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People  
in  
records



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People  
working  
in records



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People  
using  
records



## Conference 2018 Issue

Martyn Sibley –  
keynote speaker



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## Welcome to ARC Magazine November 2018

How to present an accurate record of the vast array of options on offer this year at Glasgow in one edition of ARC? That is the challenge in this year's Conference edition of your magazine.

To begin with, #ARA2018 was both global and local. We had speakers from all four corners of the world and from thriving communities in the UK and Ireland. By design, the Conference committee chose to be provocative – based on the principle that there's no point in investing the time and money in coming together solely to sail through three days in a cotton-wool ball of complacency.

We were confronted with the full range of challenges facing our sector – ie, what we record and how we do it, how we evolve as a community and support each other, and how we serve the widest possible audience and range of stakeholders. Outstanding papers from colleagues in records management, conservation and archival specialisms highlighted the range of exciting thinking and innovation going on at the coal-face.

The ARA Scotland region set the bar amazingly high in terms of warmth of welcome and showcasing Scotland's huge records resources. Our sponsors and exhibitors engaged energetically. And social media has now become an essential tool for expanding debate and participation beyond the four walls of the Conference venue.

This edition of ARC is dedicated to one person who had aimed to join us in Glasgow, but in the end could not. Terry Davies was an aspiring archive conservator at the National Library of Wales and had enrolled on the ARA Certificate in Archive Conservation programme. His conservator colleagues – 'devastated at his loss' earlier in the year – have described him as 'a

wonderful man with an extremely promising career ahead of him'. Terry was also the inspiration behind Mark Allen's session on paper conservation at Conference. Our deepest condolences to his family and colleagues.



**Jon Elliott**  
*Head of Public Affairs, ARA*

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Front cover: ARC Magazine – Martyn Sibley – keynote speaker (image copyright Archives and Records Association (U & Ireland))

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

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# opening lines



## A Glasgow Manifesto

#ARA2018 was a conference which questioned the status quo of the record. The tone was set right from the beginning with Professor Gus John's opening keynote address, which laid down a clear and strident challenge to the audience to ensure that the records we keep and care for are inclusive and representative of global majority communities.

The Glasgow conference raised many questions and generated much debate about the current state of our record-keeping and conservation profession. Our brilliant keynotes set the tone and our fantastic speakers continued the discussions throughout the three days of Conference.

I should add my thanks also to Conference sponsors, who help keep us abreast of new technologies and services to improve what we do, engage in debate and help us keep the cost of Conference flat for attendees each year. If you want to revisit and/or reflect on Conference, or missed some sessions or were unable to attend at all, we have made videos of over twenty sessions (including the keynotes) available to view for free on the Conference website: [conference.archives.org.uk/video](http://conference.archives.org.uk/video)

Debate and discussion also occurred on social media at #ARA2018, where the idea of drafting a 'Glasgow Manifesto' to capture the spirit and ambition of the event was raised (thanks to @Postcard\_Jim for the inspiration!).

Having absorbed the issues raised by the speakers, the opinions expressed by participants and the feedback received from delegates, we have produced such a manifesto – a statement of intent, which we hope captures the key themes of the conference and what you wanted to see.

This document will provide guidance, focus and inspiration for the ARA Board in its activities over the coming year as we put together an action plan. Conference 2019 in Leeds will revisit both, and judge how well we are doing.

See opposite for a summary infographic of the manifesto. The full text is available on the Conference website front page: [conference.archives.org.uk](http://conference.archives.org.uk) The ARA Board will also publicise updates on our work on Twitter, using #ARAGlasgowManifesto Please also use it to contribute your own thoughts!

**Karl Magee**

Chair, ARA Board

## #ARAGlasgowManifesto

"People make records, that is true, but people also determine what to record and what to do with it once its recorded"  
Professor Gus John  
(Keynote speaker, ARA conference, 29 August 2018)

The Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) is committed to:



Being an agent for change and reflecting the variety and diversity of the communities we serve in the records we manage, preserve and keep



Opening up opportunities to work in the record-keeping profession to all



Supporting record-keepers and conservators in the many challenges they face working in the sector

## #ARAGlasgowManifesto

"Don't be overawed... it's always those little actions that you can take today and next week that get things moving"  
Martyn Sibley  
(Keynote speaker, ARA conference, 31 August 2018)

### Next steps...



The Board of the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) will develop an action plan to tackle the challenges set in this manifesto. Updates on our work will be publicised using #ARAGlasgowManifesto

The Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) is committed to reviewing this document at the 2019 Leeds conference which will take place at the Queens Hotel, Leeds, from 28 to 30 August 2019.

The full text of the #ARAGlasgowManifesto is available at: <http://conference.archives.org.uk/>



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# Professional development news



## ARA opens CPD review to all Registered members

In 2019, the ARA will begin contacting Registered members to invite them to take part in the new CPD Review. This article explains the process, and why continuing with your professional development is so important.

Members may recall that, during 2017, ARC ran a series of articles explaining the ARA's new approach to professional development. This included a new process, originally called revalidation, to ensure that Registered members, and future Foundation members and Fellows, continue with their professional development after they have qualified with the ARA. Now known as CPD Review, the process will begin for the majority of Registered members from 2019 onwards.

So why is CPD so important? All professions experience change, and the archives and records sector is no different. External influences such as legislative change, digitisation, emerging best practice and new workforce development strategies are just some examples of why this profession cannot stand still. We all need to continue to develop knowledge, skills and competencies to ensure

that – whether we are professionals, para-professionals or volunteers – we are equipped to respond positively to change. CPD is the process through which we do this, and the CPD Review process will ensure that existing Registered members, and future Foundation members and Fellows, maintain the standards of competency and practice that they demonstrated at the time they qualified at that level.

The work of the ARA's pay review group is also connected with this approach. If we are to advocate to employers higher pay for the sector, then the demonstration of national professional standards as described in the ARA competency framework, and the continuing of professional development and reflective practice, can only help strengthen our collective case.

### What happens next?

From 2019 onwards, we will begin contacting all Registered members to notify them of the CPD Review process with an open invitation to take part. Although we will propose a submission timetable, Registered members are welcome to engage with the CPD Review now, as completion of the CPD Review is an important first step to eligibility for Fellowship, the highest level of professional recognition offered by the ARA. Registered members looking to progress to Fellowship may therefore prefer to take part in the review as soon as possible. Please contact me directly about this, at: [chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk](mailto:chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk) Over time we will move to a five-year cycle where those with Foundation, Registered and Fellowship qualifications will be invited to take part in the CPD Review.

### What do I need to do?

We advise Registered members to wait until we contact you, unless you wish to

take part now. There are a lot of people who will need to go through Review in due course, and it will take time to do this in an orderly fashion and maintain standards. The process will involve you identifying four learning objectives during the past five years, so please do begin collecting evidence now that you are maintaining your Registration-level competencies. Examples of learning objectives could be: updating your knowledge of the new GDPR, developing management competencies and exhibition/presentations skills.

Fundamentally, your learning objectives are unique to you, even though there may be some wider professional issues that impact on many archivists, archive conservators and records managers collectively. So there isn't ever a 'right' or 'wrong' objective in the review process, but each one does need to relate to you and your professional life. We are interested to know what topics you have identified as objectives, what you did to meet them, and how you reflected on the outcomes; for example, what went well, what didn't go so well, and what you can do to improve.

### What if I choose to not take part in the CPD Review?

Any Registered members and future Foundation members and Fellows that decide not to take part in the CPD Review process will eventually no longer be able to describe themselves as a Registered member (or Foundation member or Fellow) but can remain as an Individual member of the ARA.

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### Chris Sheridan

CPD Programme Manager

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# Collecting matters

The strapline of this year's ARA conference - 'People Make Records' - resonated with me in more ways than one. The fundamental message I kept coming back to throughout the conference was actually the title of this column – collecting matters.

Collecting matters to people recorded in the records and those using the records. We were especially reminded of this during Michelle Caswell's keynote on community archives and the political urgency of memory work. She recounted the importance that community groups place on the archive as somewhere to learn about histories of oppression and for them to harness this in their immediate work of attempting to break the cycle of social oppression.

One of the key drivers that motivates me is to provide and promote access to records, and a thread running throughout the conference was 'audience and inclusivity'.

One suggested answer was looking at the ways we can improve access through better cataloguing and presentation systems. I was left with a bigger impression about the importance of teasing out stories in the records; stories that make the records relevant in different ways to different audiences.

This was particularly brought home in a poster presentation on the First World War pension appeals project at the National Records of Scotland. Full of rich metadata useful to family historians, these records actually contain information that is relevant to many different audiences – at the same time, they are full of medical terminology, yet also speak to post-war social history and can even be interrogated for perceptions and attitudes towards 'class' in the early twentieth century.

Records mean different things to different people and it's important we keep audiences at the forefront as we collect, preserve and make records accessible – that we help tell the stories of the people in the records to people using the records.

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**Caroline Catchpole**

The National Archives (UK)

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# Reflections on Glasgow...and anticipating #ARA2019 in Leeds

Even as you are reading about what happened in Glasgow, planning is already underway for next year's ARA Conference. We will be at the Queens Hotel in Leeds – like Glasgow's Grand Central, it's a centrally-located former railway hotel (though this is, of course, entirely coincidental!).

