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Global futures

A view from ARA
President Alex
Buchanan



**Conference
Issue 2016**



Call for Core Training Co-ordinators

The ARA training group is looking for a number of new members to contribute to the Core Training offer for ARA members. We believe that the provision of quality, inexpensive, accessible training is one of the key roles for ARA. As a group we oversee training across the Association, designing and delivering regional and specialist training events. In the last two years we have developed the new Core Training events.

Can you help us to further develop our training provision? Are you looking to spread your wings and broaden your horizons from your current job? Do you have something to offer?

We are particularly looking for people to take on the roles of Core Training Co-ordinators. These are people who look after specific Core Training courses and take responsibility for their structure and administration. This is an excellent opportunity to develop your skills and show a commitment to your continuing professional development.

We are looking for enthusiastic people who can make a minimum two-year commitment to the role. We meet three times a year with discussions in between by teleconference and email. Travelling, telephone and other expenses are met by ARA. For an informal discussion or to express an interest contact the chair of the training group.

Lizzy Baker, ARA Training Group

Email: lizzy.aratraining@outlook.com

The ARA's Core Training programme is supported by Link 51.



**Archives & Records
Association**

UK & Ireland

Welcome to ARC Magazine November 2016

This issue has involved a lot of firsts. It was not only the first time I had edited the conference issue, but also the first time I had ever attended the ARA conference. It was the first time I had been to Wembley too, unless you count that time I fell asleep on the Tube on the way to Dollis Hill in 1999.

I must admit, I was a little bit nervous about having to gather content for the issue myself. For once I couldn't skulk by the biscuits, I had to actually get out there and mingle. Fortunately, everyone I spoke to was friendly and engaged, and I thoroughly enjoyed making new connections. There was a real buzz to the conference. No doubt some of it can be attributed to the copious amounts of tea, coffee, sugar and (later on) wine that everyone was consuming, but the rest was down to being surrounded by so many like-minded folk who are all enthusiastic, positive and dedicated to the profession.

It was also my first foray into the world of Twitter. I created an 'behind the scenes' at conference account to help drum up content and to see what goes on 'behind the scenes'. I found it a great way to dip into sessions I couldn't attend and to see some of the conversations that continue after the presentations have ended.

You'll notice that there is one name that appears more often than anyone else's in this month's issue: conference photographer Carrie Davenport. She worked tirelessly on all three days to really capture the atmosphere of the event. Without her, this issue would no doubt be filled with fuzzy photographs of the backs of people's heads. Thank you Carrie.

Many thanks also to everyone who gave in to my pestering and contributed this month. You all make ARC what it is.



Ceri Forster
ARC Editor

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Front cover: Mark Allen, Chair of ARA's Preservation and Conservation Section (right) and Antony Oliver (left) enjoy a drink at The Guildhall reception. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

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opening lines

Reflections on ARA Conference 2016: Global Futures



Any observant historian travelling between the two floors of the Wembley Hilton that served us so well at Conference this year will have seen a misquote of Charles Darwin on the wallpaper outside the lifts on the fourth floor (who ever said that record-keepers were pedantic?). Here's what the Darwin quote should have said: *"In the struggle for survival, the fittest win out at the expense of their rivals because they succeed in adapting themselves best to their environment."*

At times in the past few years, many in the profession may have felt a bit like an endangered species. Budget cuts (in the public sector), the struggle to justify records management and archives (in a private sector struggling through austerity), plus the constant drive to increase footfall and reach new audiences – all while trying to do the 'day job.'

It was a pleasant surprise, therefore, that virtually no-one at this year's conference was letting the budgets, as it were, get them down. 'Change' and innovation seem firmly entrenched in the DNA of the sector. We heard about UK public sector records managers becoming (in effect) logisticians and business management consultants; dance and theatre archivists experimenting in expressive interpretation and digitisation; and chemical spectrometry of the inks of Anglo-Saxon English manuscripts. The high attendance levels in the dedicated digital preservation stream also showed the appetite for learning, sharing and 'getting on with' this hugely challenging new culture. In conservation, we saw cutting-edge new hydration polymers, new wax compounds and sewing threads.

Our President, Alex Buchanan, mentions elsewhere in this edition the powerful first-morning keynote from Colin Prescod, who exhorted record-keepers to think of themselves as 'agents' of change. Our decisions about what material to keep, share, promote or prioritise can be instrumental in helping researchers challenge or refute the 'dominant narratives' that shape (or distort) societies. If we are passive, we risk becoming agents of the dominant narrative by default.

Tina Staples of HSBC reminded us that the future is now, today, not something distant. Our global medium is now digital: digital

preservation is not just about managing yesterday and today, but preserving today's archive for tomorrow. We have already allowed too many gaps to emerge. Finance is one thing, but the biggest challenge is the leadership to think big and be willing to drive and shape change, and experiment.

Anthea Case of Arcadia showed us – in a sense – that there are many people worse off than us. There are archives and records everywhere at risk of obliteration. The Arcadia-funded (British Library-managed) Endangered Archives Programme is supporting over 300 different international projects to record (digitally) archives in a massive range of media – from rock formations, to horn, and temple murals to copper plate – plus paper, photo and digital items from zones of war and unrest. These projects are about 'investing in memory.' Here, too, as Anthea said, 'there is no alternative to experimenting.'

In the records-managers' stream, the similar message was the need to evolve beyond traditional professional skills. As Ross Higgins commented, records managers are increasingly defined by their 'soft skills,' i.e. their ability navigate (internally) other parts of the organisation and/or (externally) develop partnerships. Ross also raised artificial intelligence – surely a future conference theme – and the tantalising (scary?) possibility one day of being able to archive one's own thoughts.

The 'Global' theme appeared in most sessions. We heard about Iranian master illuminators alongside Western European bookbinding. Speakers traced the origins of inks used in Dark Ages Britain and Ireland to Afghanistan and Egypt. Finally, we explored 'new' elements in the global – those who don't 'belong', ie the historical and contemporary treatment of those suffering mental health issues and the disabled, from institutional care in Scotland to refugees, the ethics of consent, and the LGBTQ community.

It seemed to me that thinking outside the box is no longer just a nice-to-have competence in management. It is increasingly becoming the core skill. As one speaker said, referring back to Darwin: 'share your services or you'll find yourself being "shared" by someone else.'

Jon Elliott

Head of Public Affairs

Collecting Matters

How do you surface hidden collections within university archives and special collections? How do you increase awareness of their research value to students and academics, and engage the local community in collection-based activities? How do you raise the profile of those collections to support the strategic aims and objectives of a Higher Education Institution (HEI)?

These were just a few of the questions I explored over two weeks spent working with Judy Burg, Head of Archives and Special Collections at Durham University in May 2016: www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/

It was the first phase of a professional exchange - the second will be Judy's return visit to The National Archives (TNA) in November - just one outcome of the formal relationship between The National Archives and Research Libraries UK (RLUK) articulated in our Memorandum of Understanding: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/mou-tna-rluk-2014.pdf

The benefits of the exchange are on three levels:

1. To nurture collaboration and partnership-building between strategic organisations tasked with supporting related sectors.
2. To identify areas of shared interest for TNA, RLUK and the host institution - in this case, Durham University - and to shape relevant programmes or initiatives.
3. To contribute to personal and professional development.

And following the completion of the second phase, we shall evaluate its success on each of those levels, feeding into a possible ongoing programme of professional exchanges with similar objectives.

My fortnight in Durham helped me to understand the day-to-day demands of running an archive within a very particular context, balanced with delivering longer-term goals for both the university library service and the university itself: a challenge but full of exciting opportunities too.

The exchange has already provided insights useful for the recently-concluded RLUK and TNA joint-research study into *Collecting Drivers for HEIs with Archives and Unique and Distinctive Collections (UDCs)*, presented at a workshop at this year's DCDC Conference: <http://dcdcconference.com/>

And it will continue to inform debate within the Higher Education Archive Programme #HEAP www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/the-higher-education-archive-programme/

But the personal value of such an experience can't be underestimated, so if you are ever offered a similar opportunity, my advice - and Judy's too - would be to take it!

