more dangerous to our historic infrastructure than is a small ambient temperature increase.”¹

Georgina Robinson is an archivist at Eton College Archives. She graduated in 2020 with an MA in Archives and Records Management from UCL. Her dissertation 'Climate Action by Archives, Records and Cultural Heritage Professionals in the United Kingdom' has been adapted for publication in the Records Management Journal in the upcoming special issue 'Records Management in the Anthropocene: pathways and challenges presented'

1 Mazurczyk, T., Piekielek, N., Tansey, E. and Goldman, B. (2018), 'American archives and climate change: risks and adaptation', *Climate Risk Management*, Vol. 20, pp. 111-125.

2 Committee on Climate Change (2020), 'Reducing UK emissions progress report to parliament', Committee on Climate Change, London.

3 Tansey, E. (2015), 'Archival adaptation to climate change', *Sustainability: Science, Practice, and Policy*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 45-56, doi:10.1080/15487733.2015.11908146

4 Welch, T. (1999), 'Green' archivism: the archival response to environmental research', *The American Archivist*, Vol. 62 No. 1, pp. 74-94, doi:10.17723/aarc.62.1.b5083wmj61g73608

5 The National Archives (2009), 'Embracing our Future, Preserving our Past' London: The National Archives.

6 United Kingdom (2004), *Environmental information regulations 2004 SI 2004/3391*, The Stationery Office, London.

7 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018), 'Global Warming of 1.5°C', Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

8 Winn, S.R. (2019), 'Dying well in the Anthropocene: on the end of archivists', *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 3, in: Tansey, E. and Montoya, R. (Eds), *Libraries and Archives in the Anthropocene* [Special Issue].

9 Conrad, E. (2007), 'Climate control systems design and climate change', *The Getty Conservation Institute (GCI). Experts' Roundtable on Sustainable Climate Management Strategies*, April 2007, The Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles.



The Mills Archive repository documents records of traditional and contemporary mills and milling.
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Archiving at home

The Mills Archive (new.millsarchive.org) is a permanent repository for the documentary and photographic records of traditional and contemporary mills and milling, as well as similar structures dependent on traditional power sources. It makes that material freely available for public inspection and use in research and learning.

In January this year, The Mills Archive secured a grant from the Archives Testbed Fund to help fund a new 'Archiving @ Home Hub', an online facility where volunteers could log in and complete different tasks. Nathanael Hodge, archivist at the archive, explains.


One of the things we were missing most at the Mills Archive this time last year was the friendly faces of volunteers in the office and all the help they offer in working through our collections and enriching our online resources. While we weren't yet able to have volunteers return in person, and had to content ourselves with 'coffee break' catch-ups via Zoom, we gave a lot of thought to finding ways that volunteers could still assist us in working on our collections from the comfort of their own homes.

Last October, this led to an application to the Archives Testbed Fund, a funding resource provided by The National Archives (UK) to enable archive services to explore new ideas. The emphasis is on experimentation and trialling new approaches to archives work, with

“
Our idea was for an online facility where volunteers could log in and complete different tasks.”

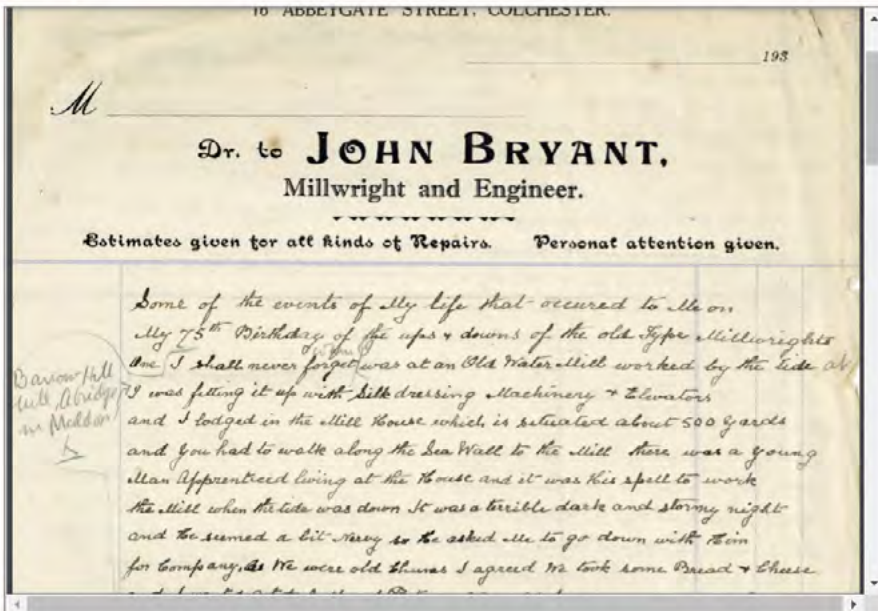

the sharing of lessons learnt more important than the success of the specific project. In January 2021, we were delighted to hear that we had received a grant to build the 'Archiving @ Home Hub'.