To be honest, for me #ARA2018 was something of a blur. I spent a lot of time worrying about what might go wrong and consequently, though I saw a bit of every session, I didn't get to any of them in their entirety. However, people told me that they were enjoying Conference and there was certainly a buzz on social media. The programme was intended to be challenging, thought-provoking and interactive, and the speakers definitely rose to the occasion.

Of course, it would be easy to bask in the success of Glasgow, but there is no room for complacency and we're busy analysing the feedback that we have received, whether on the venue, the delegate experience or the programme. This is no simple task, with nearly 200 completed surveys and over 800 free text comments. But I want to say a big 'thank you' for this and, while some things are beyond our control, we will try to address as many of your points as we can. One suggestion was to import Tunnock's caramel wafers for #ARA2019 - alas, I don't think that we can promise that, but the



reappearance of another clear favourite, the ice cream cart, is a distinct possibility.

A key point to emerge from Glasgow was the desire to continue with the discussion and to act on some of the big issues. This is being addressed in the #ARAGlasgowManifesto initiative that Karl Magee references in this edition, and there will of course be follow-up to assess our progress on this in Leeds. More specifically, we want to build on the 'People looking after records' sub-theme from Glasgow, and take a closer look at our profession in the widest sense. So we'll be encouraging debates about our careers, our training and skills, and our workplaces.

The call for papers will issue shortly after this issue of ARC lands on your doormats or in your mobile devices and it will be open for six weeks. Last year, we had a tremendous response. The content of the conference programme really does depend upon your contributions, so do please think about making a submission. We will announce the programme in February, and booking will open at the same time (as you now rightly expect, we'll also be doing our best to keep attendance costs as low as possible).

In the meantime, I'm thinking about one of the hardest decisions that the Conference Chair has to make – which flavours of ice cream!

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**Mike Anson**

ARA Conference Chair

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# People make records

Bursary winner! Image courtesy of Rachael Jones.

This summer I was lucky enough to receive an ARA bursary to attend my first Conference in my home city of Glasgow. The theme of the conference: ‘People Make Records’ echoed the City’s motto, ‘People Make Glasgow’, and this slogan was a great platform for some very important discussions throughout the three days. As I perused the programme in the days before, I was looking forward to the great variety of topics, such as volunteers, community archives, digital preservation, and building audiences. The experience did not disappoint, with records professionals from around the world sharing their research and experiences while also providing food for thought.

The conference opened with a powerful keynote speech by Professor Gus John: writer, education and social campaigner, researcher and lecturer, who described the need for archivists to actively combat social and racial injustice in the recording of history. Professor John’s accurate and necessarily uncomfortable assessment of white, Eurocentric privilege seen in education and the record-keeping profession, was a call to arms to redress the balance by giving under-represented community histories the attention they deserve and enabling those from disenfranchised backgrounds to study information management.

The first session I attended followed this theme, with speakers discussing representation and the need for strong collaboration between communities and archivists to uncover and share diverse stories. I

was struck by how the preservation and sharing of community stories can feed back into a community identity and empower its members.

These opening sessions set the tone for the rest of the conference, with themes of inclusivity and diversity explored throughout. In the face of the message to our profession to combat endemic and historic social and racial injustice, I was initially guilty of feeling too small to attempt anything as large scale and important. In the course of the conference, however, I realised that it is this feeling of impotence and consequent inaction that maintains the status quo, and that if enough of the profession shares the stories of disenfranchised groups from within their records, and diversifies the workforce, we can break the cycle of history repeating itself (to use the apt metaphor of the second keynote speaker Michelle Caswell of the University of California, Los Angeles).

The preservation of digitised and born-digital records is a rapidly growing concern for the record-keeping profession and was another theme that particularly caught my attention. Until this conference, most presentations on the subject I had attended focused on defining the theoretical ‘problems’ of digital files and the ways in which the task of preserving them is a thorny and gargantuan one. Unsurprisingly, this has led to many colleagues, including myself, feeling daunted when dealing with the ingest, cataloguing, and processing of digital files.



However, the papers in this conference were much more positive in tone and offered some brilliant case studies. A number of repositories sharing their own digital preservation practice was helpful in bringing this hugely important field out of the realm of theory and into the reality of information management. The stimulating ‘Digital Skills’ session on the last day enabled discussion between the panel members and the entire audience about the skills we need to deal with the growing mass of digital records. This debate cemented my instinct that the traditional skills of assessment, appraisal, description, providing context and ensuring authenticity used when managing analogue records are every bit as important now as they ever have been. The skills required to ensure that a truthful and representative record of history is preserved for future generations do not change, even if the formats of the records do.

Conference generated excellent discussions on important concerns in the information management sector in new and interesting ways, including panel discussions, debates, workshops, and posters; and as well as grappling with serious professional issues, it was great fun! I had a fascinating conversation, for example, with the conference ‘Artist Archivist’, Peter Morphew, who is inspired by the contents of archives and their processing to create colourful and energetic works of art.

The social events were a great opportunity to meet fellow information professionals, and to dance with a few of them at the Ceilidh following the Gala Dinner! I also cannot end this round-up of a great conference without mentioning the ice-cream that delegates could claim during a break on the Thursday, including, in true Scottish style, Irn Bru flavour!

Thank you again to the ARA for enabling me to attend this punchy and thought-provoking conference. It has been fantastic learning from fellow professionals; but, for me, the hard work starts now as I strive to put the messages of diversity, inclusivity, and digital preservation into practice during my career as an archivist.

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**Rachael Jones**

Glasgow School of Art

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Artist archivist – Peter Morphew. Image courtesy of Rachael Jones.

# First-time delegate

Professor Gus John peers over his spectacles to survey this year’s conference delegates, who are sitting transfixed by the silent, confident professor. A minute passes, then he says: “So few peas in the rice”.

And thus begins Conference, three days of engaging talks, presentations and workshops, enlightening and challenging discussions, and most importantly, calls to action. I was lucky enough to be able to attend as a recipient of the Diversity bursary, sponsored by Kevin Bolton Ltd, and was therefore particularly excited by the themes of representation, equality and diversity, which were explored in many of the papers over the course of the conference.

Professor John delivered an enlightening opening keynote, where he used the metaphor of peas and rice to highlight the lack of diversity within the room, and by extension within the sector, noting that most records professionals are white, middle-class individuals whose parents can afford to subsidise them. As someone who was only able to access this conference, and the archive profession, through a bursary and a funded training scheme respectively, this rang true for me, but my experience also highlights that there are ongoing efforts to increase access to the profession: this is a start, but it’s not enough. Professor John’s keynote felt like a call to action, and a challenge to interrogate

‘business as usual’ in order to address the issues surrounding diversity in archives and recordkeeping.

In a similar vein, Michelle Caswell, in her bold and provocative key note on the second day of the conference, challenged us to address embedded ‘white supremacy’ in the sector. The first thing I did once back at my workplace post-conference was to print out Caswell’s poster ‘Identifying & Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives’. I showed it to my colleagues, and we were surprised by some of things we can sometimes take for granted that oppressed communities experience and endure, and this poster very helpfully identifies these privileges and recommends a course of action to address them. Seemingly small actions like displaying this poster led to increased awareness of the issues embedded in our society and gave me a tangible positive step I could take towards creating a more diverse and inclusive environment.

I learned from Caswell that there need to be radical, seismic shifts in the sector to tackle inherent biases and structural oppression. However, various speakers also provided insightful actionable advice that can be applied immediately. I learned that we should be acknowledging labour from marginalised communities and incorporating this into funding bids, acknowledging who may be the best people to work on collections, and recognising the implicit knowledge of marginalised communities as an asset. These are some of the ways we can support Black and Asian-led heritage activity, and create a more diverse, inclusive and representative sector, that does not allow for omission, falsification and erasure of BME histories that Professor John highlighted.

As a person of colour, from a working-class background, at the beginning of my career, I felt very appreciative of receiving this opportunity allowing me to attend Conference, which otherwise would have been inaccessible to me. I was able to hear stories which I relate to, such as the presentation by Hannah Henthorn and Kirsty Fife on diversity in the UK workforce. Parts of their research deeply reflected my own experiences, and while listening to them present their findings and recommendations, I felt my own circumstances recognised and acknowledged for the first time.

For me, one of the most prominent themes throughout the presentations, was about recognising the different barriers communities face in the sector, in terms of representation, access, and in the workplace. As Caswell noted, we must act to empower, not marginalise. I left Conference keen to begin addressing these issues, with an awareness of how much there is to do. It’s an exciting time to be in archives.

**Iram Safdar**

Bodleian Library, Oxford

# From Cornwall to Glasgow

When the email about Glasgow 2018 arrived in my inbox, my interest was immediately piqued by the range and depth of the programme on offer. And the timing was perfect. I’m currently working on Kresen Kernow, a new archives and local studies centre for Cornwall, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Cornwall Council. We’re due to open next year, so this seemed the ideal opportunity to gather ideas and make contacts which could have a real impact on the project. I am very grateful to the ARA for the bursary which allowed me to do this.

