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Section for New Professionals

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Welcome...

Welcome…to the July issue of ARC Magazine, Section for New Professionals.

Editing this issue has been an odd experience. Reading about public engagement where people give archive tours, put on plays and go into work to catalogue collections seems like a different time. Like many, I've been adapting to working from home and haven't touched a physical record for several months. I even miss the sight of a decayed elastic band tarnishing a bundle of documents!

That isn't to say that this issue isn't relevant in these most unusual of days. Setting out on a career encourages new professionals to think about what it is they expect from their jobs in recordkeeping. I'm sure many of us have also been considering this as we cannot access the majority of the records that we keep. This issue contains articles that challenge what we expect business archives to look like ('Working in a business archive' - page 17) and what we expect cataloguing to look like (Unlocking career expectations and our sound heritage - page 22).

The great thing about the Section for New Professionals special issue is that we are guaranteed a variety of submissions- which mirrors the variety any conservator, records manager or archivist can expect to experience in their career. New professionals are in a variety of roles and that is made apparent by articles that cover subjects from charity archives ('Two archivists, 2000 boxes and a two-year deadline' - page - 18) to the curation of oral history .'(Curating oral history extracts at the British Library' - page 25).

I would like to thank Alicia Chilcott for her support in bringing this issue together. I would also like to thank all our contributors for their submissions and encourage anyone reading this to consider writing for the magazine. Tell us about something innovative you've done recently in (or away from) your archive. Give us your top appraisal tips. Let us know about a challenge you successfully (or maybe unsuccessfully?) took on. Now is the perfect time - writing an article is a great task to do from home.

Kim Harsley
ARC Editor

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Eileen Agar was recorded by National Life Stories in 1990. The interviewer was Cathy Courtney (C466/01). © British Library.
Frank Bowling was recorded by National Life Stories in sessions between 2001-2016. The interviewers were Mel Gooding and Cathy Courtney (C466/127). © British Library.

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Zoe Dickinson at the IMF in 2019. Courtesy of Z. Dickinson.

Opening lines

The Times They Are a-Changin. Bob Dylan wrote that in 1964 and in my experience change is the one constant throughout life. Right now two events will bring lasting change. The Archives and Records Association has had to move quickly to react to Covid-19 and now needs to move quickly to action its plans towards improving diversity and opportunity, writes ARA Chief Executive **John Chambers**.

The Covid-19 pandemic means people suddenly have concerns around job security, what the future will look like in the short and medium term, and how to navigate day to day challenges and change (that word again). We felt it was our responsibility to create a support hub and communications programme for the sector.

Thanks to funding from The National Archives UK we were able to establish the ARA Together Support Hub www.archives.org.uk/ara-together.html and the ARA Together Online Community https://discord.com/invite/dvG4xh6 These were put together at short notice to provide support and enable sharing of advice. Essentially they are for you and the content is driven by you. We hope they help people get through the pandemic and feel they are not alone.

> *"The Covid-19 pandemic means people suddenly have concerns around job security, what the future will look like in the short and medium term, and how to navigate day to day challenges and change"*

The feedback we are getting from the online conversations is enabling us to identify and target where we need to put more resources and develop new services. This is on top of member feedback we received last year to do less but do it better.

The brutal killing of George Floyd and subsequent Black Lives Matter protests have included casting renewed light on inequalities across most of the UK's professions. As far as I am aware only dentists and social workers are professions truly representative of the ethnic diversity of UK society. Certainly the archives, conservation, records management, information management, libraries and knowledge management fields are all 97% or thereabouts ethnically white.

The ARA has joined together with other professional bodies in the heritage sector to publish a joint statement (www.archives.org.uk/latest-news/807-joint-statement-of-intent-for-the-heritage-sector.html) committing to bring change to our professions.

> *"Now we all have the mandate to work together and bring about a fair chance for anyone to enter and have successful careers in record keeping."*

It's my opinion that there is real desire and understanding that change must happen and the roadblocks of the past are gone. For years there was talk but no action and I thought a certain insincerity. Now we all have the mandate to work together and bring about a fair chance for anyone to enter and have successful careers in record keeping.

I started with a song lyric and I'll end with one from Secret Affair - This is the time for action.

Collecting matters

Reflections on *Bridging the Digital Gap*

Michael Norman tells us about a new traineeship that has propelled him from retail into the world of open-source software and film preservation.

In October 2018, I was selected alongside seven other new professionals as the first cohort of the Bridging the Digital Gap traineeship programme run by The National Archives UK (TNA). This Heritage Lottery-funded scheme aims to encourage those with technical skills into the archive sector from a diverse range of backgrounds. In 2008 I graduated from the University of Glasgow with a degree in film and television studies and then worked in the retail and banking sectors. I hadn't considered a career in archives before applying for the traineeship at the East Anglian Film Archive (EAFA) in Norwich.

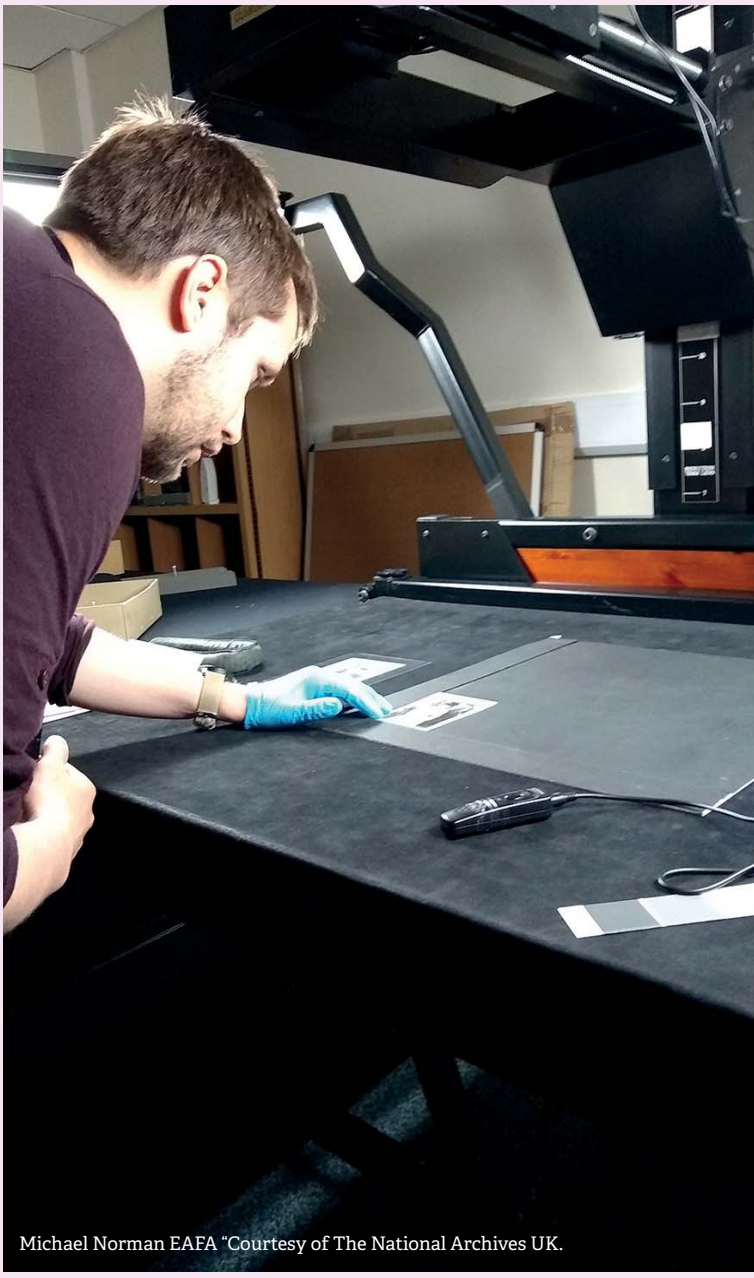
> *"the scheme aims to encourage those with technical skills into the archive sector"*

The paid traineeship consisted of an intensive fifteen-month work placement, supplemented by bespoke coursework. The online course featured introductory modules on digital acquisition, digital preservation, digital access and digital engagement. Each module introduced key discussions in the field of digital archiving and was undertaken during working hours. Potentially tricky concepts such as the Open Archival Information System were made accessible and readied me for further research. After each module, the cohort of trainees convened to share thoughts on their learning and placements. These meet-ups were the perfect forum for candid discussion and also a space for contemplative introspection, with the training leader even introducing us to theories of behavioural psychology.