Cathy Williams

The National (UK) Archives

ARA app – a new addition to the family

As many members will know, ARA has launched an app for members. The app can be downloaded easily and works on Android and Apple devices as well as on Kindle Fire tablets.

We envisage that the app will soon become your main gateway to everything on the ARA website, giving you greater flexibility of access, so that you are not tied to a desktop or laptop. Initially, it will just contain major communications. Over time, more content will be added. Eventually, the app will develop into a mobile hub for members to access information and, hopefully, audio/video content and webinars. Our goal is to improve member experiences and deliver added value, including in terms of the immediacy and flexibility with which members can receive and share information.

What's on the app right now?

- ARC Magazine
- ARC Recruitment
- ARA Today
- News from the website
- Conference details and handbook.

Why do we need an app?

There are a few good reasons why we need the app.

Firstly, like any membership organisation and professional body, we need to keep abreast of technology and enhance our offering to members. Mobile apps

are also now commonplace, with many people now using them on their smart phones; so having an app is just part of the 'new-normal'. So we decided to do that alongside developing the app, which will bring resources like ARC Magazine, section news and other items to your smartphone and (thereby) closer to your fingertips, as well as helping you share more information, more quickly, with each other.

Secondly, the app means better value for money. Putting more information into digital and reducing our print costs enables us to redirect resources to front-line priorities and keep your membership subscriptions as low as possible.

Additional benefits

The launch app is just the first step. Once we've got the basics right, the technology will allow incremental developments and benefits.

What's being considered for future development?

- An easy-to-use facility to renew your membership and update your contact details. This is due in 2017.
- A simple link to finding and booking training, and development opportunities – via the website.
- Recruitment opportunities – through job adverts and early notification for some interesting vacancies.
- Webinars and more audio/video content going forward.

We know that many members will choose not to use the app. That's fine: you'll still be able to access ARA publications and services as you do now.

Operating systems

The ARA app is available for three types of devices:

1. iOS – that's Apple devices, such as the iPhone and iPad. [Must be version iOS version 7 or above.]

2. Android – the Google operating system that runs just about every other smart phone and tablet. [Android software needs to be version 4.0.3 or above.] There's a huge range of Android-compatible products available, with phones and tablets starting from less than £50.
3. Kindle Fire – uses a custom version of the Android system.

How to download

If you are familiar with downloading apps, then the ARA app will be easy to find and install – go to the Google Play Store, Apple App Store or Amazon (for Kindle Fire) and search for "Archives and Records". A more detailed, step-by-step guide for the relatively (or totally) uninitiated is available via the Publications page on the ARA website.

You'll need your existing ARA website user name and password to log in to the app. If you have forgotten one or both, or have never had a user name and password, you'll need to reset/apply via the ARA website.

We will also ask members to revalidate their app details every three months – as a basic security precaution.

The benefits

Members that download the app will benefit from (or contribute to) greater:

- Efficiency – faster communication; you'll get (and be able to share) information more quickly.
- Mobility – information – eg, on job opportunities - will reach your device wherever it is (and you are).
- Convenience – you can keep in touch wherever and whenever it suits you, i.e. wherever there's a mobile connection.
- Web-enabled access – when we publish new documents and information with the app, it can be web enabled, with links taking you straight to the website or hyperlink connection being referenced.



- Engagement - the app enables ARA to better engage with members, and enables members to better engage with each other.
- Value for money – the app helps us reduce publication printing costs and offers another platform for possible advertisers: all this helps us redirect resources to front-line priorities and keep ARA membership subscriptions as low as possible.
- A better environment - by reducing the amount we print, we use less paper and materials associated with packaging and distribution, and emit fewer greenhouse gases.
- Professional development - we hope that the app will open up new opportunities to hold webinars and other video/audio content.
- Things we haven't thought of yet! - we'll welcome members' ideas on how the app can grow and develop in the coming years.

We need your feedback

We'd love to hear what you think, so please send us through your ideas on how we can improve the app, make it more user-friendly or develop new services. We might not be able to do everything at once, but we'll want to do as much as we can as often as we can. Please send your feedback to app@archives.org.uk

John Chambers
CEO, ARA

Registration **news**

Newly registered members of the Archives and Records Association

Following the spring 2016 assessment round of portfolios submitted to the assessors, the successful candidates are as follows:

[Amy-Jo Cameron Williams](#)

Archivist and Records Manager, University of Huddersfield

[Laura Gould](#)

Currently based in Germany

[Lindsay Ince](#)

Assistant Archivist and Records Manager, University of Huddersfield

[Peter Monteith](#)

Assistant Archivist, King's College Cambridge

[Catherine Ross](#)

Archivist, National Meteorological Office

[Louise Smith](#)

Archivist, Cumbria Archive Service

[Kimberley Starkie](#)

Archivist, Teeside Archives

The committee would like to congratulate the newly registered members on their success.

We would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the successful candidates' mentors:

[Sarah Wickham](#)

[Elspeth Reid](#)

[Penny Hutchins](#)

[Elizabeth Ennion-Smith](#)

[Sarah Aitchison](#)

[Catherine Clark](#)

[Lisa Snook](#)

[Keith Sweetmore](#)

The committee would like to thank them for the time and support they have given to their candidates.

Contacts:

General Registration Scheme Enquiries:

registrar@archives.org.uk

Registration Scheme Events Enquiries:

regschemeevents@archives.org.uk

Registration Scheme Admin and Bursaries:

regschemeadmin@archives.org.uk

Registration Scheme Communication:

regschemecomms@archives.org.uk

Registration Scheme Mentor Queries and Advice:

regscheme Mentors@archives.org.uk

Richard Wragg

Communications Officer, Registration Sub-committee

“ Don't forget: Existing candidates have 11 months to submit their portfolio under the existing Registration Scheme. ”

Registration scheme 'Blitz-It' workshop

A Registration scheme 'Blitz-It' Workshop will be held at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London, on Friday 18 November, 1pm-4.30pm.

This FREE half-day workshop is for candidates who have been working on their portfolio for several years and who would welcome some extra support to get their portfolio ready for submission before the final submission date for the old-style Registration scheme in October 2017. Mentors of candidates in this position are also welcome. For more information about the changes to Registration, see the ARA website at www.archives.org.uk/training/registration-scheme.html

The surgery style workshop will provide a brief reminder of the key components of the Registration scheme:

- Structuring the portfolio across the four development areas: formal training courses; study & research; work achievements; contributions to the profession
- The assessment criteria and working through learning outcome forms: motivation; achievement; evidence
- Claiming more than one credit
- Writing the reference
- The assessment process

In addition there will be opportunities for candidates and mentors to have a one-to-one discussion about their portfolio with an experienced assessor.

To get the most out of the workshop, candidates should bring their draft portfolio with them for their own reference. Examples of successful portfolios and learning outcome forms will also be available.

To reserve a place (max. 12) and receive further location details, please contact regschemeevents@archives.org.uk



Geoff Pick. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

ARA Conference 2016

Geoff Pick reflects on his first conference as ARA Chair

It is always challenging, when you are in the middle of organising something, to stand outside and reflect accurately on what was good, bad or plain indifferent. There are the real dangers of wearing rose-tinted glasses, hypersensitive ones or Joo Janta Super-Chromatic Peril Sensitive ones, which turn black at the merest hint of trouble (The last courtesy of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*).