I wasn’t sure what to expect from the keynotes, but both Gus John and Michelle Caswell confronted me in ways I hadn’t expected, leaving me feeling quite uncomfortable at times. Professor John brought home to us our influence as record keepers. He emphasised how carrying on with ‘business as usual’ results in gaps in the archival record. Using the example of the ‘Windrush’ generation, he warned about the deliberate airbrushing of the social history of migrant and marginalised communities. Professor Caswell focussed on how marginalised groups can be empowered by keeping community archives, allowing them to challenge the official record. Working in Cornwall, where these groups may seem relatively small, it can be all too easy to think ‘this doesn’t apply to me’. Both papers made me face the fact it does and got me thinking about ways to do this.

Access, in all forms, was a key theme of the conference. It was fascinating to learn that barriers to access can be as simple as the term ‘reading room’ being off-putting to potential visitors. Being involved with the development of a new building and services these ideas are particularly relevant to me. Stephanie Nield focussed on off-site



Community archives – Talking Syria. Image courtesy of Rachael Jones.

access, sharing lessons she had learned at Leonard Cheshire Disability. Her recommendations for making websites accessible to all included ensuring they are compatible with screen readers and accompanying audio visual content with transcripts, subtitles and audio description.

The key message to emerge from all of these papers was underscored by Martyn Sibley in his keynote: small changes can make a big difference and lead to unforeseen benefits.

Audio visual material makes up only a small part of our collections, but one which poses unique challenges. I enjoyed Will Prentice's comprehensive 'beginner's guide to looking after your audio collections', and in particular the chance to handle examples. Looking towards the future, the panel discussion on the acquisition of digital photographs, film and sound gave me examples of best practice and the latest thinking from leading practitioners. Discussions with colleagues from the ARA's Film, Photography and Sound section opened my eyes to the resources

available and made me realise I'm not alone in facing these challenges. Armed with this new information and contacts I am now much better placed to manage and develop our audio-visual collections.

The increasing importance of digital material led me to attend several sessions in the digital strand, looking for new ideas. Jenny Bunn, Gillian Mapstone and Tim Gollins explored the possibilities digital processing brings, including the capacity for more to be kept and the role computers can take in cataloguing and mining collections for data. This left me with exciting hopes for the future.

Andrew Janes and John Sheridan picked up a key conference theme of access. They explained the more complex access needs of digital records and showed how they can be managed through publishing material online then having robust policies and procedures in place for evaluating requests to remove. This offers an alternative to closure for some content. This furnished me with practical solutions to apply today.

I lack confidence in managing digital collections, so listened to the panel debate on the skills archivists need with interest. The suggestion that mediaeval palaeography may no longer be relevant was particularly contentious. For me, being required increasingly to handle digital collections does not mean I can ignore our medieval deeds! I left the session with some really useful avenues to explore for CPD. The key message I took from the digital strand was that, whether digital or analogue, the archival principles to be applied to collections are the same; it is the processes and possibilities which are different.

And did the initial promise offered by the programme disappoint? No. Rather the conference experience was far bigger and better than I could have imagined. I left Glasgow early the next morning with new insights to develop and ideas to take back to Cornwall.

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**Jennie Hancock**

Cornwall Council

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# Heading back to Glasgow

This year I attended my first ARA Conference, thanks to an ARA bursary. My own career in records began in Glasgow, as a graduate trainee at Glasgow University Archive Services. It was great to be back in the city where I had my first foray into the profession as a rather nervous history graduate, but now as a qualified archivist.

Arriving not-so-fresh off the sleeper train, I was keen to make the most of my bursary and take as much away from the conference as possible. The brilliant theme of People Make Records – encompassing those represented in records, those using records and those managing them – was done full justice by the speakers, many of whom were refreshingly provocative and critical in their presentations.

In keeping with the thematic focus on people, it was great to meet so many of the people that make up the sector workforce during tea breaks and the social events. Working at a small specialist library and archive, it is easy to lose sight of the sector outside of my own professional environment, and attending the Conference gave me the opportunity to engage with the wider record-keeping world. In some cases, the conversations following presentations were just as insightful as the presentations themselves.

Having completed my master's in archives and records management a year ago, I was reminded how much I enjoy discussing the theory and practice of the profession in depth – and this time I was able to apply the discussions to my own work. For example, I bravely ventured into a

couple of the digital sessions and felt very pleased with myself for understanding the majority of what was being discussed! Working on a digitisation project at present, I have been considering how to implement digital preservation methods to ensure adequate management of

the surrogates. The DPC panel discussion - 'The skills that archivists need and how to get them' - offered useful insight into the importance of speaking the correct 'digital language' and how to access digital skills training online.



Professor Gus John. Image courtesy of Rachael Jones.

As I embark on uploading digital surrogates to our online platform, I will endeavour to make the website as accessible as possible, referring to the useful tools mentioned by Stephanie Nield of Leonard Cheshire Archives. My engagement with readers will from now on centre on reducing the experience of ‘archival anxiety’, introduced by Sarah Hayes-Hickey of Limerick Archives, and any future work alongside community groups will be more respectful and mutually beneficial thanks to Tamsin Bookey of Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives sharing her own successful experience.

There is a broader applicability, too, of the rousing keynotes: Gus John’s uncomfortable but much-needed reminder that the work of archivists can result in the erasure and distortion of marginalised histories; Michelle Caswell’s call to dismantle white supremacy in archives; and Martyn Sibley’s wonderfully practical advice, that accessibility is just good customer service. Hearing these challenging keynotes will surely have a lasting influence on my career. These were important reminders to orientate my day-to-day work around addressing broader issues in the sector, in any small ways that I can.

The keynotes created an atmosphere throughout the conference that encouraged uncomfortable, difficult conversations, with many other sessions following suit. Topics ranged from the inaccessibility of archives qualifications to avoiding exploitation in work with community groups and volunteers. These conversations have been taking place within the sector for some time, but I, perhaps naively, felt that there was a new-found practical tone, with genuine

commitment to find solutions and implement change.

In particular, Kirsty Fife and Hannah Henthorn’s research into the experiences of marginalised workers in archives encouraged me to acknowledge my own very fortunate position as someone who has been able to become an archivist through the traditional route of volunteering, a traineeship and a master’s degree. Thinking critically about routes into the profession has been especially insightful for me as I recently joined the ARA Section for New Professionals committee and in that capacity have a role in representing and supporting those newly entering the sector.

ARA Conference 2018 was a brilliant experience and one I would not have had without the generous bursary. The three days allowed me to acquire new skills (the ability to consume my bodyweight in Tunnock’s teacakes notwithstanding!), learn from the experiences of others and challenge my own privileges.

I encourage anybody eager but unable for financial reasons to attend the conference to apply for a bursary next year.

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**Alicia Chilcott**

Conway Hall Library and Archive,  
London

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# Radically breaching barriers to inclusion

I was the giddily-grateful recipient of the New Professional bursary at the ARA “People Make Records” Conference in Glasgow this September, and my conference experience went from 0 to 60 when the first speaker, racial equality and human rights campaigner Professor Gus John, took the podium. He began by looking out at this cross-section of delegates in a fruitless search for the *peas among the rice*, and moved on to examples of institutional failure to care for records generated by diasporic people.

His was indeed the keynote speech, setting the scene for the rest of the conference - a quarantine room in which the sector’s weaknesses on diversity, inclusion - and reluctance to acknowledge the colonisation of the archive- were laid out for appraisal.

Two speakers in particular helped me navigate this: Tamsin Bookey talked on supporting Black and Asian community heritage at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, while Adele Patrick from the thriving Glasgow Women’s Library (GWL) asked “Where does feminism fit in the archive?”

Both Tamsin and Adele flipped around the assumption that we are not *attracting* users from diverse communities, suggesting that we are instead



Tamsin Bookey, winner of the #ARA2018 Best T-Shirt Award. Image courtesy of Gillian Boll.

maintaining barriers which serve to *exclude* them: at GWL, they have redefined marginalised groups once considered "hard to reach" as "easy to ignore".

We were asked to question what we are doing to make other social, sexual, ethnic or economic groups feel excluded from our services, and both speakers gave us practical tips, which I collate and paraphrase here.

- **Begin by asking these communities what they need or want from our services and *listen to them*.** As a first step this will probably involve:
- **Re-evaluating your collecting strategies.** Our sector is overwhelmingly white, and becoming a recordkeeper or conservator requires a certain level of education and access to cultural resources. While we are increasingly recognising the need to accommodate a more diverse user group, we have a *proximity to privilege* which inhibits our ability to automatically recognise or

appreciate value in the records of marginalised groups.

- **Building partnerships.** We need to collect material of interest to our communities and provide parallel information and education services, but this requires cross-cultural fluency that can only be done in collaboration with the community itself.
- **Building equitable partnerships.** Both partners have to get what they want out of the arrangement. So, allow community members to take leadership and define the terms. Pay consultants for their time and knowledge - dismantling these barriers is skilled work.  
  
Ultimately, as many speakers reiterated, we must attract and recruit more people of colour to redress the imbalance *within* the sector.
- **Advocating.** It's not always going to be our place to take the lead on these issues, but we can offer space to showcase community interests

and we can act as a translator of the community's ideas into the kind of language that bodies of authority and funding demand.