Our idea was for an online facility where volunteers could log in and complete different tasks. Initially we have focused on transcribing text documents in the archive. This involves turning an image of a handwritten or typed document such as a letter or notebook into searchable text that can be uploaded to our catalogue, making it easier for people to find the information it contains.

Author 
 Addressee 
 Date 

John Bryant, Millwright

PDF display

Transcribed text* 

16 Abbeygate Street,
Colchester

Dr. to John Bryant
Millwright and Engineer

Some of the event of my life that occurred to me on my 75th Birthday of the ups and downs of the old type Millwrights one. [pencil note - Barrow Hill Mill, Abridge, Nr Meldon] I shall never forget when I was at an old watermill worked by the tide only. I was fitting it up with Silk dressing Machinery & elevators and I lodged in the Mill House which is situated about 500 yards and you had to walk along the Sea Wall to the Mill. There was this young man Apprenticed living at the house and it was his spell to work the mill when the tide was down. It was a terrible dark and strong night and he seemed to be a bit nervy so he asked me to go down with him for company. As we were old chums I agreed. We took some bread and cheese and I went and got 1/2 gallon of Porter so we could have our supper when the tide was down. We sat down on a couple of bags of Bran and were having quite a pleasant time when there was a terrific crash and the whole floor of the Mill seemed to heave up and the Old Mill shook and groaned. It put the wind up for a time, but we plucked up courage to lift up the large door in the floor and found the Tide had risen within 3" of the joists of the floor, but we both agreed that we had enough for one night, so took our old Horn lantern and went home to bed. In the morning the problem was solved. The sea was full of porpoises and we came to the conclusion that a large one was chasing the fish down the channel under the Mill and when the nose struck the Mill floor. We satisfied ourselves on that point. But I must admit although I had some rough experience there were times when we had quite a bit of fun.

I was working for an old gentleman who was always quoting texts, he did not know whether it was from Genesis or Jeremiah. One day I was fed up with his quotations and I challenged him that I would preach a sermon for a sovereign at his little Bethel to be decided by the congregation. Another time I was working at his Mill and I had a good mate with me, we were working from 5 in the morning till 8 at night & getting a bit fagged. We arranged to leave off 1/2 an hour earlier and

Volunteer transcription on
the Archiving at home site
© Mills Archive Trust



Our IT consultant designed the site and at the end of March we launched the project on social media and asked for volunteers to help us test the facility. A number of people signed up, including some of our previous volunteers, as well as new people.



Volunteers were
enthusiastic
about the
experience

Volunteers were enthusiastic about the experience: one new volunteer, second year Museum and Classical Studies student, Kira Hollebon, wrote: "I'm thoroughly enjoying taking part in the 'Archiving @ Home' project. It has improved my CV and given me experience and knowledge that would appeal to an employer. I love that documents like these are becoming more accessible so more people get the chance to appreciate what museums and archives have to offer!"

Trialling the site resulted in numerous tweaks to remove bugs and make it easier for both staff and volunteers to use. We have found that some volunteers only try out the site for a short time before seeming to lose interest, while others become highly committed. We have had to think about which documents would be best to upload – the old and interesting items might be more fun for volunteers, but we also need to consider which would be most helpful for researchers searching our catalogue.

Overall, we've found the experience rewarding and hope to continue promoting the site to new volunteers and thinking about other types of task we could use it for. While the COVID-19 lockdowns prompted us to develop the idea, we expect it will continue to be a great way to encourage a higher number and range of people from across the country to interact with our collections alongside on-site volunteering.

If you would like to find out more about the work of The Mills Archive, please contact Nathanael Hodge at nathanael.hodge@millsarchive.org.

The completion of Mapping Jewish London (MJL)

'Mapping Jewish London' is AIM25's contribution to the pan-European Yerusha project that will enable researchers to cross-search online catalogues of archive collections relating to the history of Jewish people, organisations, culture or events. It is funded by the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe.

Focused on London, AIM25 is a charity that promotes access to the capital's archives and, as a consequence of Mapping Jewish London, it has uncovered more than 800 relevant collections that will shine light on Jewish archival heritage held in no less than 45 of London's archives, libraries and museums.