So, having got my excuses in first, what did especially strike me in my first conference as ARA's chair? Possibly unusually, it was the atmosphere. Conferences are always about much more than the papers, discussion panels and formal programming, but often that is where all the planning energy goes. What I found was that it was the informality that set the tone. Words I heard people frequently using were that the conference felt relaxed, friendly, inclusive. I hope that those of you who were attending for the first time, or returning after a gap, experienced that too, but if you didn't, do let us know. 'Networking' is almost a cliché now but being able to chat to fellow records managers, conservators and archivists, to find a new contact somewhere near where you are based or in a similar sized institution, can be



Delegates networking in the Information Village. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

really important. It was noticeable in London but very evident in Dublin last year that the conference especially provides a great meeting venue for those members working in small repositories - not that it doesn't for those of us in larger archives too!

Turning to the conference programme, there were themes that recurred regularly, and not only the formal ones outlined in the call for papers and the individual strands. Issues such as 'belonging' and 'identity' and what they mean for our collections, our users and ourselves cropped up frequently, whether the presentation was from a multinational bank, a local authority archive or a university. It was also very positive that digital preservation is now embedded in the conference and is moving gradually from the worrying but rather vague cloud on the horizon (one for the peril sensitive sunglasses) into the realm of practical solutions.

I think it is the strength of the conference, and a gauge of the breadth of our work and our collections, that we can give a platform to papers from medieval seals, big data and image databases to learning disability history and professional development. There is a danger that this could dilute any overarching conference theme, but personally I feel it is what makes the conference special. It also means that for the hopefully very few papers that don't really deliver there are plenty of standout ones. We do want to encourage more people to attend and for you to feel, particularly if you have a very constrained budget, that the ARA conference is one you can't miss.



The Information Village. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

So do feed in any ideas you have. We don't have a theme for Manchester next year yet, but its underlying philosophy will certainly be Not Boring!

Geoff Pick
Chair, ARA

Liz Sykes. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



Small fish

Bursary winner Liz Sykes reflects on the benefits of swimming in the big pond

My ability to attend this year’s conference was solely down to the generosity of the ARA and their annual bursaries. As a charity archivist, opportunities to attend the conference are slim, and it is with enormous gratitude that I was given the chance to expand my own professional knowledge at the expense of the association.

This year, the ARA conference was set against the striking architecture of Wembley Stadium. My last trip here had been on a beautiful sunny day back in 2012 to watch my own football team win a play-off final. On match day the stadium is streaming with football fans from all over the world. It’s a global icon and made an appropriate backdrop to this year’s conference theme of ‘Global Futures’.



Dr Craig Fees. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

Sophie Gibbs. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



“ *it struck me how global a sector we really have become. Digitisation has opened up our collections beyond the boundaries of our own repositories* ”

For a charity archivist the conference was a bit like being the proverbial ‘small fish in a big pond’ as professionals gathered from all sectors, ready to convey new techniques, technologies and ideas to the world of archives. As many lone archivists will appreciate, the benefit of attending these annual conferences is the opportunity to network and take back to the workplace new ideas from the ‘big fish’, to improve our own small repository.

As my eyes scanned over the conference programme on that first day I found myself largely drawn to the digital preservation strand of the conference. For me this is an area still to be better explored. The fear that still resides in many of us of how to tackle this archival problem remains. But a lot of the talks showed how much could be done on a basic level to get the ball rolling. Dr. Matthew Addis, for example, broke down digital preservation into easier steps: understand your file formats, know what you have and highlight to your organisation the importance of doing something now, to make sure it doesn’t have a black hole in its records in the future.

Of course it is hard not to be overwhelmed by the technical aspects of digital preservation. As Tina

Staples highlighted in her keynote speech, even the vice president of one of the biggest technological companies in the world was advocating people should print photographs if they really cared about them. In a global world where no one yet has all the answers the small fish syndrome comes back to haunt me. But the speakers instilled confidence in our own ability to do something, even if it’s only the basics, to start our own journeys on the road to keeping our institutional memories alive for the future.

It wasn’t all digital preservation, however, and, for a professional with the job title of Records, Archives and Information Manager, it was interesting to attend some of the Archives and Records strands of the conference. Ross Higgins made the valuable point that in this digital age everyone is now a records manager, and it’s now up to us to manage people as well as records. Once again our roles become blurred as the sector changes, and it’s up to us to keep up with it.

It’s also intriguing to discover projects completed by other archives and the successes and challenges they’ve faced. I found Craig Fees’ lecture on PETT most illuminating, as our own organisation looks into how it too can create oral records for the future, with



Ross Higgins. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

those who have interacted with the charity through the years. The Borthwick Institute for Archives had several speakers at the conference this year, highlighting various projects being undertaken. Chris Taylor and Tracy Wilcockson provided a wonderful insight into the importance of joint conservation and digitisation work, which again stimulated new ideas for my own collection.

On reflection, on the long train journey back to Manchester, it struck me how global a sector we really have become. Digitisation has opened up our collections beyond the boundaries of our own repositories, and the sharing of techniques and research from around the world is helping to improve our own methods of caring for our most important assets. Sharing our successes and challenges in a constantly changing world is imperative for the increase of knowledge, which is why conferences like these are so important for the sector. I am grateful to the ARA for the opportunity to experience it.

Bring on Manchester...

Liz Sykes

Together Trust

Big Data in a connected world: friend or foe?

In the second of the Conference's keynotes, Tina Staples considers the challenges and opportunities presented by born digital records

'Big Data' tends to refer to large data sets and data analysis. In this paper, it was used as a headline grabber to highlight the sheer scale of information that is now being created. For example, more data has been created in the past two years than in the entire previous history of the human race; and current predictions suggest that by 2020 around 1.7 megabytes of new information will be created every second, for every human being on the planet.¹

This information revolution inevitably poses significant challenges for the collectors and custodians of 21st-century archives. Digital preservation is widely recognised as one of the most pressing issues of our day. This subject, once dominated by academic theory, is now developing a valuable stream of workable, best practice guidance. However, fast-paced changes in technology mean that archivists cannot afford to rest on their laurels. It will remain a key challenge for decades to come.

There are numerous other practical challenges to consider when dealing with born-digital records:

- Archivists need to be able to demonstrate the authenticity and origins of the digital records in their care.
- Traditional collecting and appraisal procedures are unlikely to transition to the digital

environment, given the sheer volume of data and far from ideal modern recordkeeping standards.

- ISAD (G) has not been updated for born-digital records, and existing cataloguing systems were typically developed for physical records.

Born-digital archives often require a fresh strategic approach too. Business cases tend to require extensive consultation with key stakeholders and shrewd justification to secure extra budget and resources. However, additional resources are no guarantee of success. The pool of well-trained, experienced digital archivists is growing, but still appears limited. This is good news for candidates, but a worrying scenario for employers. Many would argue there is scope for more learning and practical training in academia and in the profession itself; the balance still seems weighted in favour of the paper environment at present.

The shift in mind-set also raises big questions about the future of the profession. Archives are increasingly dependent on IT and the cooperation of IT colleagues. Invariably we need to work more closely with Records Managers, Information Governance, Information Security and Legal teams too. To what extent are we reliant on these other disciplines? How is this affecting our professional identity? Furthermore, can people make the link between digital preservation and the stereotypical view of an archivist (dusty basement/leather bound volumes/white gloves)? Do we have the mandate to own and tackle these problems?

Many of these challenges and questions were - and continue to be - encountered as part of the programme to install a global digital archives system at HSBC. A considerable period of investigation and analysis took place before the team agreed on the eventual solution: Preservica Enterprise Edition, closely synchronised to separate regional instances of Calm catalogues. There then followed another two years developing, testing and installing the system, thanks to the particular complexities of the HSBC set-up.