- **Serving.** As Zarya Rathe said in her Conference talk: "one of the most damaging messages survivors of systemic abuse receive is: 'you don't exist'. Recordkeepers have a responsibility to facilitate trauma healing". Day two's keynote speaker Michelle Caswell gave this advice to white archivists: know when to act and when to shut up, and do the unglamorous but vital archival business of recording and preserving.
- **Creating social glue.** The shopfront of an archive should be an informal space that meets other social needs of the community. GWL offers refugee advocacy assistance, for example, and has held daily English-as-a-second-language classes since 2004. Both GWL and Tower Hamlets make their centres local hubs for music, storytelling and arts events; and crucially, don't underestimate the bonding effect of food.
- **Not rushing it.** These relationships need to be nurtured over a long period, involving a lot of clarification to one another about why we do things the way we do. In this process, the priority shouldn't be numbers. Rather than footfall, we should value building continuity and deeper levels of trust.

These proposals weren't presented as one-size-fits-all solutions. What would be right for an inner-city community hub won't work for a records office located in an industrial estate. But they are concrete steps, offered by organisations which have been more successful than most at



radically breaching the barrier between marginalised people and the “store door” of our archives and records.

These were three intensely inspiring and energising days, and I’m proud to be starting out in a sector which invites these challenging questions, in the knowledge that increasing diversity only serves to strengthen the services we provide.

As Martyn Sibley said in the final keynote speech: “Inclusion is just good customer service, everybody wins when institutions address environmental, attitudinal and organisational barriers to inclusion”.

**Gillian Boll**

University of Bristol Theatre Collection

(@Gillian Boll)

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/>

<https://aranewprofessionals.wordpress.com/2018/09/14/ara-conference-2018-new-professional-bursary-winner/>

# Trending: top tweets #ARA2018

Glasgow 2018 saw the strongest social media presence ever, with attendees and those that couldn’t make it interacting and engaging with each other worldwide. With everything from Tunnocks teacakes and Irn-Bru ice-cream to (of course) more important themes, such as diversity and inclusion, the power of records as a vehicle for social justice, and which digital skills professionals may need, being discussed, debated and contemplated.

Social media provides a platform to communicate crucial issues arising from Conference beyond the venue – opening up discussions and participation to a wider audience and proving that they are relevant to all in the profession.

A brand-new Tweet wall, the #ArchiveZ campaign organised by ARA Scotland, a ‘People Make Records’ Conference-themed Archive Hour, engagement from keynote speakers, creation of Wakelet collections capturing daily tweets; these were all contributing factors to the social media success this year... and the list goes on!

Thank you to everyone for supporting the online community! Here are some of the top Tweets...



**Kyle Granite** @KBaillie89 · Aug 31  
 Michaela and Nicola's presentation on vicarious trauma was brilliant. This needs to be spoken about more and accepted as a serious issue for archivists dealing with sensitive records. #ARA2018

Dr Anthea Sales and 5 others Retweeted  
**Stefanie Archivist** @stefarchivist · Aug 31  
 Archives matter. Archives are about people's lives, rights and freedoms. #archives #ara2018

**WolvesArchives** @WolvesArchives  
 Lovely moment in the searchroom today. A member of the Windrush generation came in, who had been trying to prove his British citizenship since 2005. Research with us enabled him to get his naturalization certificate, which he proudly showed us, & he was very grateful for our help

**ARA UK+I Conference** @ARAconf · Aug 30  
 Keynote Prof Michelle Caswell discusses time as a cyclical entity where patriarchy and white supremacy designed to oppress marginalised communities repeats throughout history. Community archives and archival labour seen as active disruption to these oppressive cycles #ARA2018



24 replies, 48 likes

Stephanie Nield and 12 others Retweeted  
**Martyn Sibley** @martynsibley · Aug 31  
 Delivered my keynote speech for @ARAconf this morning on inclusion. It went really well to a packed audience! Interestingly I learned so much about Archiving and Recording keeping for disability activism in Glasgow. Giving people a voice and passing on heritage is vital #ara2018



4 replies, 25 retweets, 69 likes

**Kyle Granite** @KBaillie89 · Aug 31  
 The thing that I have liked the most about this conference is the, often uncomfortable, conversations that have been had about diversity (or lack thereof) and white privilege within the sector. Keep the conversations going, we all play a role. #ARA2018 #breakdownbarriers

**Helen Dafter** @HistoryHelen123 · Aug 31  
 In digital age what are an archivist's desert island skills? A: core archive principles and practice, appraisal, flexibility, ability to enthuse others with passion for collections, context, people skills #ARA2018

Jim Kanahan and 1 other Retweeted  
**Wendy Russell** @wendyaleasha · Aug 31  
 Left #ARA2018 to be received by a taxi driver who was most enthusiastic about archives, telling me how important they are to him and to all of us, and how he wants to see more people (more of 'the people' rather) using them so they can tell a new story. What a perfect ending.

**Kevin Bolton** @kevjbolton · Sep 1  
 My first @ARAconf in 10+ years and it was utterly brilliant and inspiring. More determined than ever now to start turning talking about diversity into action.

Thanks @BAC\_Chair and team.

**Sarah Aitken** @CakeManuscript · Aug 31  
 Scottish Ceilidh dancing is perfect for archivists. There is order, classification, and dancing in a circle represents the lifecycle of a record. @araconf #ara2018 @Glasgow, United Kingdom [instagram.com/p/BnHqMjtBSgG/...](https://www.instagram.com/p/BnHqMjtBSgG/)

**Phillippa Enguin** @ClaireyTunstall · Aug 30  
 The whole world needs this [archivistsagainst.org](https://www.archivistsagainst.org) @professorcaz shaking up Thursday at #ARA2018

You Retweeted  
**Nicola Laurent** @NicolaCLAurent · Aug 29  
 .@Gus\_John called his paper 'Choices of the living and the dead'. Archivists MAKE choices. Choose what history, events, records get recorded in archives and exhibitions. We have power. We should not help airbrush history, we are not neutral #ara2018 #archives #History

To read, re-live or reflect on Conference 2018 - search #ARA2018 on Twitter.

**Zoe Fullard**

ARA Conference Social Media and Communications Officer

Images courtesy of Zoe Fullard.





Mark Allen at work. Copyright Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland).

# Learning new conservation tricks and tips

It is 7am and the sun is rising low and golden in the late summer sky over the River Clyde. The sculptural monolith of a crane is reflected in the glass-like surface of the water, as a small group of runners jog along the river that built Glasgow. We are a medley of conservators, records managers and archivists from as far afield as Gibraltar and Jersey, enjoying a leisurely, early morning chat on 'The Conference Chair's run'.

This sporting addition to ARA Conference 2018 was not the only new initiative, for the conference veteran (Shirley) and newcomer (Tracy – grateful recipient of the Ancestry local authority bursary) alike. For example, in plenary sessions, delegates were able to contribute to debate without having to face the dreaded microphone via Slido, an app which feeds comments live to a screen visible to all. Its anonymity promoted open and honest conversations on the challenging themes of diversity, inclusion and privilege.

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

And we were certainly challenged. Opening keynote speaker Gus John noted wryly the sparse 'peas in the rice' apparent in the delegate audience - our sector is predominantly white and middle class. To invert the imbalance, John calls us to challenge the business-as-usual mind set and ask opposite questions such as, "why are my archives 'white'?"

Then Michelle Caswell, keynote speaker on Thursday, spoke of the tools we can use to take these initial steps, the first being to acknowledge white privileges. As founder of [www.archivistsagainst.org](http://www.archivistsagainst.org) Michelle showed a poster designed to remind us of these privileges which permeate archives and how to take them into account – every day. Find it, print it, display it.

Self-styled 'captain of inclusion', Martyn Sibley was the final day's keynote speaker. Sibley is an inspirational blogger, adventurer and 'smiler' who uses a wheelchair.



He illustrated that barriers, whether they be steps, a foreign language or poor signage – are barriers for everyone. By identifying barriers and finding just a couple of things we can do about them, we can all effect change. And Sibley's secret for positivity? To find your 'super power' and use it, and let others do the things that reflect theirs.

So as our 'super power' is conservation, this was the stream of specialist sessions we mostly attended, though many delegates dipped in and out of various rooms to attend talks across the domains. The programme provided a blend of the practical and the powerpoint, the single item case study and the extensive project, the artistic and the scientific.

Unfortunately, there were too many to adequately summarise here, but the breadth and variety of topics was epitomised, we felt, in the session Shirley chaired on the Thursday. Debbie Adele Cooper's talk on 'Glass plates; from archive to new plates, an artistic journey' produced an attentive silence in the room as we marvelled at the creativity of her work and the added dimension this gives to archives. Then followed the contrasting pleasant hum of convivial chatter as we all perfected our spine-fold repair technique during Mark Allen's hands-on, accessible workshop.

'Outreach' recurred as a theme in a number of talks. In 'Reach out! Engaging people in conservation' Shirley spoke about the #ConservationDiaries hashtag she trialled over the summer, her main finding being that we should embrace technology and social media as a tool to both document and tell others about what we do. Claire Thompson's talk, 'My story of the Chimney map' also examined this angle and how media interest in the project grew as a result of a film made of the conservation treatment and posted on YouTube. Inspired by Claire, at WYAS we too have experimented with film to document our recent treatment of a plan of Saltaire, in preparation for exhibition at the Wellcome.