Three short interviews with team members and archivists have been published and can be found [here](#). Now that 'Mapping Jewish London' (MJL) has drawn to a close, it is worth reflecting on the breadth of Jewish holdings in London's many archives and museums and to stress that this project brief changed and ultimately looked at material that was already catalogued to identify and occasionally enhance the Jewish connection to the material. As part of the project, searches of over 200 repositories in the capital identified thousands of Jewish collections, with the 800 most significant aggregated into Yerusha portal.

These collections span many centuries and include institutional and personal collections covering science, medicine, religion, philanthropy, literature, academia, art, music, politics, society, finance, healthcare, local government and education, as well as other topics. They include manuscripts, objects, visual material, audio and paintings created and left behind by women and men.

More information about the Yerusha project can be found [here](#).

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh launches website on Victorian Highlands and Islands medicine

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE) has launched its new website, Remote & Rural Remedies (www.rcpe.ac.uk/remotearuralremedies).

At its core, Remote & Rural Remedies features a digitised and transcribed collection of surveys conducted by the College in the mid-19th century to investigate medical practice in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. These records feature fascinating details about the care that was available to remote communities, the challenges faced by practitioners and the opinions of the survey respondents. Inspired by this collection, RCPE has created accompanying school activities, blog posts, videos and online exhibitions to provide context and support different avenues of engagement.

This new resource also includes interviews (www.rcpe.ac.uk/remotearuralremedies/activities/interviews.html) with doctors and nurses currently practising in the Highlands and Islands – uncovering stories of the challenges of dealing with medical emergencies, COVID-19 and the medical conditions faced by those living in the region.

Daisy Cunynghame, Head of Heritage at RCPE, comments: "These records demonstrate the College's long history of conducting research into healthcare provision and medical practice with the aim of regulating the profession to protect the public. We are excited to bring this collection to the public eye and are very proud of the efforts of colleagues and volunteers that were involved in creating this web resource. Researchers now have access to digitised records which highlight the challenges of medical aid and healthcare in the Highlands and Islands at a time of increasing social, industrial and economic upheaval. Our hope is that the website becomes a hub of continued activity for our audiences to learn about, discuss and reflect on remote and rural medicine in Scotland, both then and now."

Naturally, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the issue of sufficient and regular medical care and supply in remote areas. This newly launched website will enable current medical practitioners and allied health professionals to contribute to the discussion by submitting their own survey. More details can be found [here](#). In these surveys, the College invites practitioners to share their experiences and perspective on remote and rural medicine today, as well as providing insight into the changes that have taken place over the last 170 years.



Remote & Rural Remedies. © Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh

Boots Archive and The Wellcome Trust: the right chemistry to transform an archive service

Hannah Jenkinson was Project Archivist at Boots Archive where she managed the service's Wellcome Trust-funded re-cataloguing project from November 2015 to June 2021. Hannah highlights the key stages of the process – from being awarded the grant through to the successful completion of the five-year project.



In November 2015, Boots Archive ([click here](#)) embarked on a five-year project to re-catalogue the entire archive collection held at the Boots Head Office in Nottingham. The project aimed to transform an internally focused service into one of the leading academic resources on the history of modern healthcare, with descriptions and digital content made available through an online public catalogue.

The ambitious cataloguing project was generously funded by a Research Resources Grant from the Wellcome Trust. The fund supports archives and libraries holding health-related collections to develop access to them through cataloguing, preservation or digitisation. The fund awarded to Boots enabled the appointment of two posts (a Project Archivist and Project Assistant Archivist) for the duration of the project, and it allowed for the purchase of new cataloguing software. A subsequent second-stage application was successful in 2016, allowing for a two-year appointment of a Project Conservator to re-house the collection.

As part of the application, an initial scoping project was undertaken including an independent collection survey. It reinforced the importance of the collection, confirmed the need for an improved finding aid and supported the ambitions of the team. As a purely internal service, the collection had historically been managed in a simple way, with records listed using a DB Textworks database and placed in concurrent boxes. This allowed the team to provide an effective reference service to the business, uncomplicated by contextual information

or seemingly complex hierarchies and structures.

Getting the structure right

The first basic requirement was for a relational database to impose some structure which would help users navigate their way around the collection. We chose Axiell's CALM and subsequently migrated existing data between the systems. Part of the work included enhancing migrated entries, as well as developing new content with the analysis and description of records within their historical context.

Before cataloguing started, a catalogue structure was created showing the relationship between the



The prestige of receiving a Wellcome Trust grant helped to highlight the significance of the collection to academic researchers and internal stakeholders.





The benefit of having a clearly defined structure from the start of the project meant that cataloguing could be approached in a less structured way.

different Boots businesses. Functions were adopted at series levels to reflect the many departments of the company (departmental information is reflected in administrative histories). The benefit of having a clearly defined structure from the start of the project meant that cataloguing could be approached in a less structured way. The team was able to sort through varied boxes of material, allocating meaningful reference numbers according to the newly established structure. The physical rearrangement of the collection was not possible, so the ability to at least intellectually re-structure was crucial.