Tina Staples. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

The system has now been running for nearly two years and the hard work has undoubtedly been worth it, since born-digital archives offer some huge incentives and opportunities for all archivists:

- There are huge efficiency gains to be realised: speedy document retrieval through one-click URL links; full text searching of content; reliable disaster recovery options etc. Future technology, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automated data extraction tools, will no doubt add to this list



Conference delegates enjoying the keynote speech. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

- The 21st century abounds with rich, dynamic content such as films, websites, social media and even Virtual and Augmented Reality. These formats capture thoughts, feelings and experiences of the population at large – in sharp contrast with the more formal, static documentation that has tended to survive pre-20th century.
- By their very nature, born-digital archives are destined to be accessed remotely and this allows us to envisage a day when we can open up our 21st-century collections for global, online interaction, wherever our users are in the world.
- And this is cutting-edge, career-defining stuff. We need pioneers who are willing to make their mark in the profession.

The current state of affairs is promising. We can celebrate the fact that what was once the preserve of big national heritage institutions and academic theory, is now becoming mainstream. There is an abundance of knowledge sharing and collaboration to capitalise on. We also now have a number of vendors on the market with tried and tested systems, including more affordable out-of-the-box Cloud-based services; although we must avoid over-dependence on just one or two leading products to ensure the marketplace remains competitive.

“ more data has been created in the past two years than in the entire previous history of the human race ”

In summary, digital archives have the potential to be a friend and a foe. And as we look to the future, some big questions still remain:

- Are we doing enough to train and educate ourselves, and the next generation?
- Are we strategically well-positioned with information management peers, and key stakeholders?
- And do we really have the appetite to take on responsibility for the collection and custodianship of born-digital archives, alongside our more familiar world of paper archives?

Tina Staples

HSBC

¹ www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2015/09/30/big-data-20-mind-boggling-facts-everyone-must-read/#3da0e5aa6c1d



Melinda Haunton. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

The unmissable and the unexpected

It's been too long since I had a chance to go to conference as a delegate! Although I've been a fairly regular attendee, running surgeries and workshops, it's several years since I actually got to sit in a session and listen. So I was delighted to be attending two days of ARA2016.

There were some sessions which were absolutely unmissable for me. Firstly, I wanted to hear Vicky Hoyle talk about where she has got to with her analysis of 'authorised discourse' in the archive sector's keynote documents. It's not a very comfortable experience to hear your inmost assumptions made transparent, but it is a fascinating one all the same, and essential to check what boundaries we are creating unnecessarily. Vicky pointed out the monolithic use of 'shared heritage' as one example of how we might unintentionally exclude conflicting narratives.

I also spent a fascinating afternoon in two panels that get to the heart of our sector's future, on diverse recruitment and on digital preservation training. How

do we want to develop and how can we structure support to ensure that we do, from tweaking training delivery to whole new possibilities for CPD and recruitment into the sector? Lots to ponder.

To complete my sweep of all three strands, I also attended the briefing on conservation standards: Goodbye PD5454, and hello EN16983 and a revised BS4971! It's great to have a mix of takeaways from conference, and in this case I spent the session scribbling frantically to capture lots of new practical information. Next steps: commenting on the revision of BS4971 and working out exactly how and when we need to amend Archive Service Accreditation to reflect the changing standards landscape. It looked as though people who came to my talk the next day, on upcoming changes to Accreditation to ensure it asks more around digital preservation, were similarly taking notes for the future.

One of the joys of conference is the things you didn't expect. I'm not sure what I thought Arike Oke's paper



Arike Oke. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

“ *One of the joys of conference is the things you didn't expect* ”

on new approaches to the Rambert collections would involve, but silently engaging with a single item, and using that as the basis for an insight into creative practice, was completely unexpected. It was a chance to see archives through new eyes, and brought me right back to the question of boundaries: much as we love context and what it can do for our understanding of collections, it can also be valuable to encounter a single item without prejudging it, and simply embrace what it can tell us.

Melinda Haunton

The National (UK) Archives



Stacey Kennedy (left). Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

Thanks to Ancestry!

The conference's premier sponsor Ancestry funded a new bursary this year, available to local authority archives. Winner Stacey Kennedy from Peterborough Archive Service gives her highlights here.

I attended the conference this year due to the bursary sponsored by Ancestry. This was not the first ARA conference I had attended, however, shortly before applying for the bursary I had obtained a new job as manager for Peterborough Archives Service (Vivacity). This was the first time I was managing a service, and I was a bit apprehensive about the new challenges for myself in this role, coupled with being the service's only qualified archivist. I recognised that the conference was a good opportunity for me to network with others in the sector and to reach out for further support. I had also identified that many of the



Mike Anson on setting goals. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



The Ancestry stand. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

“Most of all, the conference left me feeling positive about what I can achieve and proud to be part of the sector.”

topics in the conference programme were pertinent to challenges I would face.

The last conference I attended, I was doing so in a student capacity pondering the theory for dissertation ideas. This time, I was looking at it from a more practical standpoint for papers that could directly help me in my work tasks. For this reason, this time I attended many more papers from the digital preservation stream compared to last. My service is represented in the East of England Regional Archives Council (EERAC), which is currently trialling Archivemata and AtoM with Arkivum. This was something I had found really daunting when I started, as I knew so little about them. At the conference I spoke with the representatives at the Arkivum stand and got a greater understanding for what they do. I also attended many talks in the digital stream where services had used digital preservation systems and the software that I have started testing, so found it very useful to hear their experiences. The keynote speech delivered on Thursday by Tina Staples reiterated the

importance of being proactive in this digital era. This was something I had previously acknowledged but felt too overwhelmed by to give too much thought to, but my current position means I need to address it. Her talk was cautious in reminding us about our need as a sector to act: to look at new cataloguing standards, to look at the point in the lifecycle of a digital record when we intervene, and to look at our professional identity and its new dependencies in this digital age. But it was also a very positive keynote; telling us the digital age is a big challenge, but it is something we can take on if we act sooner rather than later. I am trying to apply this positive mindset while grappling with the new software in our Arkivum trial!

I also found the conference really useful for learning more about the Transforming Archives project; we are a service lucky enough to be getting a trainee. I enjoyed hearing about the project and its aims in a broader context at the roundtable. I also met many of the current trainees and heard their experiences of the project which

“I have made contacts with people I never would have met had I not attended.”



The Arkivum stand. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

I will reflect on when putting together our trainee's work plan. The project has completely made me rethink how we should be recruiting into the sector, the new skills and experiences we need to be seeking out and embracing. This is something that will stay with me as and when recruiting in the future.

The talk given by Keith Grinsted on the commercialisation of services, and Mike Anson's workshop on setting goals, were thought-provoking for me in my new role as manager, where I am not just thinking of collection management and the public service but also for the first time for me the management of the service. I thoroughly enjoyed the workshops in the Archives and Records stream 'Beyond the collecting policy' and 'The archive effect', as they provided an opportunity to sink our teeth into real life situations and as a group of archivists bring our own experiences and thoughts to the table on how we would approach them.

All in all the conference was a hugely enjoyable and useful experience. I have made contacts with people I never would have met had I not attended, and have a book full of notes for ideas on how I can develop both myself as an archivist and also our service. Most of all, the conference left me feeling positive about what I can achieve and proud to be part of the sector. Huge thanks to Ancestry for this opportunity.

Stacey Kennedy

Peterborough Archives Service

Farewell 5454

Chris Woods introduces EN 16983 and BS 4971, the new standards for the archive sector

In 2009, when the last iteration of BS5454 was up for review, it was developed as a 'Published Document' and not as a National Standard. At the same time, a privately sponsored publication was proposed, PAS:198, for environmental considerations, some of which were relevant to 5454. The 'PD' title was given because a European (not EU) standard was being proposed that would cover the same or similar scope. It was agreed that once the latter was published BSI would withdraw both 5454 and PAS:198. The need for the PD as a stop-gap was demonstrable - BS5454:2000 was fraught with errors and issues, but there were too many archives across the UK needing an up-to-date, competent standard to refer to when issuing instructions to architects and engineers for the sector to wait six or seven years for the new EN standard to be ready.