We both came away with a list of clever practical tools, tricks and materials to try. On our shopping list is the fixed-mount cutter we tried in Richard Nichols's mounting and framing demonstration. Pre-prepared, cyclododecane-impregnated tissue strips were an innovation new to us, explained by Aimee Crickmore in her talk about the Coleshill Project and dealing with fugitive media. We also loved the simple tip from Salvador Alcántara Paláez's British Library/Qatar Foundation digitisation project to use only an even number of options for a condition survey, thus avoiding the temptation to 'sit on the fence' with the middle choice.

As for the science-focused presentations, anti-condensation paint will be another trick to try, as explained by Chris Woods in his talk, 'Switching to passive'. This textured paint can help resist the dreaded mould from colonising surfaces; best if surfaces are well insulated and without an air flow passing over it. Erika Koetze of the University of St. Andrews and Jonathan Hines of Architype built on the passive theme in 'Enabling people in collection care through controlled environments', emphasising the benefits of insulation, air tightness and the regulating effect of an earth contact, damp-proof concrete floor. Mechanical engineers advocate moving air around a space to achieve stability, but if there are no thermal bridges or air leakage, we could all save a lot of money by reducing our reliance on air-conditioning.

It was certainly an enlightening three days in the sumptuous surroundings of the Grand Central Hotel. If you are ever in Glasgow, do pop up to the hotel's elegant, tucked away coffee room that overlooks the vaulted and evocative interior of the Grand Central station. The hotel room wall is decorated with books, fanned out, sculpted and interspersed with plants and typewriters. An unusual idea for combining both archive display and storage expansion!

Many thanks again to Ancestry for enabling Tracy's attendance, the first local authority archive conservator to benefit. See you in Leeds in 2019; and don't forget your trainers!

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### Shirley Jones and Tracy Wilcockson

West Yorkshire Archive Service

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<https://debbieadelecooper.com/>  
<http://www.conservationphysics.org/coolstorage/index.php>  
<http://www.conservationphysics.org/musmic/musmicbuf.pdf>  
[martynsibley.com](http://martynsibley.com)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6Bn3xBGfWY>  
[http://gracenbrilmyer.com/dismantling\\_whiteSupremacy\\_archives3.pdf](http://gracenbrilmyer.com/dismantling_whiteSupremacy_archives3.pdf)  
<https://wyascatablogue.wordpress.com/>



# A trainee conservator at Conference: fitting right in

Glasgow's ARA conference was my first conference while being employed in the conservation department at the National Library of Wales. When I arrived at the hotel and saw the amount of work and effort that had been put into the conference, I was a bit blown away. It was eye-opening to see the amount of people who were also in the same field as me and how serious it is taken, not that I doubted the seriousness of it before!

The talks by all the different people were extremely interesting, and it was great to see what other people had been working on. The ones that stood out to me personally were the sessions led by Mark Allen and Richard Nichols. The content of both was relatable to the experience I've had within the workplace; also, the fact that they did a demonstration helped me see how other people do the same tasks and from that to gain a better understanding myself.

The conference was a great opportunity for me to meet other trainees. This was great, because I got to learn from their experiences and also just to chat about the course. Also, the conference gave me a chance to meet the instructors of the ARA course, with whom I would have to do my individual modules: meeting all the instructors and socialising with them helped make the process of going for one-to-one training with them a lot less daunting. Getting to know them more individually helped me feel a lot more comfortable.

Straying away from the work side of the conference a bit, it was fantastic that my work as a trainee conservator enabled me to visit somewhere completely new. I got to learn more about the history of Glasgow and was able to wander around the city in my spare time. Ultimately though, all this is possible because of the great work done by ARA to host these conferences in the various locations, and

I look forward immensely to hopefully attending others and seeing more people and places.

To sum up my experience of my very first conference though, all of the people that were there were very encouraging, welcoming and enthusiastic, which was great for me because - as a trainee who had very little experience - I felt included. Everything I learnt and took away from the conference had a positive effect on helping me understand conservation and develop my career further within the field. I would like to thank everybody who was involved in hosting and making the conference happen, and greatly look forward to the next, and many more to follow.

Diolch yn fawr!

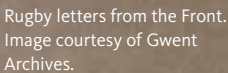
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**Julian Evans**

National Library of Wales

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# A sporting chance: preserving the records of Newport Rugby and Athletic Club

My colleague, Sally Hopkins, and I spoke at the ARA conference in August as part of the conservation stream. Our talk covered the Gwent Archives conservation project, 'A Sporting Chance: Preserving the records of Newport Rugby and Athletic Club', which was funded by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust in partnership with the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government.

This grant-funded project began life when, in 2015, the Friends of Newport Rugby contacted Gwent Archives about a vast number of documents that had been found in the attic of an old club house that was earmarked for demolition. The documents dated from the club's earliest days, and their importance was immediately obvious. Now better known as the Pro-14 professional rugby team the Newport Gwent Dragons, Newport Rugby Club's origins date to 1875, when it became the first integrated sports club in Wales. The club and its Rodney

Parade ground are world-famous and its members have had a great influence on the development of the game of rugby, including the founding of the Welsh Rugby Union and the creation of the Wales national team. But the club's distinguished sporting pedigree ranges much wider than rugby, with members representing the club present at the formation of the Amateur Athletic Association, at the creation of the International Cross Country Championships and competing in the hurdling for Great Britain in the 1908 Olympics, as just three examples.

The sporting diversity represented in the collection makes it significant and arguably unique. Each sport had its committee, and general committee minute books record their meetings. The records include the period of the Great War and the recruitment of members and the formation of a club battalion; six Newport rugby players were among the 13 Welsh internationals who fell in the



war. Alongside the minutes is a series of letters sent home by troops from the battalion to the club.

In July 2017, Gwent Archives secured funding to preserve the collection and began the process of recruiting volunteers to help clean and package it, as well as appointing Sally Hopkins as Preservation Assistant to oversee the volunteers' work and assist in the more interventive treatments, for example carried out on the Minute Books and World War One letters.

As the project was due to end the month after the 2018 ARA conference, the conference theme 'People make Records' helped us reflect on the impact the project has had on all members of the team working on it.

As a newly-qualified conservator, this project has helped me develop my skills in paper repair and bookbinding and in people management. It has also taught me how to share a work space with others, which was something I was not used to doing as a lone conservator.

With my colleague Sally coming to the project from an object-preservation background, it was interesting to hear how the collaborative working has affected her. She commented:

'During the project I've gained practical skills and experience in cleaning loose leaf and bound material. I've also learned a great deal about interventive conservation of archive material, which is in contrast to my object-based training.

I have found the experience of working in an archive very interesting in comparison to working in a museum environment. Despite having studied preventive conservation in an archive setting, there is nothing like the practical experience; it often produces challenges which require problem-solving skills and proves that the theory isn't always possible in reality. A valuable lesson!'

Together, we explored the subject of project impact further by creating a questionnaire for our volunteers to fill in.

All of the volunteers felt that they had gained a worthwhile skill in document handling and a few highlighted that they now have a deeper appreciation of the part conservation plays within an archive. All commented on how they have enjoyed working in groups and the discussions that have arisen when cleaning the documents; the social history aspect of the collection

seems to have made a significant impression, too. Most of the volunteers said they would like the collection to be fully accessible, with many mentioning online accessibility. They would also like to see the collection well promoted, especially to the community of Newport, with an exhibition being the most common suggestion for doing so.

Not only were the questionnaire comments useful when presenting the effect this project has had on the team at the ARA Conference in Glasgow, but we are also using them to develop ideas on promoting the collection and how we can better structure future conservation projects for volunteers.

We offer special thanks to the Friends of Newport Rugby Club whose dedication and enthusiasm for the collection is the sole reason we are able to explore this subject and for the opportunity to attend the many other interesting talks at the ARA Conference, 2018.

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**Rhiannon Griffiths and Sally Hopkins**

Gwent Archives

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## ENVIRONMENTAL MONITOR and LOGGER



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You barely notice the Chinese outside their restaurants and take-aways, but their community has been steadily growing in Britain. Chinese families exist to work hard – often a 60-hour week – to save money for their children's education and to send back home to support their relatives: last year they sent more than £7 million. They are seldom seen in Social Security centres. Despite recent drug revelations, their absorption has been largely free of trouble. But does the dragon have teeth? The truth is that, a silent minority is not necessarily a happy one. A report on the Chinese living in London by Lailan Young; photographs by David Montgomery

## THE SILENT DRAGON

### Young Chi Hong

The success story of Young Chi Hong should be an inspiration to the thousands of Chinese waiters who work 60 hours a week in Britain: work hard, save, pray for a lucky break, and in time, you'll have your own restaurant.

Mr Young, who is 48, left Tientsin, China, in 1959 on a one-way visa to Hong Kong where he worked as a waiter. He saved his fare to London where he worked in a restaurant in Golden Green. In 1963 he borrowed £3000, joined up with two Chinese, and opened the Richmond Rendezvous, the first Peking-style restaurant in Britain. Business was slow at first because people were more accustomed to Cantonese food, but when the food guides 'discovered' the restaurant the customers flocked in.

The Rendezvous Group now has 12 restaurants, mostly in London, but also in Edinburgh and Eastbourne. Mr Young lives with his wife, who speaks little English, and four daughters in Richmond. They collect Chinese paintings and have a Rolls, a Mercedes and a Fiat. He thinks each of his daughters ought to have a steady boyfriend by 18, but he is sometimes suspicious that prospective suitors may be out to marry his daughters for their money, rather than their charms.