The cohort worked in eight archives across Hull, York, Norwich and London. Working in the technical team at EAFA, I was introduced to various skills including:

- film inspection, repair and cleaning
- scanning and colour grading
- transcoding
- cataloguing.

As I went through the traineeship, I developed a passion for free and open-source software (FOSS). Using open-source software, I worked with the team to research and document workflows for optical disc imaging. We also built a videotape digitisation workstation where we captured video streams. If you're interested in the world of FOSS or moving image preservation, I highly recommend searching for Dave Rice and Ashley Blewer.



Michael Norman EAFA "Courtesy of The National Archives UK.

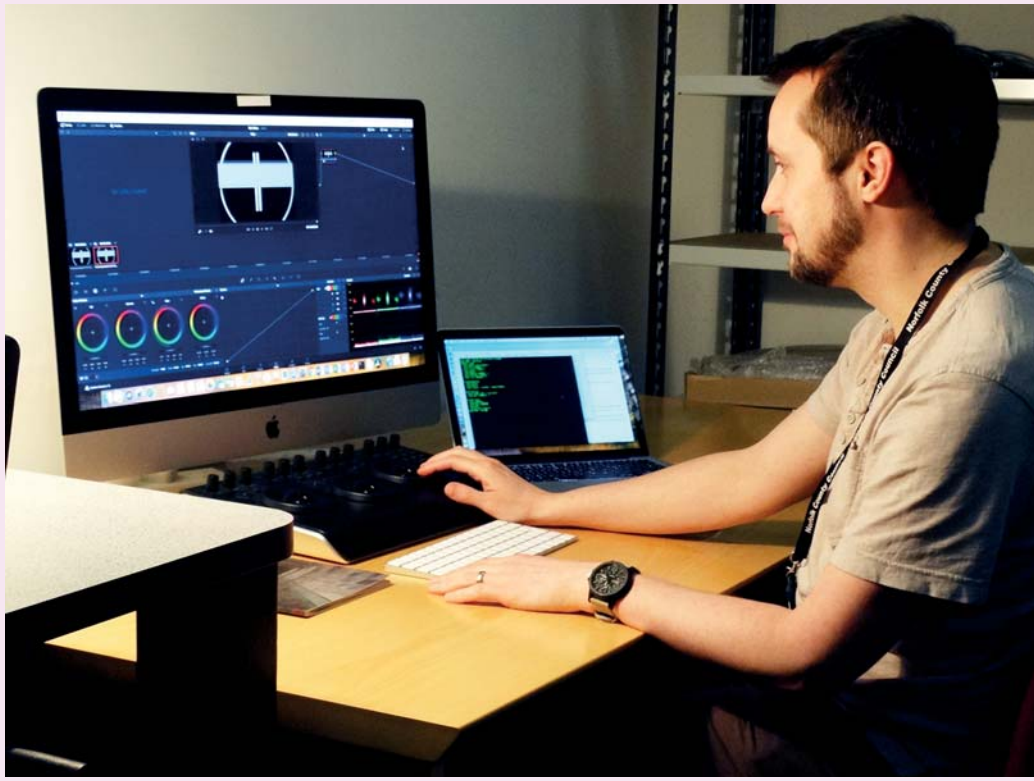
As trainees we seized upon the opportunity to visit other archives and bounce ideas and questions off the host archivists. We also took the opportunity to go to a range of conferences. These included the Discovering Collections, Developing Communities (DCDC) conference, and the Digital Preservation Coalition's Preserving Moving Image & Sound briefing day.

Seeking opportunities to broaden my horizons, I took on a voluntary position with the British Library's Unlocking Our Sound Heritage project at Norfolk Record Office. I was lucky enough to be awarded a travel grant for No Time To Wait in Budapest in December 2019. This superb, free, annual conference brings together the moving image FOSS community. Events such as these are invaluable opportunities to network, increase your confidence and enhance future employability prospects.

Since finishing the traineeship, I have moved on to work at the British Film Institute (BFI) as a data specialist on the Heritage 2022 Video Digitisation project. The project is seeking to digitise 100,000 at-risk video tapes. As is the nature of project work, no two days are the same, and the scope of my remit is ever-evolving. This role provides an excellent opportunity to put into practice and build upon the technical skills introduced in the traineeship. As a new professional I am grateful to both TNA and the BFI for providing me with the platform and opportunity to begin a career in archives.

Innovative schemes such as Bridging the Digital Gap are an important vehicle for encouraging technical talent into a sector long dependent on graduates trained in managing physical materials. The advent of the digital age has muddied age-old processes and assumptions. The sector is responding by acknowledging that new skills are required to navigate this shift.

Michael Norman EAFA. Courtesy of The National Archives UK



Michael Norman EAFA. Courtesy of The National Archives UK

> *"tricky concepts such as the Open Archival Information System were made accessible"*

Professional development news

Strengthening my professional development through ARA's Professional Development Program

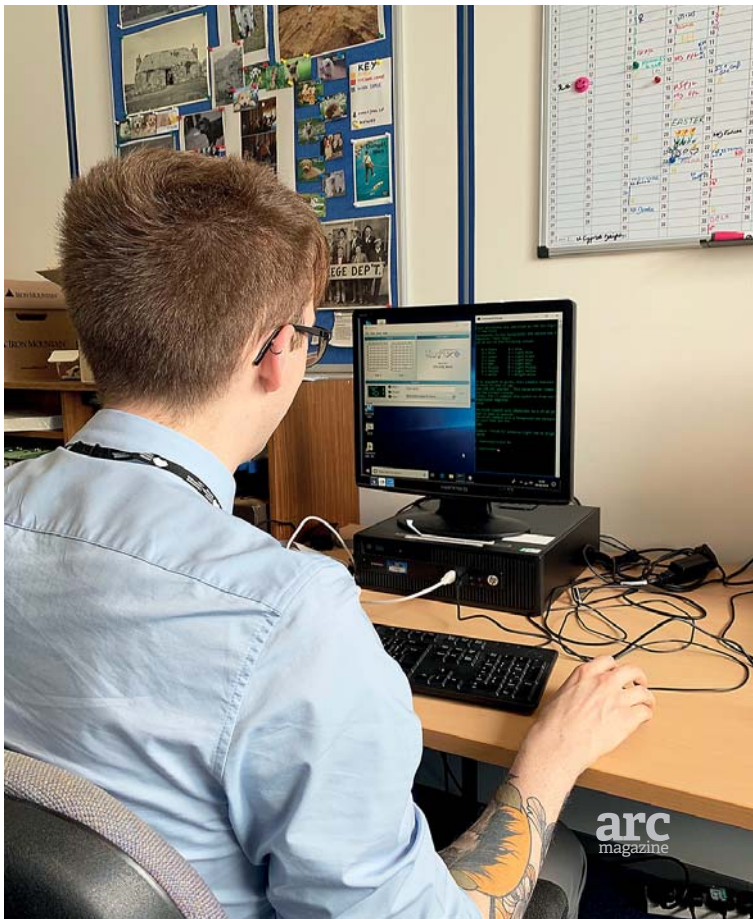
Frederick Alexander, archivist at Historic Environment Scotland, explains the benefits of ARA's professional development programme that go beyond letters after your name.

In the first week of UK lockdown there was a flurry of circular emails within archives. These ranged from announcing the closure of an archives reading room, to advice for staff working from home. Another common theme in these emails was advice for conducting professional development whilst working from home. The promotion of webinars, articles, podcasts and other learning opportunities became so frequent that a new email chain was created just to keep track of them. Since then I have undertaken a Harvard lecture series on computational science whilst my colleagues have taken courses on subjects including palaeography and archaeology. In addition to this, I have set myself the challenge of completing my application to become a Foundation Member of the Archives and Records Association (FMARA).

In 2018 I graduated from the Information Management and Preservation postgraduate course at the University of Glasgow. This course gave me a strong foundation in archive science, records management and digital preservation. However, since graduation I have been constantly learning, either through my workplace, CPD, or peer-to-peer learning. In preparing my FMARA application I have been asked to highlight my current workplace experience, as well as identify six competencies that I want to develop over a set period (usually one or two years). For each competency I have had to:

- Review my activity;
- Identify my current level;
- Discuss what I have done to develop it;
- Demonstrate how I have been able to implement it in my career.