Now the time has come for the publication of EN 16893. It went out for public comment in 2015 and received 501 comments. It now awaits the formal voting process for all EN standards and if all is well will be published by the end of 2016. It covers all building related standards that PD5454 included, but further strengthened by review amongst European colleagues under the Technical Committee 'Conservation of Cultural Property'. 'Conservation' is formally the term used for all things relating to the protection, care, preservation etc. of heritage collections as well as remedial work. The standard will be titled *Specifications for the construction or modification of buildings or rooms intended for the storage and use of cultural heritage*. As such it is a building construction standard and covers all collection types, not just archives. It includes



Chris Woods, chairman BSI-IDTo2/09 and convener TC346/WG4/TG1. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

much of the most useful parts of PAS:198 as well as being structured very similar to its ‘base document’ PD5454:2012, covering structure, environmental planning, risks, security, fire and flood protection etc. Because archive collection elements relating to environmental parameters, packaging and shelf equipment would be too specific for it, these elements have been incorporated into BS4971, currently under review.

The approach to storage climate in EN16893 has evolved further since PD5454 led with the notion of low energy and passive environments, and it now steers custodians, and their architects and engineers, to seek to achieve environmental stability through good building structure, high air tightness and high thermal insulation against external temperature. BS4971 follows through for archives, promoting the use of a ‘normal’, passively achieved, archive climate for the majority of materials, microclimate packaging to stabilise RH for RH-sensitive materials stored in the normal archive climate temperature (magnetic video and audio cassettes), and microclimate packaging and freezer storage (-20C) for the very highly temperature sensitive materials that will not survive if not frozen (plastic and colour photos, cine film, reel to reel audio magnetic etc). Proposing the same wide parameters allowing for seasonal adjustment of climate, suitable for almost all collections, with a target annual average of less than 18C, instead of proposing a cool store climate for modern media, BS4971 breaks new ground.

It also sets out the Policy and Planning approaches that archives and libraries should take for the long term ‘preventive’ conservation of collections, and proposes criteria for decisions and quality measurement for ‘remedial’ conservation treatment projects.

Taken together these two new standards, EN16893 and BS4971, should provide all the direction that archives need for the conservation of their collections. We at NCS will be providing further advisory information to help in practical delivery of the standards on the ground.

Chris Woods

National Conservation Service



Conference delegates. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

The student perspective

My attendance at the ARA Conference would not have been possible without the CAIS/FARMER Bursary, which covered the full conference registration fee, accommodation and travel expenses. The bursary was a result of the Forum for Archives and Records Management Education and Research (FARMER) conference held in Dundee in April 2016 and was created from the surplus funding of the conference.

The ARA conferences have a reputation for being well-organised, highly professional and friendly in atmosphere. These were also the first impressions even before arriving at the venue: communications, information provided beforehand and the digital conference handbook, as well as ARA mobile phone app, gave an impression of a well-run event. Social media, especially Twitter, was utilised to highlight the event by the official hashtag #ARA2016.

The first keynote came from Colin Prescod, who delved into the themes of race and class in the context of archives. The talk was thought-provoking and highlighted the importance of looking at the archives and recordkeeping practices from different viewpoints, seeing archives as a site of struggle and avoiding the ‘whitewashing’ of the records. As Prescod mentioned during the speech, interventions to the grand national narrative are important, such as considering slavery, immigration and racism against the sometimes glorified history of the nation. Similar themes of ‘other’ in the archives were present in other presentations as well, such as the Friday afternoon’s presentations and panel ‘History of the Present’, which discussed the themes of under-represented communities, refugees and people with learning disabilities in relation to archive representation. Similarly, the various sessions concerning digital preservation, digitisation of collections and digital archives were strongly presented and were running in two separate streams. The most memorable were talks of digitising collections, particularly the Wellcome Trust’s mental health digitisation programme, The Retreat



Anthea Case from Arcadia giving the final keynote. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

collections at York, and LMA’s online image database Collage.

In addition to the premeditated themes, it soon became clear that in order to get the most out of the conference it would be beneficial to see also talks from different fields. For example, the conservator’s viewpoint of the York floods in 2016 shed light on the way a community response in catastrophe situation could become the first line of defence in preventing damage to heritage buildings. Another talk concerning endangered heritage was Friday’s keynote from Arcadia Fund’s Anthea Case, which highlighted the need to save endangered archives from war zones by digitising a varied range of media, from temple murals and rock formations to photographs, and raising the question of whether it was more important to preserve the original ‘first folio’ or the information it holds.

The wide variety of talks attended did help to form a clearer picture of the archives and recordkeeping profession in general. For example, the tutorial held by Rachel Hosker about dealing with films as a part of wider archive collections gave insight to the



Conference delegates. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

challenges presented by film and sound records as a part of traditional archives. The need to have a varied skill set as an archivist is important, which was further underlined by discussions with archivists from different organisations, outside the official conference schedule: Adrian Glew from Tate Archive mentioned the need to train future artists to produce sustainable film and video works, which do not deteriorate over time too quickly, while Rachel Hosker highlighted the importance of training archivists with similar skills in caring for such collections.

In a way, the informal hallway discussions were the most important part of the conference experience: to hear the opinions and experience of archivists already working in the field, the challenges they face and the need to steer training and teaching of new archivists according to the needs of the future challenges. Overall the attitude of already professional archivists, conservators and other professionals was very welcoming and warm – the reputation of the conference held true.

It became very clear that attending professional level archive and recordkeeping conferences in an early stage of career is paramount – it helps to see how other archivists see the field, where one might fit in it and what the different specialisms might mean in practice. It also provides invaluable connections to different institutions, within the UK and internationally. However, the cost of the conference to a student is rather high, which deters many from attending. The full three-day conference fee

with accommodation was around £600, which might be too much for most when adding in travel costs. According to ARA, six bursaries were awarded this year to attend the conference, which helps tremendously with the cost. It would be interesting to know how many students or new professionals attend each year, self-funded or sponsored, although ARA doesn't currently collect this kind of information. However, it would be important to see students and other low-income ARA members be taken into consideration when deciding on conference fees.

From a student's point of view, the ARA Conference was an invaluable experience to learn about current trends, challenges and developments in the wider recordkeeping profession. It gave a clearer view of future professional goals and provided peer support and connections to different organisations. It became clear that in order to gain these insights, it would be important for a student to be able to experience it first-hand. Similarly, to safeguard the development of future archive and recordkeeping professionals with necessary skill sets and attitudes towards the archive work, it would be paramount to include them in the professional discussion and collaboration as early as possible.

Leena Lindell

The University of Dundee



Susan Scott (right). Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



Who needs gelato? Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

Ciao Wembley!

For many years now, I've found the August Bank Holiday week ideal for a summer holiday *in Italia*, so it's been about a decade since I last showed my face at the ARA conference. However the announcement of Wembley as this year's conference location was so convenient that really there was no excuse. I duly persuaded my travelling companion that Italy would be just as delightful if we went a week earlier, altered our long-standing hotel reservation, and booked myself into the full ARA Conference Experience. And what a brilliant plan this turned out to be.

#ARA2016 kicked off in style with an opening keynote speech by the dynamic Colin Prescod, Chair of the Institute of Race Relations, touching on the conference theme 'Global Futures' with a thought-provoking speech on the need to collect, record and integrate Black British history, with, well, 'British history', especially of (although not limited to) the late 20th and early

21st century. Colin probably offered enough food for thought for a whole additional conference strand! After this promising start, the conference began in earnest. One thing that had attracted me originally to the programme (aside from the exotic location) was the digital strand, and I spent the majority of my time in digital sessions. I got a great deal from these, although perhaps not always quite what the speakers intended. It appeared that I knew almost as much (or as little) about the theoretical future of digital developments in technology and storage as those who seem to wrestle with these conundra on a daily basis. Basically there's no simple answer, and whatever solution you choose for whatever need you perceive your archive to have, will be executed more efficiently or more cheaply, or be obsolete in only a few years, or even months. In a later session I learned that there is a comfortingly long way to go before we archivists can be replaced by robots. One organisation is developing software to help transcribe its sizeable

manuscript holding, but with just one author to 'learn' to process, the output is still only about 80% accurate. For those of us with manuscript by many dozens of authors, there's no hope of finding enough sample material to 'teach' the program to recognise the quirks of each writer, so it will still be more accurate (if a lot more time-consuming) to exercise our analogue palaeographical skills for some time to come.