Mr Young never wants to see China again "unless the Communists leave. But they'll stay forever." He believes that the British treat foreigners better than other Europeans but the great British weakness is their willingness to down tools and go on strike, thereby endangering the economy. He also feels that parents do not exercise enough control over their children, giving them too much freedom to do as they please.

"The Chinese here," said Mr Young, "are not bothered with politics and they stick together and don't cause trouble. The police say that Chinese people make very little trouble compared with others."

### Julian Ng

Julian Ng, successful at 36, is the manager of the Soho Rendezvous restaurant and works a 60-hour week. He would like to grow a beard, but as he only needs to shave twice a week, like many Chinese, his chances are slim. He was born in Peking, and at the age of eight he was betrothed "to a little fatty. I wore the red silk neck-band given to me by the girl's family for a year before I realised its significance, and then I tore it off."

He worked in Hong Kong and Japan after leaving China, then wandered around Nigeria and Senegal buying and selling precious stones. He now considers England his home and is paying off the mortgage on a

two-bedroomed house in Colindale.

He has two young children but the family can't afford holidays. Julian Ng sends three-quarters of his salary and savings to support his elderly parents in China and his wife's relatives in Hong Kong "because it is my duty". His ambition is for his children to go to private schools "for the best possible education I can give them".

### Lu Yin Ho

One of the chefs at the Soho Rendezvous, Lu Yin Ho is 30 and was born in Tientsin. He learnt to cook in Hong Kong. He works 54 hours a week, earning about £55 net, and his employer provides his accommodation, which makes him better off than most Chinese restaurant workers. He sends a quarter of his salary to his wife's family in Hong Kong.

Mr Lu is an excellent cook, but on his day off he buys fish and chips and plays wau-jing. He likes London and thinks "English girls are prettier than Chinese girls". His wife speaks little English and they worry about not being able to help their children with their homework. The oldest, who is eight, often acts as family interpreter. Mr Lu does not want his children to work in restaurants: "Cooking is heavy and dirty. I would like them to be accountants, maybe because it was always my ambition to be one."

Rendezvous in Chinatown; from left to right – Lu Yin Ho, one of the chefs at the Soho Rendezvous; Young Chi Hong, owner of the 12-restaurant Rendezvous Group; Julian Ng, the manager of the Soho Rendezvous

Source: The Sunday Times Magazine, 22 May, 1977

# The silent dragon

The quest for the democratisation of history in community archives in London

My Conference presentation started by showing the cover of the Sunday Times Magazine dated 22 May 1977. The cover story portrays the British Chinese community in 1970s London as a quiet and self-sufficient group. This impression is pretty much the same 40 years later. This prompted me to query how much the Chinese community archives collection could really give effective voice to British Chinese communities when their materials end up permanently in a mainstream, ie non-community repository.

Community archives are regarded as a means of 'democratising' history and the heritage of under-represented social groups. Nevertheless, users should acknowledge the existing power relations reflected in

many community-based archives. Community archives can be just like other institutional archives, with challenges and points of contention.

My conference paper argued that:

- the layout of community archives are loci of power which mirror the power structures in society at large;
- the extent of the democratisation of history in community archives depends on the level of community participation throughout the representation process at various levels. I argue that the democratisation of history is a spectrum that can be expanded or retracted.

In the UK archival world today, communities themselves and community archives sit alongside larger entities, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (“HLF”) – in terms of funding support - and institutional repositories like the London Metropolitan Archives (“LMA”) - lead the development and implementation of professional practice. This structure is an integral part of how memories are shaped. Through the lens of Chinese community archive collections at the LMA, which were established in 2005, my research has sought to build a comprehensive picture of how the democratisation of history in community archives is influenced by the interplay of these four actors.

My research reveals that British Chinese people who are male, first generation immigrants, originally from Hong Kong and have successful careers are over-represented in the Chinese community archives collections. Why is this? Overall, the participation of the British Chinese community is low throughout the archival management process in the collections. Except from volunteering to be interviewed or donating items, community involvement is minimal. Only a small selection of groups take part, and grassroots or socially disadvantaged groups are not encouraged or empowered.

Community archivists tend to take a top-down approach in engaging the community. For example, decisions are often made by a committee, which consists of project officers and experts, and professionals. Community archivists might be even less prepared to adopt a bottom-up community engagement model in order to encourage the community to continuously deposit their collections at the LMA.

The HLF looks for projects that can reach a wider audience, giving them learning opportunities. Unavoidably, less time and effort, and fewer resources, are then devoted to the work that meaningfully involves the specific community in the whole archival process, especially the work engaging creators of heritage, when substantial resources are diverted to education and outreach activities. The LMA control the central archival functions. Community archivists have little on-going controls over collections: for example, the LMA sticks to their paper-form collection policy, which means that a vase that might signify much to the diasporic history of the British Chinese family is excluded.

In sum, my case-study of this collection revealed a low level of democratisation of history. But we should stay positive. After seeing the tangled web of power in force

in the community archive collections, I recommend continuing to encourage and empower both the community and community archivist participation.

There is good practice to draw on. The HLF might refer to its sister funding body, the Big Lottery Fund, which requires its project grantees to put members of community in the lead. If the HLF were to articulate the same expectation from their project holders, project officers would be more likely to spend more time and devote more attention to meaningfully involving members of community throughout the process.

The Huntley archives at LMA, an acclaimed community collection, offers an equitable partnership model for LMA and community archives to use in the British Chinese case. This power-sharing governance model within the organisation could be extended to other community archives so that more representatives across different community archives could continuously exert influence over their collections and be kept updated about LMA’s various aspects of work.

My research shows community archivists having unreserved trust in professional repositories, which seems to self-restrict them from taking part in on-going management. Such high level of trust sits in contrast to the more questioning view of mainstream archives shared by independent community archivists. This is also an area worth further exploration.

Finally, regarding enhancing community engagement, never assume that there is a uniform identity within a particular community. Community-based archivists can help educate and inform, for example debates within the British Chinese community on who can really be considered to be “Chinese”. Community archivists can and should determine issues with which people can identify and based upon which they can organise and act. In that way, bottom-up community participation is more likely to happen in practice and more likely to lead to beneficial and meaningful outcomes.

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**Hiu-kam Rachel Wong**

Independent researcher

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Clockwise from top left: Elspeth Reid (Distinguished Service Award), Susan Healy (Distinguished Service Award), Erin Lee (Recordkeeper of the Year Award), Huw Bonner (ARA Archive Conservation Certificate - Seals) Copyright Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland).

ARA 2018  
Gala Dinner

# Excellence award winners celebrated at Conference







## Care Leaver memorial



# Records and trauma

When we first discussed submitting an abstract to talk about vicarious trauma to the Australian Society of Archivists Conference held in Melbourne in 2017, it was with some trepidation. It felt like discussing emotions was some kind of archival cultural taboo.

We had heard anecdotes of archivists being told that if they couldn't cope with the material they didn't belong in the profession, or being deliberately shown the most traumatic material as some kind of bizarre hazing ritual. After Melbourne we realised that there was a real need in our professional community to discuss this topic, and have conversations about what structural changes can be made to support professionals working with difficult records.

We were both very excited to be accepted to come to Glasgow for ARA 2018. Our topic fitted the theme of

'People make records' well, and we wanted to be able to progress the discussion on how to 'look after the people behind the records'. The ceilidh and ice cream were wonderful bonuses!

The organising committee did a fantastic job of choosing keynotes that established the tone of the rest of the conference. Professor Gus John challenged us to examine the structural inequalities that exist in the archival profession and Michelle Caswell called on us to enact this with seismic and structural change. Martyn Sibley revealed his personal story, sharing with us the importance of being an inclusive and accessible profession.

Many other talks also aligned with our topic and related to our work and experiences leaving us a mixture of inspired, invigorated and uncomfortable by the end. Discussion focused on the impact individuals have upon archival





Vicarious trauma – a care leaver memorial. Image courtesy of Michaela Hart and Nicola Laurent.



The global language that is ice cream. Image courtesy of Michaela Hart and Nicola Laurent.

practice, how our decisions are not neutral, because no matter how hard we try, we are people and people aren't neutral. Instead the best we can do is be upfront about our bias and what experiences we bring to our decision-making processes as we push for a more equitable and diverse profession.

But an important takeaway we had was that if we are going to act on diversifying the archival profession, taking up the calls for action from the conference, it will be hard, and we need to ensure everyone is supported during that process. We need to recognise and respond to the different experiences individuals have when working with records, and, by becoming a more empathic and engaged profession, we can then begin to make both the big and small changes that are needed.

Following our return home, we were really pleased to

hear that our presentation has inspired change. Several colleagues have been in touch to let us know that they have started conversations in their own workplaces, and at least one organisation has implemented vicarious trauma training for their whole staff.

Thank you to the organising committee, ARA and all the colleagues we met and spoke to, learnt from and shared experiences with. We hope to see you again soon.

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#### **Michaela Hart**

Department of Health & Human Services, Melbourne

#### **Nicola Laurent**

University of Melbourne

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# "It's life's illusions I recall..." - Can we improve on this?