> *"professional registration has given me a sharper sense of what employers are looking for in the current workforce"*



Strengthening my digital curation skills by implementing a Kryoflux machine into our quarantine station. Courtesy of Frederick Alexander.

Registration allows me to consolidate my professional experiences which includes public lectures. Courtesy of Frederick Alexander.

One of the competencies I have chosen to develop is 'digital curation: preserving born digital and digitised records and archives.' This is a competency that directly relates to my current role working on a digitisation project, as well as my career goals of working in digital preservation. To develop this competency I have read Trevor Owens' *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation*, attended presentations and lectures, and undertaken free online courses to strengthen my digital skills. Summarising all of these into a single document has helped me consolidate my learning, as well as allowing me to more confidently speak about my skills during interviews and project applications.

Taking part in ARA's professional development programme has given me a sense of confidence in my professional skills and experience. It has also allowed me to have a sharper sense of what employers are looking for in the current workforce. Working with a programme mentor has been equally beneficial, giving me the opportunity to have frank conversations with another professional who has more experience in the sector. Finally, professional recognition from the ARA will give me the ability to enter salary negotiations on a stronger footing, as ARA's Pay Review Group benchmarks its salaries using the ARA's professional levels of membership.

I would recommend that all early career professionals consider setting professional registration as part of their development goals. This programme has given me more flexibility in thinking about my professional development. It has forced me to consider the full breadth of skills I should be developing. I now see my career as a process of lifelong learning and look forward to continuing my professional development.

"Working with a programme mentor has given me the opportunity to have frank conversations with another professional who has more experience in the sector"

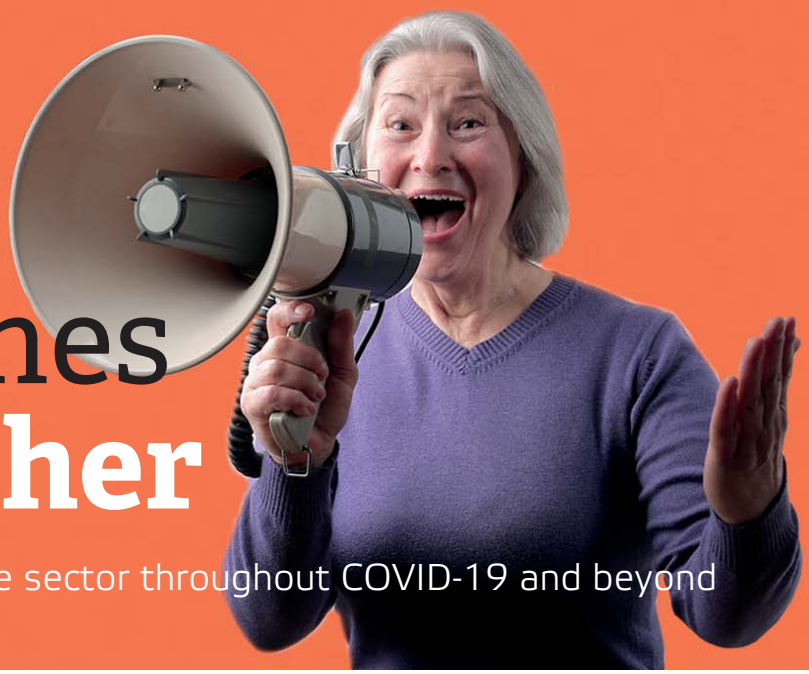
News

Congratulations to the following members who recently gained ARA professional registration.

New Foundation Members are Alyson Brewer FMARA, Fran Horner FMARA and Suzanne Shouesmith FMARA. New Registered Members are Laura Early RMARA, Lynsey Darby RMARA and Rosemary Everritt RMARA. Congratulations also to Dr Lisa Snook FARA for qualifying as a Fellow of the ARA.

We're also delighted to congratulate Ben Barber FMARA and Jim Costin FMARA, both Bridging the Digital Gap Trainees who are now Foundation Members of the ARA.

We're proud to be able to recognise and celebrate all those who have recently qualified!



ARA launches ARA Together

Connecting and supporting you and the sector throughout COVID-19 and beyond

As the restrictions and implications of the COVID-19 pandemic continue, we want to do all we can to support our members and the archives and record-keeping sector as a whole.

This pandemic is presenting all of us with many challenges – from concerns about jobs and careers and the implications of running and managing collections during this period, to the health and wellbeing of staff and the ability to adapt to change at a pace. We are all facing some challenging times that will undoubtedly put us under additional pressure over the weeks and months ahead.

But we're here to help.
We have launched ARA Together – a support hub to help you all throughout COVID-19 and beyond. Hosted on our website, this is a place where you can find:

- Access to ARA Together's Online Community (archives.org.uk/ara-together/ara-together-online-community.html)
- The ARA's own news and policies relating to COVID-19 (archives.org.uk/ara-together/ara-covid-19-news-and-policies.html)
- The latest advice and guidance from the governments and the NHS (UK) and HSE (Ireland) (archives.org.uk/ara-together/advice-and-guidance.html)
- Support and practical help (archives.org.uk/ara-together/from-the-sector.html) from the heritage sector
- Tips for staying engaged (archives.org.uk/ara-together/stay-engaged-ara-pdp.html) with your own professional development
- Support relating to health and wellbeing (archives.org.uk/ara-together/health-and-well-being.html)

The aim of this support hub is to signpost you to a wide range of reliable online resources that we believe will provide you with valuable information and guidance throughout this period. Each section is dedicated to a particular area of guidance, so please feel free to access the information that is most relevant to you.

The ARA Together website hub will be updated regularly so do return to them from time to time to find the latest governmental guidance and advice from the sector.

ARA Together – our Online Community

We recognise that these are very testing times for our members, with emerging concerns around returning to work. Reopening services and navigating day to day challenges around even getting to and from the workplace, among a host of other things. You will all undoubtedly be concerned about how the archives and record-keeping sector will recover post COVID-19. But we also know that there is a positive side to all of this – that there are many examples of members and organisations finding innovative ways to run services, and of teams going above and beyond to stay connected and continue delivering as much of their services as possible.

We have created ARA Together's Online Community archives.org.uk/ara-together/ara-together-online-community.html – using a free online platform (Discord), where you can chat with each other and share openly via text, voice chat and video. We will be there each day to answer your questions and once a week to host a call where we can all speak to each other about the latest challenges and developments. In this way we can support and connect with each other regularly and learn from one another as a community, sharing experiences, advice and examples of best practice.

> *We recognise that these are very testing times for our members, with emerging concerns around returning to work.*

Many of you have already jumped online and joined the community, which is fantastic. We encourage you to engage with each other, lean on one another and share your thoughts and ideas as openly as though you were chatting at conference together.

There are several channels for you to engage with, with returning to work being the hottest topic of conversation just now. Here is a taster of what's online but do go and take a look for yourselves:

Returning to work - the implications of returning to work and reopening services throw up a whole host of questions. How will social distancing work for staff and public accessing services? How can teams plan for a phased return? What practical measures should be put in place to ensure services keep staff and the public accessing the service safe?

Keeping Connected – working from home presents challenges around maintaining clear lines of communication, which can be a tricky one to get right. Too much time spent on video calls can be unproductive, but on the other hand, limited contact between team members can lead to feelings of isolation and important information not being shared. Use this channel to share your own experiences of what you have found works well in terms of keeping connected with your team members – whether it's virtual meetings on Zoom or Google Meet, conversation threads on Slack or Trello, or more simply, a weekly team call or a social Whatsapp group, tell us what you're finding works best for you and your team.

Career resilience – the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly created a lot of concern about job security and speculation about what the long-term impact might be on the record-keeping sector. Share your thoughts on how best to keep positive about your future career in the sector – whether that's the CPD you're undertaking during this period to strengthen your CV, your thoughts around engaging with the ARA's Professional Development Programme or even whether you are thinking of a career change.

Thinking outside the box - many of you are having to come up with new ideas to keep your users engaged with your service when they can't currently access it. We've read some great examples of record-keeping services using social media and marketing, writing blogs and using YouTube to reach out to users. Share your new ideas and initiatives developed during this time to help retain and grow the public's interest. What's worked well and what advice would you give to other services?

Signing up to the ARA Together Online Community is very straightforward archives.org.uk/ara-together/ara-together-online-community.html and you can start engaging with each other as soon as you've registered. Please do join the conversation online and share your thoughts, challenges, solutions and ideas.