Over in the archival strand I found myself in a tutorial discussing the appraisal and management of pornographic material arriving unexpectedly in one's archive as part of a larger collection (well, who hasn't had that experience?). On an entirely different note, Dr Craig Fees' presentation on use of the Planned Environment Therapy Trust archives, to help the now-adult one-time residents of these schools regain a sense of self and place, was both immensely interesting, and moving; and possibly my favourite presentation of the entire conference. Overall the



Colin Prescod, Chair of the Institute of Race Relations.
Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



The Guildhall Art Gallery. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

programme offers plenty of excellent (and sometimes agonising) choice, and I really regretted missing the conservation sessions on lapis lazuli, and red-rot.

As we all know, the conference is more than the sum of its papers, presentations and posters. It's about socialising, networking, and scoring free pencils from the many suppliers who populated this year what one conference organiser impressed on me was not merely an "information market-place" but a veritable "information village". Over the three days I was delighted to run into many friends and colleagues whom I hadn't seen in ages, and I do think this aspect of conference is every bit as important as a debate as to whether OAIS is still fit for purpose (perhaps not, it was suggested on the first morning). The first of the two evening events was at Guildhall Art Gallery in the City of London, and involved getting around 150 people from Wembley to the City by Tube, and back again. To my knowledge no one got lost either way *en route*. We had the run of the Guildhall Art Gallery that evening, with a drinks and canapé reception laid on by the City of London, some of whose dignitaries were there to greet and mingle with us. We were officially

welcomed to the Gallery by a sheriff of the City of London, Dr Christine Rigden; while the Chief Commoner turned out to be a charming elderly gentleman wearing a very nice gold and enamel medal. Being perfectly common, myself, it was a pleasure to meet him. The second evening event was the gala dinner, followed by dancing to a 1960s tribute band. 1960s-style dressing was encouraged, and some valiant souls did indeed go if not the whole hog, then certainly part-way. Chair Geoff Pick and President Alex Buchanan bravely led the way onto the dance-floor to kick off this part of the evening, and if anyone wants a photograph of that, I may just have one – for a price.

So, was this year's ARA conference worth re-jigging my entire Italian holiday arrangements for? Well, yes, in hindsight I'd say I rather think it was. For lone archivists like me, it's always nice to spend time with other like-minded people, and find out about new ideas and developments. There was a lot of food for thought, plenty of interesting ideas to take away and think about, many old friends to catch up with, and new people to meet. And if I learned one truly salutary thing from the whole experience, it's that I should really not leave it so long

“ *the conference is more than the sum of its papers, presentations and posters. It's about socialising, networking, and scoring free pencils* ”

before going again. I'd give the credit for that to the organising committee, who managed to make the whole event both purposeful and enjoyable.

So, many thanks to them for all their efforts, and I'll definitely be back, eventually. In the meantime I have some nice new pencils, courtesy of the Information Village, and a suite in a lovely little hotel in Florence already blocked out for August Bank Holiday week 2017. I'll just wait and see what next year's programme looks like, before committing absolutely...

Susan Scott

Archivist



Alex Buchanan and John Chambers. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

Global futures

A view from ARA President Alex Buchanan

“Until the lions have their historians, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter”. With this aphorism, Colin Prescod, Chair of the Institute of Race Relations, in his opening keynote of the ARA 2016 conference, reminded us that histories are not, cannot and must not be considered neutral. Rather, being written in the present, they have the potential to repair the injustices of the past but only if undertaken with full commitment to reparation. His impassioned lecture spoke of failures as well as successes, tokenism as well as genuine engagement, and, for me, opened the conference with a challenge to which members of the profession must continue to respond. In the case of black communities and their archives,

the struggle has been to ‘belong’ both in Britain and in mainstream heritage institutions, not as tokens but as an essential part of Britain’s past and future. Its imperial past inscribes the global into the local, an ongoing reality, as we were reminded later in the conference by Evan Easton-Calabria, Anne Irfan, Ann MacDonald and Paul Dudman speaking on refugees, archives and refugee archives. Yet there remains a tension between what stories archives can tell, what they ought to tell and how they ought to tell it in order for archives to become ‘spaces of belonging’, in the words of Craig Fees, themes also addressed in relation to the LGBTQ community and people with learning disabilities.

‘Belonging’ became an ongoing theme of the conference, as an affective state, a political imperative and a delegate experience. Archival affect was the topic of a workshop by Caroline Williams, whilst Elizabeth Baker and Gary Brannan provided an update on findings regarding the emotional support needs of record-keepers. The politics of archival belonging were discussed by James Lowry in a paper which reopened the debate on the so-called ‘displaced archives’, aiming to promote practical solutions, and also in one of the workshops, where Janette Lisa Martin and Claire Mayoh encouraged participants to question what belongs in an archive when content may be challenging, disturbing or even illegal.



Margaret Procter speaking on international collaboration. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



Panel on refugees and refugee archives. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

So, where do we, as professionals, belong? Margaret Procter spoke of the long history of international collaboration within the sector and shared her thoughts on how each of us can contribute to a global conversation. A welcome aspect of this year's conference was that whereas, in the past, delegates tended to remain in 'their' strand, whether it be archives, records management, or conservation, this year there was considerable movement between sessions - at times the archives strand seemed comparatively empty whilst some conservation sessions were standing room only. The inclusion of digital and digitisation strands continued to support cross-pollination of ideas, though it cannot be long before such categorisations seem archaic, as the digital becomes increasingly mainstream. This is an arena in which we all belong and it is clear that many are eagerly addressing the challenges. Also welcome was the level of research involved in many of the papers: the ARA conference has become a place where research results are reported and professional input to collaborative research invited: we can all offer something of value to projects to improve our working lives and our standards of work. A final observation relates to the numbers of international and younger delegates and the contribution of some of the latter via the poster session, introduced for the first time last year and now a successful part of proceedings. A number of sessions related to investment in the future



Exhibitors in the poster session. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

of our profession. ARA is very grateful to those who contributed to making bursaries available for new professionals and we are delighted that our programme has a global appeal. The Conference also developed into conversations on social media, enabling everyone to join in. Although we've now said 'Goodbye Wembley' for this year, we are already looking forward to Manchester 2017.

Alex Buchanan

ARA President

ARA 2016 Information Village

Views from some of the many exhibitors at this year's conference

For us, exhibiting at the ARA conference is about catching up with existing clients in person – hearing about their latest projects, carrying on conversations around how we can help them digitise their collections and make them accessible online.

One particular conversation on our stand this year that sticks out was an archivist describing an oral history project which involved interviewing former sailors, and relating the risqué nature of the stories that the interviews had revealed!

The conference also provides a forum for us to stay in touch with the challenges and issues the sector is facing, and meet new contacts in the archives community. As usual this year's ARA conference was very well attended and provided us with ample opportunity to do both of the above.

The high proportion of new professionals attending this year and approaching us to discuss their digitisation plans was a highlight. I spoke to a number of people from the sector who had recently taken the first step in their careers and were attending the ARA for the first time.

Another positive, that I think reflects the growing importance of the conference, was the number of international delegates - from the USA, Nigeria, and even further afield.

We'll certainly be looking to exhibit again at next year's event in Manchester!

Ryan Kyle

TownsWeb Archiving Ltd



Ryan Kyle (left), TownsWeb Archiving Ltd. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



Elizabeth Thurlow, ARA Section for New Professionals. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



Anoush Simon, Aberystwyth University. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

This was the Section for New Professionals' first stand at the ARA conference, which was an exciting time for us, providing an opportunity to promote the Section not only to the new professionals in attendance, but also to those at the conference, who although no longer new professionals themselves, now manage trainees, interns, volunteers or recently qualified professionals.