Material was prioritised based on an understanding of content that would be of interest to academics and other researchers, generally due to its breadth of subject matter and the time periods it covered. Initial focus was therefore given to marketing material in the first year, followed by stores, product development, welfare and training, manufacturing, financial and corporate strategy papers in subsequent years of the project. As more material was catalogued, small, phased releases were made on the online catalogue to help kick-start the drumbeat of interest in the collection.

Industry collaboration

During the application process, a panel of academics from five universities and a range of disciplines were enlisted to help advise on the research potential of the collection and on shaping the new service. Throughout the project, biannual meetings were held, and the panel was instrumental in promoting the collection, providing

connections with the wider academic community, and, at times, helping to interpret certain material from the collection. Panel members have become key influential external stakeholders and facilitated the development of widespread public engagement opportunities. Engaging an academic panel has also been crucial in delivering several successful funded collaborative projects.

Through connections made via the academic panel, Boots Archive was invited to collaborate with the Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership (www.midlands4cities.ac.uk). Two placements were offered to doctoral research students, providing the opportunity to develop research skills using the collection. Outcomes included the development of resources which were incorporated into the catalogue, such as brands' histories and interpretation of abbreviations used in raw ingredient ledgers in the collection. Opening the collection throughout the project and allowing immediate access enabled the team to capitalise on academic partnerships such as this.

Adapting to lockdown restrictions

Like many organisations, Boots Archive service was impacted by COVID-19. Many core activities ceased, including the cataloguing project. Fortunately, the project was granted an extension and as the team adapted to new ways of working, the project resumed, reaching its conclusion in June 2021. Guided by advice from the UK government and The National Archives (UK), standard requirements were introduced once a return to the office was possible. A blended approach to home and office working was taken due to the limited office space available. Working smartly when in the office saw the team focus on digitisation, rehousing and cataloguing material where additional copies were not available. When working from home, the team focused on digitisation priorities and utilised handling collection material for research and cataloguing.

One of the main learnings from this period was how crucial the catalogue was. Prior to the cataloguing project there was no remote access to the collection, and the team's ability to continue functioning as a department benefited from having a catalogue that was accessible beyond the head office. Project work continued and we were able to provide a service to academics and colleagues. The new catalogue helped prove that the Boots Archive could take a 'business as usual' approach, even in difficult circumstances.

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The time to be lovely
is - **always**

A rare opportunity

The project has not simply made access to the collection easier, but by encouraging academics and members of the public to delve into the archive, has also developed a much better understanding of the potential informational value of the collection. This has allowed the team to create more compelling and engaging company narratives and to find new and exciting avenues for the collection. Furthermore, the prestige of receiving a Wellcome Trust grant helped to highlight the significance of the collection to academic researchers and internal stakeholders. It seems a rare opportunity to essentially rip up and re-write an archive's finding aid, but the project has helped create strong foundations for the future protection of Boots Archive collection and its services.

The Boots Archive catalogue is now available with more than 61,000 entries and almost 25,000 digitised images.

You can view the Boots Archive catalogue [here](https://archives.walgreensbootsalliance.com/) (archives.walgreensbootsalliance.com/) and find out more about Boots' heritage [here](#).

Hannah Jenkinson was Project Archivist at Boots Archive where she managed The Wellcome Trust-funded project from November 2015 to June 2021. Hannah is an experienced practitioner and has held varied roles at organisations, including the Marks & Spencer Company Archive, Guardian News and Media Archive and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.



WBA/BT/27/39/2/1/12, Comrades in Khaki, April-May 1916. Over 9,000 digitised staff magazine images from 1915-1959 are available. ©Boots Archive

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And finally...



arc magazine

Our next edition of the *ARC Magazine* is due out in September/October, so look out for it in your inboxes. If you have any content suggestions for future editions, please email *ARC Magazine* arceditors@archives.org.uk.

Meanwhile, *ARA Today*, our electronic members' bulletin which contains all the latest ARA and industry news, is circulated on the first Wednesday of each month. Please send any content suggestions for future editions of *ARA Today* to catherine.scotcher@shconsult.co.uk.

Our ARA Together Online Community calls also continue on Discord, with regular calls hosted by representatives from across the sector covering a wide range of topical content. If you haven't yet joined the community, it's free and very easy to do so. Simply click [here](#) to sign up. Once registered, you will be able to access a number of different content channels covering topics such as sustainability, digital record-keeping, diversity, keeping connected and professional registration – among others.