And, if you come across any links or guidance you think would be of value to the wider membership, or if you have any feedback and ideas for the ARA Together web pages or for the ARA Together Online Community (on Discord), please contact us at membership@archives.org.uk.

Showcasing the artefacts in the archives. Courtesy of Z. Dickinson.

Backchat...

Zoe Dickinson, Archives/Records Officer at the International Monetary Fund, tells **ARC Magazine** how she went from Aberdeen to Washington DC via Malta all whilst doing a job she loves.

Q: How did you decide to become an archivist?
History has always been 'my' subject. Growing up it was my favourite class and the one I succeeded in. I spent my weekends insisting my parents take me to castles, museums, or other historical sights, and I decided early on that I wanted to 'do something with history', but what? Whilst I was studying history at The University of Aberdeen, I had to undertake a placement in a historical environment, and so came my first insight into the world of archives. After two wonderful weeks at the Glasgow City Archives, viewing old documents, helping researchers and learning basic preservation, I posted online: 'When I get older, I want to be an archivist'.

Q: What challenges did you face going from an undergraduate degree to becoming a professional recordkeeper?
After realising that I needed another degree to become an archivist, I hit a roadblock. Coming from a working-class background, with parents who left school with few qualifications, the fact I had been to university at all was deemed a miracle. I needed to find a way to make it happen with no funding. I decided to take a year out to gain more experience. I volunteered at my *alma mater* and a local family history society, whilst trying to raise the funds to undertake my masters. I worked full time in retail whilst volunteering and spending any spare time I had writing funding applications. Luckily, I received bursaries from a number of institutions for which I am incredibly grateful, as without which I would not be where I am today.

Q: What was your first taste of international archives?
The first opportunity to work abroad came about on my work placement during my Masters which I spent at the National Archives of Malta. This experience opened my eyes to how other countries managed archives, the differences, and similarities in how we work and how much we could learn from one another. I worked with records in various languages, visited several different archive branches and was invited to present to archive students at

> *"Network, network, network!"*

the University of Malta. On my flight back I got chatting to a man who told me I had chosen the wrong career if I wanted to travel, and by not being bilingual, I would only ever work in the UK. From that moment, I was determined to prove him wrong.

Q: What, besides your placement, made you want to work in international archives?
Outside of work, travel is my favourite thing to do, and working for international organisations has combined

Archivists and other colleagues at Christopher Street Day (Pride) in Frankfurt 2019. Courtesy of Z. Dickinson.

all of my favourite things; from travelling, working with people from all over the world, to learning new languages, visiting different types of archives and getting to work with and see some pretty amazing collections and items (including a Nobel Peace Prize!) .

Q: What do you think is a surprisingly important skill to have as an archivist?

Making contacts and networking. I cannot express the importance of attending events, and getting involved in things outside of work, but also keeping in contact with past colleagues when you move on. The community of archivists working in international organisations is very small so joining the International Council on Archives (ICA) Section for International Organisations was a great way of becoming involved. Last year I attended the annual meeting at NATO Headquarters and this year I have been reviewing articles for the ICA publication 'Comma'. Both of which have provided great opportunities to discuss all the common issues facing similar institutions today.

Q: What advice would you give to anyone wishing to follow a similar path?

Firstly, ignore the people that say you can't. Network, network, network! Never take a mentor for granted - you'll be surprised at what you will learn. And finally, just apply! When I applied for a traineeship at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), I never in a million years thought I would get it, but I did, so take the chance! I also advise everyone to continue their professional development both internationally and in your home country because it's important to ensure you are constantly up to date - you never know where your next job may be located.

Q: Tell us about one of your professional highlights.

Working at the European Central Bank. Being able to work somewhere so fundamental and prestigious, and to be actually serving Europe felt like an achievement in itself. I met the most amazing people who have become lifelong friends, acquired the best mentor I could ever ask for and learnt so much about the profession. I was lucky to have an array of tasks, one of which was organising and launching an incredibly successful exhibition on '20 Years of the ECB'.

"The views expressed herein are those of the author and should not be attributed to the IMF, its Executive Board, or its management".

"From that moment, I was determined to prove him wrong."

Zoe at the IMF in 2019. Courtesy of Z. Dickinson.

The ARC editorial team would like to thank:
Victoria Lane, Shakespeare's Globe and APAC Board member,
Erin Lee, National Theatre and APAC Chair,
Malcolm Mathieson, National Theatre and APAC member,
Clare Wood, Southbank Centre and APAC Board member, for their contribution to the June issue of ARC Magazine on Performing Arts Collections. The ARC editorial team are very grateful for the excellent work they did to bring together the issue.

Chair's update

Sara Brimble, section chair, tells us what the Section for New Professionals has been up to over the last year.

The Section for New Professionals (SfNP) has been very busy over the past 12 months. We have striven 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.

Beyond London

We continue to grow and work for our members. We have focussed on building our profile across the regions by hosting events in Edinburgh, Essex and Liverpool to reach our members outside of London. These have included our annual summer seminar and two training sessions with a focus on soft skills. In October we held a joint event with the Eastern Region at Essex Record Office which was an incredibly enjoyable and educational day. We have also worked with our Irish representative to support the work of new professionals in ARA Ireland. In August the section manned its stand at the ARA conference in Leeds. Our treasurer spent an enjoyable day networking and meeting delegates interested in the work of the section.

Guidance

Alongside our training events, the Peer Pals Scheme continues to offer members an e-mentoring service which 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 professionals to learn about upcoming events, opportunities and career guidance. The section are always pleased to have new candidates who are interested in taking part in Peer Pals as a mentor or mentee, and welcome submissions for 'Off the Record'. We have been working with Chris Sheridan to incorporate the Professional Development programme into our events and to engage our members in the scheme.

> *"We are always working hard to make the Section for New Professionals a success."*

Sara at the ARA conference

What next?

I consider myself lucky to have served the section for the past three years as the 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. As I step down this summer I look forward to seeing how the section will continue to grow and tackle the important issues such as mental health training and gaining a broad understanding of the career you are embarking on in recordkeeping.

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. I look forward to hearing from you!

Don't forget what you learned on the course!

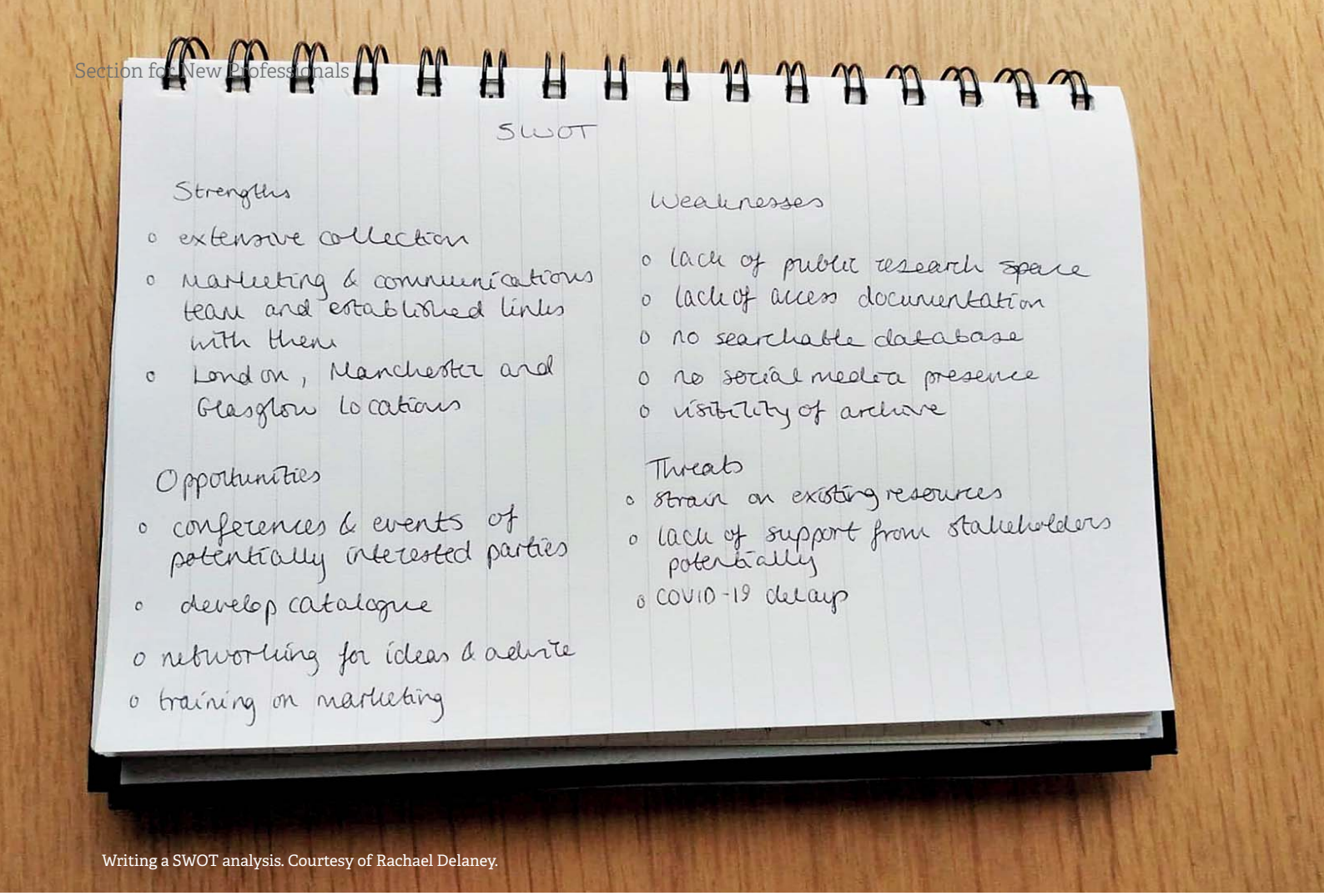
Rachael Delaney discovered just how useful her archives administration masters course was when she started her first job.