Our stall also allowed us to speak to a few of the lucky conference bursary winners, including Sian Morgan, the recipient of the crowd funded new professionals bursary. As a Section we were overwhelmed by the amazing response of the record keeping sector in raising the funds to support a new professional to attend the conference. It really is encouraging to see the benefits of supporting those starting their career in the profession.

Elizabeth Thurlow

ARA Section for New Professionals

Colleagues from Information Studies at Aberystwyth University are regular contributors to the ARA conference, but this is the first time we have also had a promotional stall – so we weren't quite sure what to expect. This is also the first time the conference has seen two full days of exhibitors' stalls – a great idea as it gives delegates time to see and speak to everyone they need to. Participating was a really good experience – the Information Village was well organised, friendly and above all, gave us a focal point to say hello to current students and alumni, as well as discussing our courses with prospective students. As one of the biggest distance learning providers in archives, records management and information studies post-graduate education, it was great to see past and present students doing so well in their professional lives. We also found out useful and positive things about what we do – particularly that our CPD module in Digital Preservation is just what some delegates were looking for to enhance their professional portfolio. Plus – the reception at the Guildhall was excellent!

Anoush Simon

Aberystwyth University



The Information Village.



Exhibitors at The Information Village. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



Exhibitors at The Information Village. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

Views on the ARA conference from an archive trainee

I was fortunate enough to attend the ARA Conference for the first time as part of The National Archives' 'Skills for the Future' Traineeship that I have been part of this year. As a trainee who is very much new to the archive sector, I can safely say that the ARA Conference has been an invaluable training experience. Not only has it been an opportunity to meet with archivists from across the country, but it has also been a chance to hear about some of their current projects and aims for the future. Perhaps most valuable to a new trainee is also the opportunity to learn about the main themes and challenges facing archives at present. This year's conference was focused on the theme of 'Global Futures' and from simply reading the conference timetable, it was immediately evident that this theme can be interpreted in many ways. Throughout the three days I attended talks on the repatriation of displaced archives, Archive Service Accreditation, how to avoid changes in digital images, how to describe film archives and how to transcribe with technology, and that was only a small number of the topics approached during the conference.

One memorable moment for me was during Tina Staples' keynote speech, where she willed the audience to identify what it was that first made them want to be archivists. While seemingly quite a simple question, what made it memorable for me was that the majority of the audience, myself included, seemed to have been inspired by the chance to work with the archive documents and



Bethany Elliot (centre). Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



Bethany Elliot and Stacey Kennedy at the Guildhall drinks reception. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



Delegates at the Gala Dinner. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



Delegates at the Gala Dinner.
Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

“ Perhaps most valuable to a new trainee is also the opportunity to learn about the main themes and challenges facing archives at present. ”

to help readers with their research, while the theme of ‘Global Futures’ suggests that as we continue to work in the archive sector, the need to promote our collections and what we do, for numerous reasons, is becoming more evident.

In keeping with this theme was a tutorial that I attended by Caroline Williams, titled *The "archive effect": users, emotions and global impact*. The tutorial challenged the audience to question what the emotional impact of using archives may be for the users, and how we can identify these emotions, or even if we should be identifying them at all. How important is that emotional response, and should we be looking at this more closely? An interesting conclusion that came from this was the idea that we could use these emotional responses to tailor archive outreach and perhaps even to promote what we can do as an archive.

The conference offered an interesting and varied programme, and this article is of course only a small

taster of the sessions and tutorials that I was able to attend over the three days. My comments on the conference would not be complete without also mentioning the wonderful activities outside of those sessions. There was an ‘Information Village’, full of stands advertising archive services and products, and there were also some poster presentations, including some from my fellow ‘Skills for the Future’ trainees. In addition to this there were great opportunities to meet and socialise with the other delegates at the Guildhall Drinks Reception on Wednesday evening and at the Gala Dinner on Thursday, which included a brilliant 60s band and even a little dancing!

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to attend this year’s ARA Conference and will be taking all that I’ve learnt forward in my continued archives training.

Bethany Elliot

Skills for the Future Trainee



A conservator's view

I have been to several ARA conferences over the last 27 years but never in the capacity of a Bursary winner.

After a very early start and train journey into London I arrived at the Wembley Hilton in time to hear Geoff Pick's welcome address to delegates, followed by the first keynote speech of the conference.

All sessions of the conservation strand took place on the 4th floor of the hotel. The first speaker (Zoe Reid) discussed with us recent conservation projects she had been involved in, which included the Century Ireland project, which is an online historical newspaper that describes Irish life in the early part of the 20th century. This session amply illustrated the theme of this year's conference (global futures), where public demand to access these records is becoming ever more significant through the creation of websites, Twitter feeds and

postings on Facebook. More importantly, if it wasn't for conservation/preservation projects such as the ones discussed then access to these resources would be severely diminished.

The morning continued with a session on innovations in digital condition writing (Annika Erickson), where software such as Artichek has been designed to improve collections care management. The software has been developed out of a desire to move away from the tedium of paper based report writing.

Chris Woods then spoke about the new standards (EN 16983 & BS 4971) which are to replace the existing standard soon to be withdrawn. The new standard will become the benchmark that all conservators and archivists can use to specify buildings, environmental requirements for archival storage and approaches to



Mark Allen demonstrating the repair of outer joints. Photos copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

implementing conservation/care of collections policies etc.

After lunch, the programme included the community response in York after major floods in 2015, volunteers in conservation and a wonderful talk on the mysteries of lapis lazuli. This fascinating pigment was beautifully explained by David Leon Margulies, who also told us of his own experiences in trying to replicate an original recipe.

After our evening meal I attended the drinks reception at the Guildhall Art Gallery, where I viewed some fantastic paintings and had the opportunity to see a recently unearthed Roman amphitheatre at the foot of the building, which was absolutely fascinating and a personal highlight.

Day two was a good mixture of theory and practical sessions. Highlights included acid deterioration (red rot) in leather bindings. As conservators our options are limited in what treatment we can use or is readily available to treat disintegrating leather. Dr. Anne Lama has carried out extensive research on the subject and has developed a product that will increase the

Victoria Stevens on the dyeing of textiles for book conservation. Photos copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



Mark Allen, Chair of ARA's Preservation and Conservation Section (right) and Antony Oliver (left) enjoy a drink at The Guildhall reception. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

longevity of leather damaged by acid, by delaying the deterioration rate. She explained that a formulation containing aluminium oxide and oxazolidine II introduces stabilising properties within the damaged leather and also provides long term protection against an acidic environment.

Conservators always love to see fellow professionals giving a practical demonstration of a particular technique/method and I'm no exception! Victoria Stevens showed us the processes used in the dyeing of textiles for book conservation, followed by Mark Allen on the repair of outer joints on volumes using Japanese paper in conjunction with board reattachment. Catherine Dand then showed us how the use of a Dino-Lite digital microscope can support the delivery of day-to-day tasks in the workshop and how it can offer conservators a way to engage with interested parties outside the conservation profession.

No conference would be the same without the Annual Gala Dinner. It was lovely to see recent graduates in the conservation training scheme and instructors receive

their fully deserved certificates. The theme of the evening was the 1960s, and some people did make the effort and dress accordingly. A late night on the terrace of the hotel chatting to friends and colleagues rounded off a thoroughly enjoyable day.

The final day's programme was again varied and nicely paced throughout, with a mixture of theory and practical sessions. First up was Annie Starkey speaking about how she won a fellowship awarded by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. This enables her to travel to countries such as Italy and France to work with artisan papermakers to develop a high quality repair paper for use on our western archive collections. Zoe Kennington then explained to us how important it is to forge connections with fellow conservators across multi disciplines. She illustrated this through a series of projects she has been involved in recently with textile and works of art on paper conservators.