I was delighted and grateful for the chance to attend and present a paper at this year's ARA Conference. I wanted to take the opportunity, as the archivist of a religious order, to discuss some challenging issues particular to this role, but also to the role of an archivist generally.

I manage the beautiful Loreto Archives Centre in Ballarat, a city about 100 kilometres from Melbourne. Ballarat is home to the first foundation of the Loreto Sisters, a Catholic religious order of women, who came from Ireland in 1875 to establish schools for girls in the expanding colony. Our archives centre is a purpose-built repository for the collection of personal and business records of the Loreto's Australian province, including Vietnam and Timor Leste. This is an in-house archive, but we welcome researchers and provide a gateway to the collection on our website: <http://archives.loreto.org.au/>

[Home/About-us/Loreto-Archives/Selected-Guide-To-Loreto-Archives.aspx](#)

The title of my paper, from a line in Joni Mitchell's song 'Both Sides Now', voiced my concerns about the capacity of our archives to record truth. Our role as archivists is to provide the raw materials of history – the evidence - but can we really say that our collections are authentic and reliable enough to fulfil this goal? Records are artefacts representing an event and not the event itself, of course. But perhaps in keeping the artefact we are not preserving an authentic record, as there are many ways in which the representation of an event can become distorted, not least because the truth is not always what people are seeking. There is the danger that 'it's life's illusions I recall' or the 'story' of the organisation as we wish to see it.



Loreto Archives Centre, Ballarat, Spring 2018. Loreto Archives collection. Image courtesy of the Loreto Archives





Loreto Archives collection. Image courtesy of the Loreto Archives

In the context of religious archives, which have come under sharp focus and criticism during enquiries into institutional responses to child sexual abuse, we have to look at further means by which we can ensure the ethical and consistent practice of recordkeeping. We must examine our recordkeeping practices as they relate to the people touched by the organisations so that these institutions do not fail the very people for whom they exist.

Religious orders have had a tradition of keeping in-house archives since monastic times. This makes for rich and ancient collections, but perhaps, as a result of this long tradition and the embedded status quo, also predisposes to preserving a story rather than an evidence-based authentic record. The problem with a story is that it may imply fiction or part-fiction at best. It may be a narrative that can be used as an instrument of the establishment and easily be replaced by counter-narrative when convenient. In my paper, I raised some of the issues we face in ensuring the keeping of an authentic and reliable record. I hope that I indicated some of the ways that the people of the archives, as subjects, creators, curators, users and clients, can contribute to the authenticity of collections by

ethical recordkeeping, financial and cultural support for archives and general engagement.

I also reflected on how the ethical position professed by an organisation can support an ethical archival policy. Loreto's founder, Mary Ward, admonished her followers to 'be such as we appear and appear such as we are'. This is an affirmation of authenticity and transparency that we would hope our archives fulfil.

Our aim, as archivists of any organisation, is to ensure that the archives are a reliable representation of the people and their organisation, not so much to be woven into the narrative of society but to act as a foil for narratives and hence a more authentic and powerful social resource. We do not want users to recall illusions when they use our archives.

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**Robin Scott**

Loreto Australia & South East Asia

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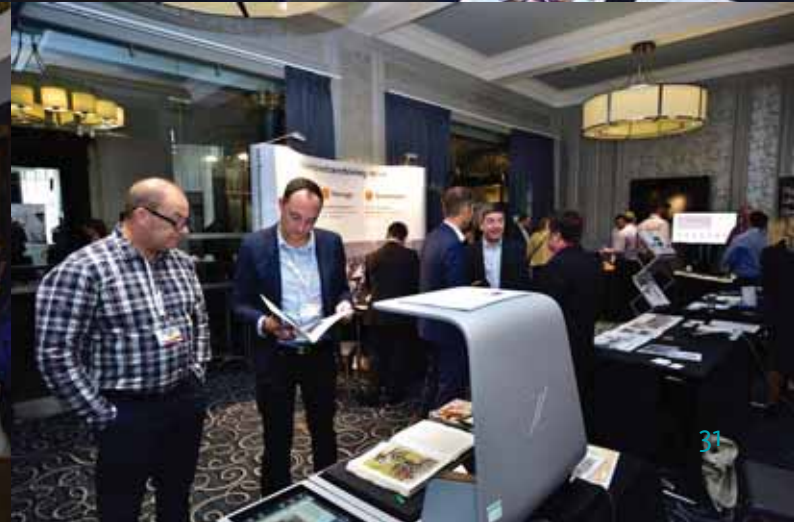


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# Scotland's First World War Pension Appeals Project

For almost a year we have been working on a Wellcome Trust-funded project at National Records of Scotland (NRS) to catalogue Scotland's First World War Pensions Appeal Tribunal records. The project aims to catalogue and preserve fascinating documents that until now have remained an untapped resource for medical historians, genealogists and other researchers interested in those who survived the First World War.

We were very pleased to be invited to present a poster about the project at the ARA conference in Glasgow this year. It was a great opportunity both to gauge interest and assess enthusiasm for the records, and we received lots of positive feedback about the project.

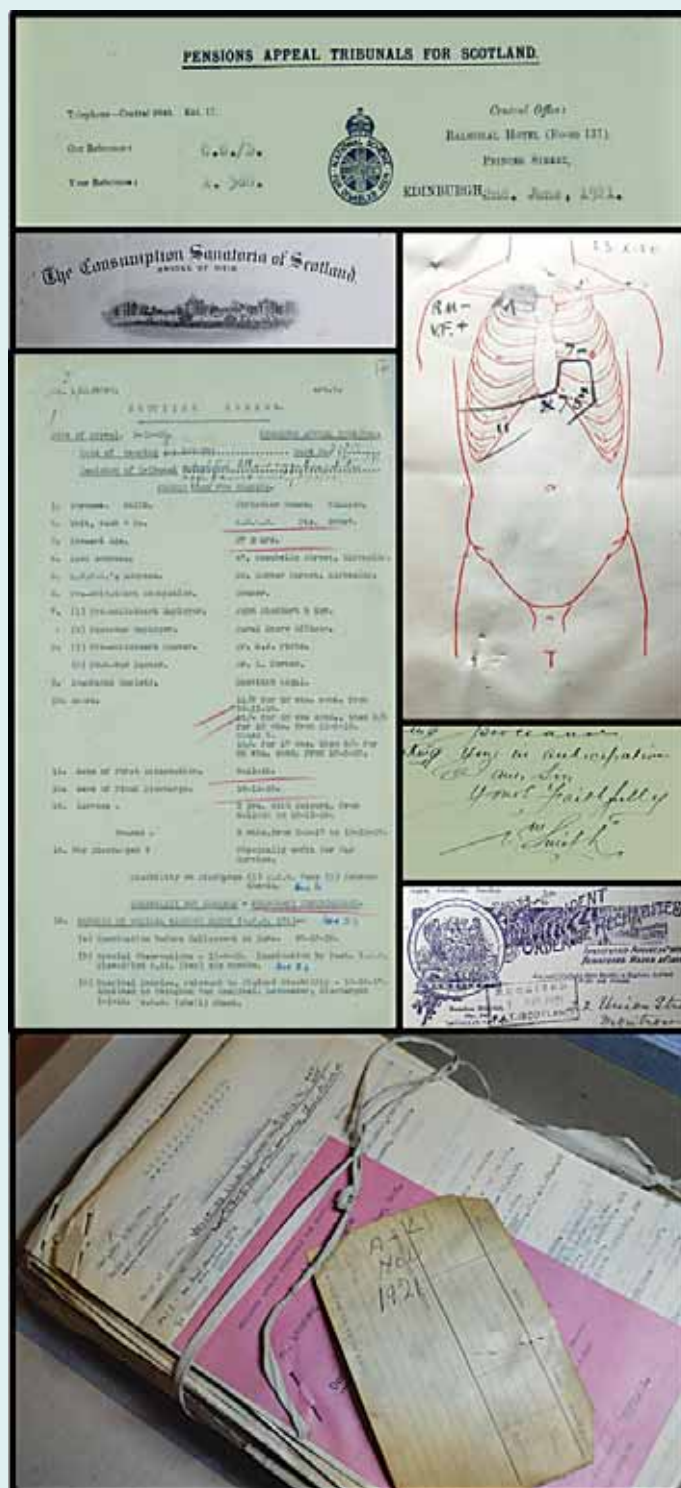
Pensions Appeal Tribunals were established under the War Pensions Act 1920 to deal with appeals by ex-servicemen, their widows or their dependants, for war pensions. The PT6 series in NRS concerns the tribunals that heard appeals from people living in Scotland. It contains applications from or concerning around 30,000 Scottish ex-servicemen suffering from wounds and injuries sustained during the war, or who died afterwards from associated illnesses and conditions.

Before we began cataloguing, attempting to search these records was very difficult. The appeals were held in 288 boxes, arranged alphabetically by month from November 1919 to December 1932. In order to locate records, you first had to know when a claim was submitted and heard by the tribunal. As this basic information wasn't recorded anywhere, researchers had to trawl through many boxes and potentially thousands of uncatalogued records!

We are cataloguing these records using a custom-built database, and re-housing them in specially designed folders and boxes. We also report any damaged records or conservation issues for remedial preservation. Once completed, the new database will be publicly accessible and make searching the tribunal records much easier. It will allow searching across multiple fields, including name, address, age, regiment, rank, service number and medical condition.