Rachael Delaney. Courtesy of Olivia Gerrity.

At the beginning of this year, I started my first archivist role at an international architecture and engineering company. Since January, I have spent time familiarising myself with the collection, colleagues and the company. One of the first things I noticed was the lack of promotion of the archive, both internal and external. Many employees were aware of it but were not active users. So, I returned to what I had learnt about outreach as a student to guide me.

One student assignment- an outreach strategy for a publicly funded archive- provided the backbone for producing an archive strategy for the company. After identifying which sections would translate nicely for a business archive, I wrote a formal evaluation. The most useful technique for this section was creating a SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. It successfully underlined the issues but the true value of this technique is that it also highlights existing strengths and potential opportunities. This way of presenting information created a more balanced view and generated motivation to promote our work. Even some of the weaknesses were helpful in creating solutions for other challenges. For example, the lack of public research space was linked to the lack of documentation to regulate access. Seeing these two factors listed together highlighted that we could use an access policy to limit access to digital copies thereby providing a temporary solution.

Advocacy was one of the key actions that I identified in the strategy. I considered the aims and potential



Writing a SWOT analysis. Courtesy of Rachael Delaney.

outcomes of advocacy and identified stakeholders and allies. I then set about communicating our aims to stakeholders. This task was especially difficult as a new professional where self-doubt has not yet been quashed by years of experience. Personally, this meant I needed to be prepared for these conversations. I knew that improvising on the spot was not my forte and that my confidence in speaking as an advocate for the archive needed developing. I wrote notes to prepare myself for a variety of different conversations which made me feel more confident as I approached the stakeholders.

Another action was to identify existing avenues that were not being utilized to promote the archive. The archive had never been promoted via our social media, although an exhibition featuring our records had. This involved finding visually appealing and interesting records to photograph for posts, such as a lantern slide of our founder, and establishing contact with our communications team in London.

Without returning to my student work, I may have spent hours researching where to start. Whilst I've only been able to list some of the steps so far here (and COVID-19 has slowed progress in actually implementing the strategy) this experience has reminded me how valuable it is to spend some time returning to guidance, notes and assignments from the course. It also highlighted how constructive the techniques and approaches like SWOT analysis can be to enrich our work and help us face challenges.

Lantern slide portrait of company founder. Courtesy of Rachael Delaney.

Working in a business archive: expectations vs reality

Emily Gooding looks at the assumptions around business archives and challenges them with her experience of the Baring Archive.

It may be a commonly held assumption that business collections are mundane and have little appeal. However, the reality couldn't be more different. I first heard about the Baring Archive when I saw my role advertised and thought it looked interesting. My appreciation of this rich collection has deepened throughout my internship and I can say that it has greatly exceeded my expectations. Although these collections might require a deeper look to draw out their gems, it is worth the work. It is truly fascinating to discover the variety of documents and objects that live within a business collection like the Baring Archive. The collection draws on international history from Tsarist Russia to the US Civil War. A diverse collection, it does not just include paper business records but also holds objects and artwork.

I think the common assumption, and to a degree what I expected, is that a business archive is very

> *"this experience has reminded me how valuable it is to spend some time returning to guidance, notes and assignments from the course"*

Emily helping a researcher in the Baring Archives' reading room. Courtesy of Emily Gooding.

Emily with a researcher in the Baring Archives' reading room. Courtesy of Emily Gooding.

separate to the actual business. However, this is not the case for the Baring Archive. I help to conduct art and archive tours for employees, clients and external interest groups. The tours for employees and clients create an understanding of the archive's function and use, thus fostering connections with our heritage throughout the business. Every month I organise a new joiners tour to ensure that employees are aware of our presence and how they can engage with the art and archive collection. The engagement with clients contributes to the business- around 50 clients visit us every year. This demonstrates that it's not just researchers who use the collection- the archive is actively involved in the business' core work.

The Baring Archive team is based within the ING communications and brand experience team. Being integrated within another team in the business has meant that I have gained an insight into how other areas of the bank operate and collaborate. Having an archive that dates to the eighteenth century within the business gives it an edge, it is a special addition that sets the company apart from others. A key part of my role is to facilitate ING's use of this uniqueness. An additional part of my role has been to organise events for our charity partners. This wasn't something I necessarily saw myself doing in an archive traineeship but it has massively improved my project management and organisational skills.

My passion for the sector has grown throughout this role and my eyes have been opened to new areas and opportunities. I hope I have expelled some myths around business archives and revealed the realities of what a rich, diverse and valuable asset a business collection can be. Not only are they important to the business and hold a deserved place, but they are also fascinating and can often be a hidden resource waiting to be discovered by a wider section of researchers.

Two archivists, 2000 boxes and a two-year deadline: the challenges of cataloguing the Save the Children Archive

Matthew Goodwin and **Holly Waughman** give us an insight into the work of the project archivist, a role that many new professionals will take on.

In 2019 the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham, began a two-year project funded by the Wellcome Trust to catalogue and preserve the Save the Children (SCF) archive. The project team comprises two project archivists, one project manager and one archive assistant. SCF was founded in 1919 by sisters Eglantyne Jebb and Dorothy Buxton, who aimed to provide emergency relief to children throughout Europe after the First World War. The collection consists of 2000 boxes of material covering the organisation's 100