The afternoon brought two very interesting practical sessions. The first of which was by Yuki Russell, who demonstrated the use of Porelle Hydra 3D (membrane),

Rhiannon Griffiths receiving her certificate in Archive Conservation. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.



which can be used to humidify localised distortions in parchment and vellum. Once hydrated the membrane effectively “irons” out creases/distortions. This was followed by Laura Matthews and Nick Tremlett, who discussed the uses of Porelle membranes in preservation and conservation and how this membrane is being developed and manufactured with the possibility of it being used as a protective packaging layer. Although the Porelle Hydra 3D is still being piloted, another product, Porelle Hydra PTFE, is currently available from Conservation by Design (www.conservation-by-design.com).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank ARA for awarding me a Bursary to attend this conference. Also, thanks to my colleague Catherine Dand who organised a really excellent and varied programme of speakers and sessions for the conservators.

I always find going to conference very inspirational and rewarding. Your head is buzzing from all the information you have absorbed. Some of the ideas, techniques, products I have learnt about at conference I will want to investigate further, for possible future use in our own collections management programme. I would highly recommend attendance at conference to conservators and other interested professionals.

Antony Oliver RCARA

Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information



Christina Wood (second right) at the Guildhall drinks reception. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

ARA bursary winner

Christina Wood gives her views as one of the ARA's bursary winners

It was a great privilege to be able to attend the 2016 ARA Conference in London. It was my first conference and I was simply overawed by it all. There was a good buzz surrounding the whole three days – everyone was there to learn and enjoy themselves.

I was glad to be able to attend at least one session in each of the three main streams of Archives and Records, Conservation, and Digital Archives and Records. There were many highlights during each day, but I can only concentrate on a couple.

As everybody knows, digital records are being produced every second of the day and their content and size are vast. The thought of having to preserve these can be overwhelming which can lead – as Dr Matthew Addis said in his presentation



Steve Connelly receiving his Distinguished Service Award. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for ARA.

'Digital preservation: Keep calm and get on with it!' – to “organisations having preservation paralysis” so that they “end up doing nothing”. However, he pointed out that it is essential to do *something*: “A little bit of preservation can go a long way to preserve archival content.” The best thing to do is start simple and work your way up. The National Archives DROID free software tool can help to identify versions of file formats held, how old they are and their size. It is essential that archivists know first what digital file formats have been used; once that is known other sources can be employed to help “keep the bits safe”. So, there’s no need to fear or dread digital preservation – just make a start!

On Friday, there was a change to one of the presentations which I was particularly looking forward to, but the alternative talk given by Caroline Brown, entitled 'Global Futures: Making a Difference to Lives – Strathmartine Hospital Histories', more than made up for any disappointment. Formerly called the Baldovan Orphanage and Asylum, Strathmartine Hospital was established in 1852 and closed its doors in 2003. An oral history project was carried out to capture the memories and experiences of the patients and staff. While some former patients were willing to be recorded, others used story boards to recreate their memories, and one individual made a film about the hospital. Nursing staff felt they could not give

their testimony, as the hospital had an adverse reputation and there was a stigma attached to having worked there. The oral history project ‘exposed difficulties in the system but also gave the former residents the opportunity to see that progress had been made’ towards resolving them. It made people aware of the role of archives in society and how they can hold institutions to account. Resources were created on ‘how to tell your own story’ and an exhibition is being mounted at the Scottish Parliament at the end of this year. The presentation showed how archives working in collaboration with communities can have a powerful effect on individuals and the community as a whole.

A very personal highlight for me was being there at the Gala Dinner when my former line manager, Steve Connelly, was presented with the Distinguished Service Award – in my opinion he truly deserved it. I was delighted to see how well received his award was by everybody in attendance.

I cannot thank the Archives & Records Association enough for making it possible for me to attend the conference.

Christina Wood

Highland Archive Centre



A first time for everything

I arrived at the final day of the 2016 Conference with a lot of excitement and just a few nerves. The nerves had nothing to do with the Conference's organisation or the people I'd be meeting – I'd heard universally good things about both. Rather, being a fairly recently qualified archivist, I was attending the Conference both as a first-time delegate *and* as a first-time speaker. Crossing both thresholds at once amidst such a large gathering of my professional peers... well, I was a tad fretful.

My unnecessary fretting, however, lasted only for the short walk from the Underground station to the hotel, and it evaporated instantly upon the warm welcome I received. It was wonderful to see so many people gathered together in a friendly, polite, enthusiastic atmosphere. I bumped into several former colleagues and teachers, and there was plenty of entertaining discussion between sessions. Studying the delegate list on my way home that evening, I was really impressed by how far (and near) people had journeyed to reach this year's venue.

My roundtable session was part of the 'Digital archives and records' stream of talks, and I elected to stay in this stream for the rest of my day at the Conference. I'm very glad I did. Digitisation projects, crowdsourcing, artificial intelligence, linked data, the influence on archival cataloguing of web giants like Google and Amazon... all of these subjects and more reared their heads throughout a programme that, in my opinion, struck an excellent balance between theory, practical experience, and predictions for the future. I left with reams of notes and lots of avenues for further reading. I'll share with you my favourite note from the stream: Martin Bradley and Aisling Keane observed that their Abbey Theatre archive digitisation project has in three years created around 20 times more data than the Hubble Space Telescope has transmitted since the early 1990s.

If a recurring theme could be detected in the talks I attended, it was the changing role of the archivist in the Internet age. We seem to be moving towards a model in which archivists conduct highly detailed



Delegates in the Digital Preservation stream.
Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.

“It’s a very exciting time to be an archivist...”

exploratory, curatorial and promotional work with subsets of collections, often in collaboration with other specialists. The resulting datasets could then support machine learning-based automatic processing of wider collections. They could also provide an expertly curated framework for the exploration, transformation and additional description of archives by an Internet-enabled global public. Throughout the day I reflected on the kinds of digital skills we may want to add to our CVs in the coming years. It’s a very exciting time to be an archivist...

And then it was my turn to speak. Ten minutes only – our roundtable chairperson Jone Garmendia did sterling work with the stop clock – speaking in front of a very receptive and welcoming audience. I’m thrilled to have had the opportunity to contribute, especially with the question and answer session that followed, which culminated in an energetic reassessment of the uses of authority files.

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I was only able to attend one day of the 2016 Conference, but I wish I could have been there for all three. My impressions as a first-time delegate were overwhelmingly positive. I learned a great deal, met former colleagues, and made new introductions. I went home feeling more enthused than ever about our amazing vocation. I'm hoping to make the trip to Manchester to attend the entire Conference next year. If you've never been before, I can thoroughly recommend it.

Matt Antony

The Postal Museum

Delegates networking in the Information Village. Photo copyright Carrie Davenport for the ARA.



Business Archives Council conference

The 2016 Business Archives Council conference is taking place on Monday 21 November in London at the headquarters of HSBC.

We will be sharing, discussing and debating the variety of ways business archives can branch out and become more diverse. Speakers and contributors will cover a wide range of topics focused on the theme of diversity, from moving beyond traditional archive functions to making collections more relevant for the 21st century audience. A range of case studies will consider what practical steps can be taken to make your collection more diverse, with a focus on using volunteers and members of the community to collect, interpret and catalogue.

Contributors include The National Archives, HSBC, Boots, University College London, History of Advertising Trust, York Libraries and Archives, BBC Archive and Rambert Archive.

The venue address is HSBC Holdings plc, 8 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HQ.

Following the conference there will be a reception for the presentation of the BAC Wadsworth Prize for Business History, taking place nearby at Barclays from 6pm. All conference delegates are welcome to attend.

Find out more and book your place now at:
www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activitiesobjectives/conference

Please send any questions to conference organisers Hannah Jenkinson and Jemma Lee at: bacconference@gmail.com

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