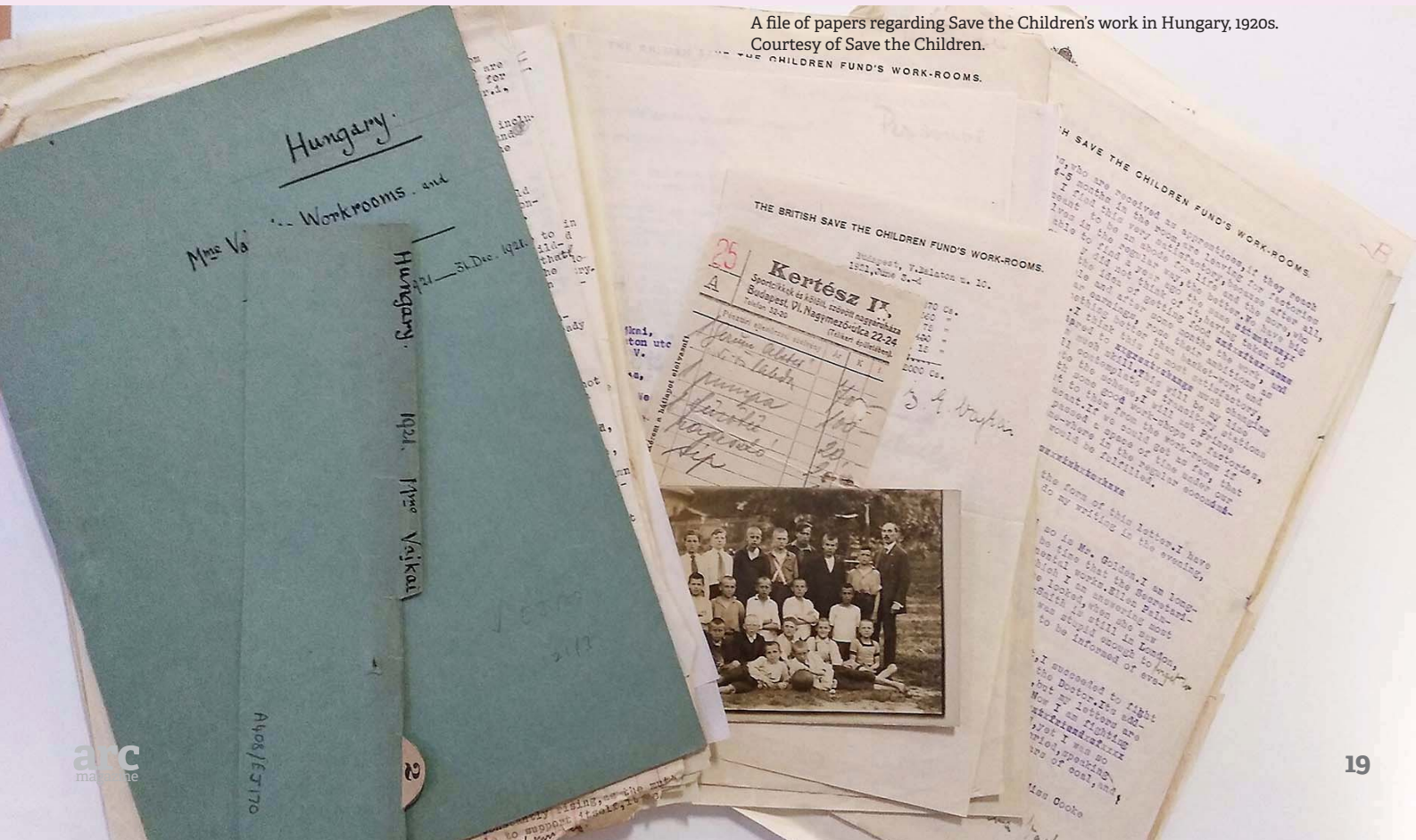
Save the Children worker, Mary Katherine Hawkins, in South Korea c.1950s. Ref: Box 73, PP1533. Courtesy of Save the Children

Concertina comic strip by Corinne de Candole. Ref: SCF/EJ/9/2. Courtesy of Save the Children.

Eglantyne Jebb with a Greek refugee. Ref: Photograph Box 52, PP1423. Courtesy of Save the Children.

year history. The archive reflects the charity's work, both at home and abroad, and its fundraising campaigns and activities. It also contains papers covering local branches, shops, relationships with other organisations, and a small selection of personal papers from individuals who worked for SCF. The archive provides a unique resource for researchers into the development of a modern charity, but also for research into humanitarianism, post colonialism and child rights.

The main purpose of the project is to produce a fully searchable online catalogue for the entire collection, which has previously only been partially available for researchers. We have been repackaging and rehousing items into archival standard packaging and highlighting issues to the conservation team. In addition to this, we have engaged both researchers and the public by hosting various events. These have included behind the scenes tours for International Women's Day, and a one woman play, performed by Anne Chamberlain, about the life of Eglantyne Jebb. We're also planning on hosting a study day to explore charity archives and post regularly to our project blog at https://thesavethechildrenarchive.wordpress.com/.



A file of papers regarding Save the Children's work in Hungary, 1920s. Courtesy of Save the Children.

A behind the scenes tour and 'show and tell' for the Domus Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Histories of Education and Childhood. Courtesy of Cadbury Research Library

Challenges

Working on this project has highlighted many challenges. These have included negotiating the workload and responsibilities between two co-archivists and issues such as the lack of diversity within the archive.

One of the biggest challenges we have faced has been the issue of access to the archive, both in terms of corporate sensitivities and data protection issues. Previously access to the archive was limited, so one of the first tasks was to work with SCF to negotiate an opening period for some items. We needed to gain an understanding about what needed to be closed for a longer period of time to protect their current operations.

In addition to this, we also became aware that there is sensitive personal information throughout the archive, including information about staff, people and children helped by SCF. We devised two methods to ensure that whilst sensitive information isn't available to researchers, much of the archive can remain open:

- a screening process for researchers;
- a method by which a limited number of individual documents can be temporarily removed from files to allow access.

Another challenge has been the size of the archive and the deadline. Both these factors have had an impact on our cataloguing strategy and arrangement. We decided at the start of the project to use the existing box list, supplemented by some sample box checking, to decide on the arrangement of the archive. At times this has meant that some rogue items have been discovered, resulting in sections of the catalogue needing rearrangement. The storage of the archive away from the creating organisation has also impacted our work. It has been difficult to understand the original context of the records, including information such as the creating department. Consequently, and in order to better reflect the changing name and nature of the departments over time, we took the decision to use a functional arrangement.

A before and after photograph of part of the Save the Children collection. Courtesy of Cadbury Research Library

Despite the challenges of the project, it has been stimulating to work with the collection and to work together to solve problems. So far, the project is progressing to schedule, and we look forward to making the catalogue to this fascinating collection available to researchers.

A selection of early versions of Stagetext promotional leaflets, courtesy of Stagetext.

'Captions Speak Louder': an archive project celebrating access in the arts

Ciara Murray, Stagetext's Project Archivist, discusses her work on their hybrid collection.

To celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Stagetext, the charity received a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for an archive and exhibition project titled, "Captions Speak Louder: Discovering the Story of Open Captioning". Stagetext is a charity which provides captioning and live subtitling services to theatres and other arts organisations to make their activities accessible to people who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing. Stagetext has grown significantly over the years, after starting with their first captioned performance of 'The Duchess of Malfi' by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2000, to now, with Stagetext captioning over 300 events each year.

I am spending the year working with Stagetext as their project archivist, focusing on preserving, cataloguing and enhancing an archive of physical and digital material. Once the archive is catalogued, it will be deposited at the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. There will also be a touring exhibition featuring items from the archive, which will be designed by an exhibition designer with input from myself and Stagetext users. This exhibition was due to launch in London in late 2020 to coincide with the official 20th anniversary of Stagetext, however due to the pandemic, we are now looking at launching the exhibition and anniversary celebrations in 2021. This is an exciting project that celebrates access and inclusion in the arts. It also explores the UK theatre scene from an audience perspective, focusing on a number of innovative ways patrons with a hearing loss can access live theatre.

As a new professional, this role has exposed me to the practical realities of working on a wide-ranging archive project, as well as the numerous opportunities this type of project presents. In particular I will have the chance to

> *This type of project requires new professionals to think on their feet, work with limited resources and be decisive*

take the lead in many archival tasks I would not have envisaged undertaking this early in my career, including:

- Appraising, cataloguing, arranging and determining preservation concerns for a significant hybrid collection of paper, audio-visual and born-digital material;
- Recording and archiving subtitled oral history interviews;
- Managing volunteers who will be assisting at various stages throughout the project;
- Helping design and curate an exhibition with a freelance designer;
- Digitising selected items from the archive for inclusion in an online gallery.

There are certainly challenges with this work, in particular managing the born-digital material. Although I know this is a much-discussed issue among archivists, the complexities involved with appraising and cataloguing born-digital material have proved to be substantial. The initial born-digital collection is essentially accumulated files from the last two decades, arranged in various organisational systems by different staff members over the years. We are endeavouring to integrate all material into a cohesive arrangement but the digital material has required a change of approach in how we do this.

Our approach so far, has been to follow the ISAD(G) framework, whilst also incorporating advice from the Paradigm project workbook, the ARA website community, as well as guidance from other archivists. Perhaps most importantly, all decisions regarding appraisal of material are being carefully documented for future reference.

Working on a project as the only archivist in a non-archival environment can be daunting, even more so for a newly qualified professional. However, the opportunities this sort of work presents are numerous for anyone looking to gain experience in a wide range of archival tasks and project management. This type of project requires new professionals to not only implement the knowledge gained from their studies, but to think on their feet, work with limited resources and be decisive. In my case, I have been able to develop a huge number of practical skills, as well as work on an exciting collection which celebrates access and inclusion in UK theatre.

If you are interested in the Stagetext 'Captions Speak Louder' project, you can find further details on our website: http://stagetext.org/archive-project

Unlocking career expectations and our sound heritage

As **Sarah Wood**, University of Leicester, enters her final year as a new professional, she has found herself reflecting on what she thought her career would involve. Little did she know that she would be working with sound collections, cataloguing to library standards and dabbling in digital preservation!

In October 2018 I joined the Unlocking Our Sound Heritage (UOSH) project (www.bl.uk/projects/unlocking-our-sound-heritage) as their digitisation hub cataloguer. This ambitious project, which aims to preserve and provide access to the nation's rare and unique sound recordings, drew my interest but wasn't what I expected to do when I became an archivist. However I couldn't resist the opportunity to develop my skills in collections management, cataloguing and volunteer engagement!

About the project

The UOSH project is a partnership project led by the British Library, with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which involves ten regional hubs across the UK. Each hub has a project team that typically includes: a project manager, an engineer, a cataloguer and a rights clearance officer. Based at the University of Leicester, the Midlands Hub reaches out to collection holders across the region, working with sound collections from archives, libraries, museums, private organisations and individuals.

Processing a new collection. Courtesy of the University of Leicester.

UOSH Midlands Hub. Courtesy of the University of Leicester

Collections management

This is the first time I've worked with loaned collections on such a large scale. The logistics involved in ensuring their secure transfer and processing is no easy feat. However, once a workflow was established, acquiring new collections became much more manageable.

Before collections are loaned, the repository completes a condition report. This includes capturing vital information such as extent, format and physical condition. Once collections arrive, we complete a similar report to ensure our findings match. Next, each item is assigned a unique identifier and groupings are established. A tracking sheet is used to capture the movement of items as they are sent for digitisation, cataloguing and returned to the repository. This is also used to flag any sensitive personal data or copyright issues within the recording.

Cataloguing

Probably the biggest adjustment was adapting my cataloguing skills to a new standard as the

> *"Don't be afraid to apply for jobs which do not immediately fit with 'traditional' roles"*

Sarah in the strongroom. Courtesy of the University of Leicester

project uses a variant of MARC21. A significant shift away from ISAD(G), I was daunted at first. However I quickly realised they have much in common.

Although the cataloguing standards differ, they both have the same goal: to achieve the standardised description of an item. I soon found that despite differences in terminology, there were usually equivalents in ISAD(G) or Dublin Core. Once I grasped the new terminology and phrasing I found I could adapt quickly to this standard.

Another challenge I faced was the complexity of sound collections. An absence of metadata can make it difficult to sort and catalogue a collection and usually requires listening to the recordings in full. This is time consuming and can be very confusing at times. However, it is enormously satisfying once you have created a logical grouping of the tapes and added some order to the chaos!

Volunteer management

Volunteer engagement plays a vital role in the UOSH project. Onsite and remote volunteers have participated in the project through digitisation, cataloguing, and outreach activities. I really enjoy working with our volunteers: delivering specialist training, developing their skills in a new area and building their confidence. A large percentage of our volunteers come through Voluntary Action Leicestershire, a charity that 'helps people in local communities change their lives for the better, through supporting the local voluntary and community sector'. For me, it is so rewarding seeing our volunteers grow in confidence and gain transferable skills that enhance their employability prospects. Some of our volunteers have even secured employment in the library and archive sector.

So, what have I learnt from this experience? Here are my top tips when considering a different path:

- Don't be afraid to apply for jobs which do not immediately fit with 'traditional' roles
- Embrace new opportunities when they come your way, see them as broadening your skillset and expertise
- Choose an area that you're excited and enthusiastic about as this will be your driving force
- Take advantage of the training on offer, this helps widen your professional skills
- Try to look for the similarities between job roles, rather than their differences.

Tape boxes in the strongroom. Courtesy of the University of Leicester.

Volunteers working on collections. Courtesy of the University of Leicester.

Open reel tape machine. Courtesy of the University of Leicester

Celebration event for our volunteers (including cake of course!). Courtesy of the University of Leicester.

Curating oral history extracts at the British Library

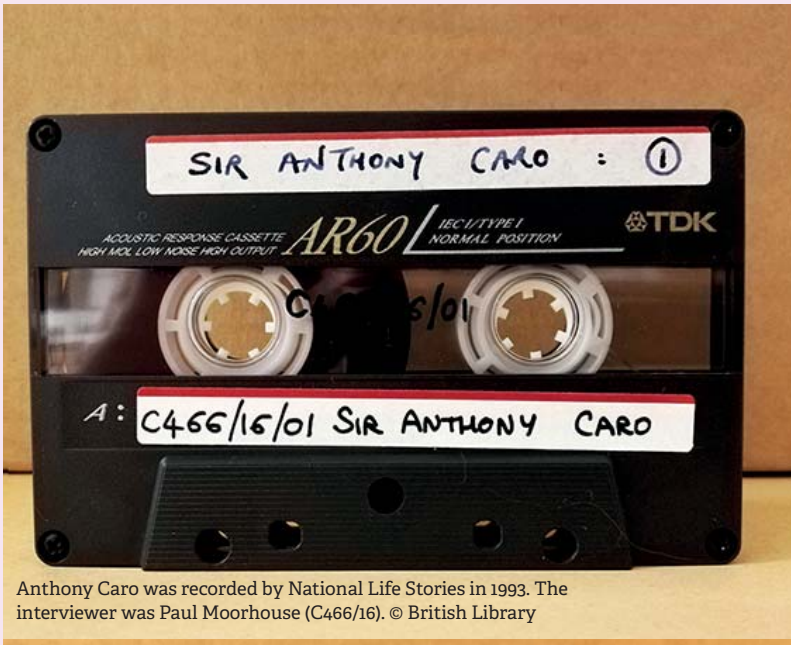
Camille Johnston, oral history assistant archivist at the British Library, discusses the challenges of working with an oral history clip bank.

As of April 2020, there are 475 oral history collections held at the British Library covering a wide range of subjects relating to life in the UK. It's not uncommon for interviews to run to over ten hours, particularly those conducted by National Life Stories, a charitable trust within the oral history department. The length of these recordings naturally presents a challenge to archivists, both in terms of archival description and for access. How can we help users locate recordings relevant to their interests and use their listening time effectively? Extracts can serve as a quick point of access but editing sections of recordings in this way carries issues of its own.

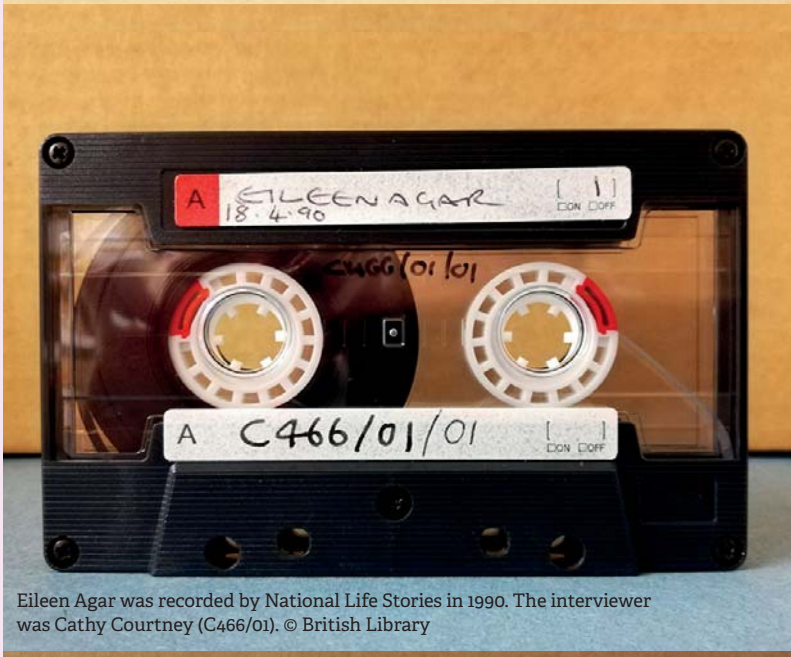
Audio extracts are a helpful stepping stone to further research. They can be used to draw attention to collections and to help establish themes across different interviews. Appealing for their concise nature, clips can seem to give an impression of the interviewee in just a few minutes. But how accurate is this impression? Can an extract convey the subtleties of mood, expression, and intent found in a full-length interview? What are the ethical considerations when choosing which recordings to highlight? I try to keep these questions in mind when describing existing clips for the department's internal use and when publishing clips online via the British Library website. However, it's important to concede that the selection and editing process is ultimately subjective.

Curating the clip bank

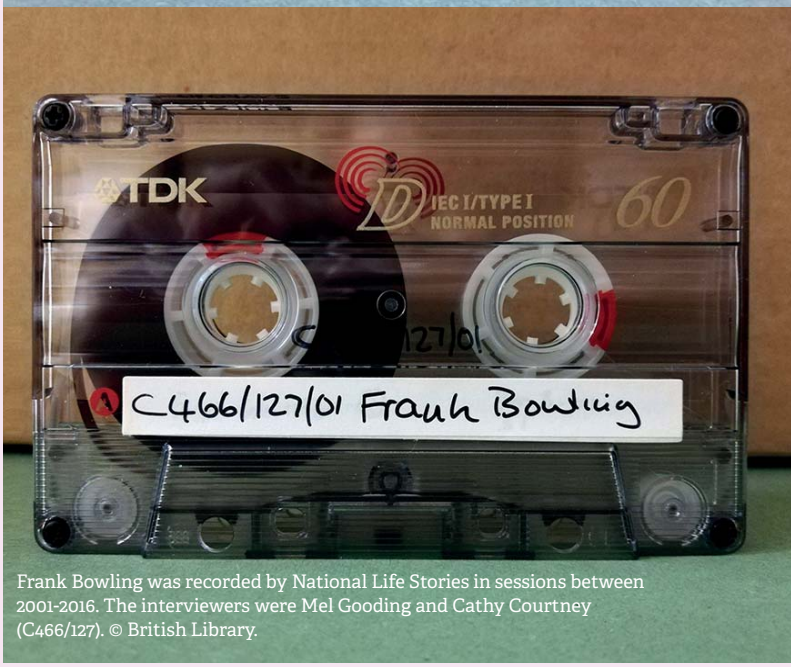
I first engaged with the archival challenges of working



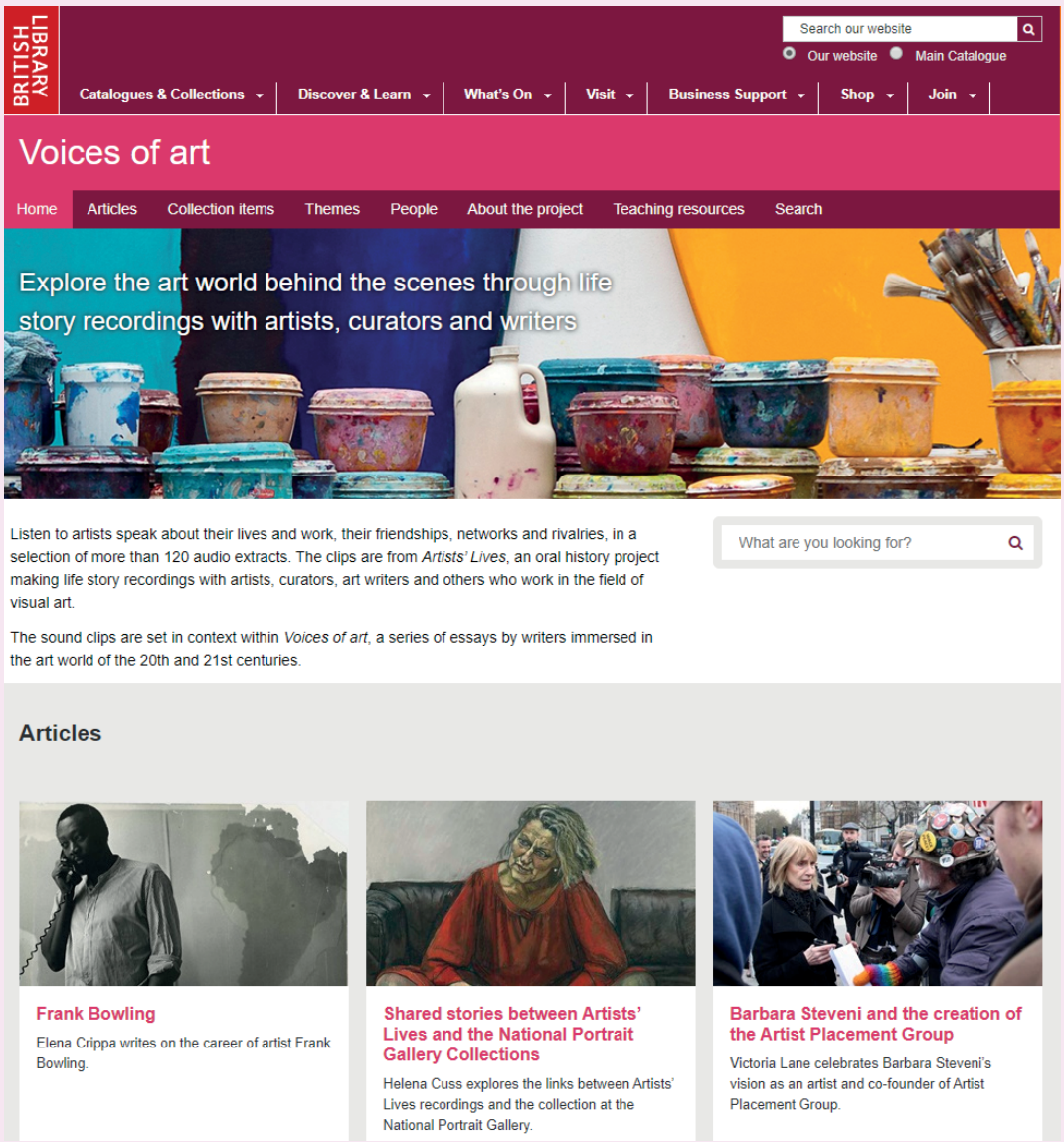
Anthony Caro was recorded by National Life Stories in 1993. The interviewer was Paul Moorhouse (C466/16). © British Library



Eileen Agar was recorded by National Life Stories in 1990. The interviewer was Cathy Courtney (C466/01). © British Library



Frank Bowling was recorded by National Life Stories in sessions between 2001-2016. The interviewers were Mel Gooding and Cathy Courtney (C466/127). © British Library.



The Voices of art homepage on the British Library website. Courtesy of The British Library.

> *Clips can seem to give an impression of the interviewee in just a few minutes. But how accurate is this impression?*

with oral history extracts in 2017. I was completing my archives and records management MA at University College London (UCL) at the time and was on a student placement with the oral history team. My task was to locate, describe, and arrange thousands of existing digital extracts to create a 'clip bank'. These clips comprise intriguing stories, funny anecdotes, and poignant moments chosen by the team over the years. The idea behind the clip bank was to make it easier for us to locate and reuse edited sections of recordings. Now, whenever we make a new clip, we add it to the collection.

Voices of art

The following year National Life Stories received funding from the Paul Mellon Centre for a new website featuring 100 oral history extracts (www.bl.uk/voices-of-art). This was a fascinating project to be involved in, allowing me to further consider how to sensitively edit and contextualise an extract from a person's testimony. Voices of art hosts a series of commissioned articles that interpret a selection of new and existing clips. The clips are taken from the 400 plus interviews that comprise the oral history project, Artists' Lives. Every article includes at least five illustrated audio extracts, each accompanied by a transcript, interview metadata, a link to the full recording, and a short description providing further context. My role was web-coordinator for the project which involved editing articles, sourcing images, and cutting new clips, as well as building the website itself.

We launched Voices of Art in November 2018 with 18 articles that discuss influences on British art and artists since the 1950s. In selecting artists to feature on our 'People' pages we've made sure we give equal prominence to lesser known voices alongside more household names. We hope that while users may be drawn to the site by the prospect of gaining further insight into the minds of their favourite creators, they will also discover new artists in the process.

What's next?

Alongside helping users to locate relevant recordings, edited audio clips may also help address a broader question of how to reach users unfamiliar with our catalogue. Though extracts are already widely used in presentations and exhibitions, we're exploring new ways of sharing them through social media and curated websites. When properly contextualised, extracts published online could widen the visibility and accessibility of our collections, particularly to a generation of podcast listeners accustomed to browsing audio online.

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