One of the unique cataloguing features is the use of Medical Subject Heading (MeSH) codes within each

entry, allowing us to index an ex-serviceman's broader medical conditions. These codes are internationally recognised and used by medical research historians, as they standardise terminology and create the potential for future statistical analysis. They allow researchers to ask



The case of William Smith. Copyright National Records of Scotland.



questions, such as how many men suffered from heart conditions, and how many of those had their appeals allowed. The codes also enable historians to investigate how illnesses were diagnosed and treated at the time, and the ongoing impact of the war on ordinary servicemen.

As ever, it is individual cases that tell the story best. William Smith, like most of the men we have come across, was an ordinary soldier. He was 21 when he enlisted as a private in the King's Own Scottish Borderers, having been employed as a grocer before the war. William was serving in France when he received a shrapnel wound to the chest and a gunshot wound to the face. Unsurprisingly, he was diagnosed with 'shell shock' and 'neurasthenia' (a neurological condition and a diagnosis frequently used to describe symptoms of shell shock).

William's symptoms included insomnia, agoraphobia and anxiety, and he experienced 'battle dreams'. He was also treated for tuberculosis in a sanatorium, but he left when his pension was refused. He discharged himself '...because he did not want to remain a patient there and see his wife and child starve at home.' William subsequently lodged an appeal for pulmonary tuberculosis with the Pensions Appeal Tribunal. It ruled that only his bronchitis had been aggravated by service.

With many stories like William's, it is clear that these records are an important resource for assessing the long-term impact of the First World War. They reveal how the experiences of war, and the complex medical conditions which consequently arose, directly affected men's readjustment to civilian life. Along with providing evidence of the economic hardship experienced after the war, the records also tell the many and poignant untold stories of those who survived but continued to be affected by it.

The records are currently closed to the public while they are being catalogued. But we hope that once the project is complete, our work will help to ensure that the stories and sacrifices of Scotland's First World War servicemen are given new visibility and understanding.

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**Lynn Bruce & Olivia Howarth**

National Records of Scotland

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# Are archivists talking enough about research data management – and what are they saying?

As a qualified archivist undertaking a part-time PhD in archives (but also working full-time as a research data manager) I am always interested to see whether the annual ARA Conference theme overlaps with my research. My doctoral thesis is investigating the connections between archival skills and research data management, and more specifically whether the involvement of an archivist or records manager can improve organisational data management practices.

For anyone who has not come across these terms before, research data is another way of saying datasets that are the subject or product of research, and they are produced by most academic disciplines including the sciences, social sciences and humanities. Datasets are generated in many formats including spreadsheets, text documents, images or audio-visual material. Research data management is necessary from the time that datasets are produced until they are archived or destroyed, including appraisal, the creation of descriptive metadata, storage and preservation and provision of access, among other activities.

My research to date has explored the connections between recordkeeping professionals and research data management, including a review of historical and contemporary literature. The main finding is that there are many archivists and records managers working to manage, catalogue, preserve and share research data. Even outside our profession, librarians and other professionals are using archival principles to develop approaches to data management.

Yet, when I speak to other recordkeeping professionals, or browse the programme for Conference, I don't get the impression that many of us consider ourselves to be the obvious choice when it comes to managing research data.

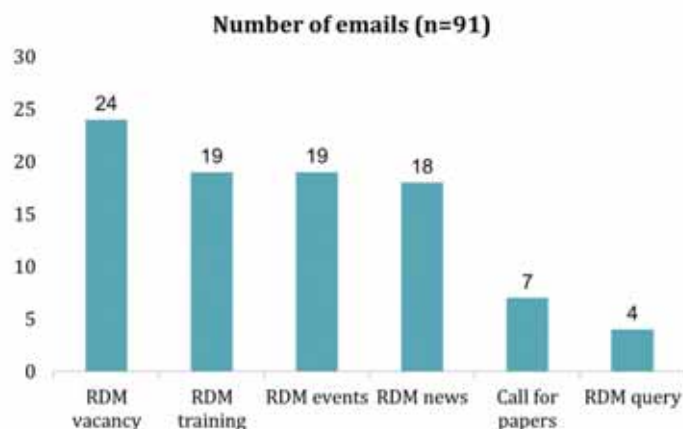


Figure 1: topics of research data-related emails sent to the Archives-NRA mailing list.

The conference theme this year was People Make Records, and I decided to use the sub-theme of “People Looking After Records” as my starting point to undertake a short research project: are my peers talking about research data management – and if so, what are they saying about it? To do this, I used a dataset gathered from the JISC-hosted email listserv, Archives-NRA.

I first searched for the term “research data” on this list and downloaded all of the results as a spreadsheet. I then excluded any emails which did not reflect my standard definition of “research data”, leaving me with a list of 91 emails. To get a better sense of what people were discussing on the list, I then coded the resulting emails, categorising them depending on their content. I was also able to analyse the frequency of the use of the term over time, as I was interested to see whether people were discussing it more (or less!).

It was clear that archivists do discuss research data on their own mailing lists – but I was also interested to see whether archivists participate in discussions on dedicated research data management lists. For this I used data from another JISC listserv, Research-Dataman (it should be noted that this list has a much more international subscriber base than Archives-NRA, and has existed for a shorter period – since 2010). This was less precise, as I could only identify archivists when they included their signature and job title when emailing the list. Nevertheless, I identified 49 emails which were either from archivists, or discussed archivists.

Finally, I re-examined the Archives-NRA mailing list data to see whether discussions on research data had increased over time – and it was apparent that they had, particularly after 2010.

I have made the dataset I used available publicly for download and reuse, in case other archivists are interested in investigating further.<sup>1</sup>



Figure 2: Emails from or about archivists sent to the Research-Dataman mailing list.

Based on my previous doctoral research, and the findings of this short study, it does appear that many archivists and records managers are involved in research data management, and this may continue to increase over time. In my Conference presentation, I suggested some ways that we, as a profession, can support colleagues working in this area, and advocate for our role as data management experts. My suggestions included:

- Advocating for professional bodies to publish guidelines and recommendations to support records professionals in addressing the challenges of managing research data.<sup>2</sup>
- Developing guidelines and documentation aimed at users outside the records management and archival professionals, demonstrating the application of records management and archival theory and practice to research data curation.
- Records professionals already working in research data management roles can engage with the scientific and data science communities through channels such as the Archives and Records Professionals for Research Data group of the Research Data Alliance.<sup>3</sup> This in turn can raise the profile of records professionals as data experts in the broader scientific community.

I was delighted to present at the Conference as part of the records management stream, and I hope that in future years there will be more presentations from recordkeeping professionals working in “non-traditional” information- or data-management roles.

**Rebecca Grant**

University College, Dublin

<sup>1</sup> Grant, Rebecca (2018): Dataset analysing the crossover between archivists, recordkeeping professionals and research data management using email list data. figshare. Dataset. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.7007903.v1>

<sup>2</sup> For example, the ARA Specialist Repositories group has published an overview, “What to think about when you are confronted with managing research data”: <https://tinyurl.com/ycbmtghw>

<sup>3</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/nyc24v6>

# Clydebuilt connections to people

Given our project's local roots, in the host city of a conference themed *People Make Archives*, I took the opportunity to discuss some of Glasgow's more *people*-focused attempts at inclusiveness, regeneration, and their connections to the city's shipbuilding history. Specifically, my presentation on the records collection of the former Clydeside shipbuilders William Simons & Company. The saying 'Glasgow made the Clyde, and the Clyde made Glasgow' reflects the human intervention in all this, as it was only with the canalisation of the narrow, shallow upper Clyde, at the behest of tobacco and sugar merchants, both trades also dependent on slavery, that eventually

allowed large vessels to dock up-river. In turn, this led to the expansion of international trade, as well as shipbuilding itself.

Glasgow University Archives holds extensive shipbuilding records, and the Simons project, supported by a grant from the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust, focused on a collection with some of the oldest plans in the archives. The Simons Company was founded in 1810. Its collection of 680 plans comprises 85% of the total of pre-1870 ship plans held by Glasgow University Archives. However, the collection has national and international importance beyond Glasgow, as evidenced by the problematic (for some) inclusion of plans for so-called blockade-runners, built to beat the Union blockade of the Confederacy during the American Civil War of 1861-65.

Although archive services hold records for many shipbuilders, only the Simons collection holds plans for blockade-runners. With the fastest steamers in the world built on Clydeside, Confederate agents were drawn to first buy existing ships and then order new, faster vessels: eventually one in three blockade-runners were Clyde-built. Despite public opinion opposing the slave-trading Confederacy, Clydeside speculators invested heavily in blockade running,



The Simons imprimatur. Image courtesy of Glasgow University Archives.



Clydebuilt on Flickr. Image courtesy of Glasgow University Archives.



Ship plans preserved and conserved. Image courtesy of Glasgow University Archives.



and Scotland also provided it with captains, engineers and stokers.

Other documents in the university's archives reflect the extent of these enterprises. The records of William Denny & Brothers Ltd. include letters offering to build blockade runners as well as a letter from one Captain James Carlin (UGD3/34/14) concerning the construction of three blockade-runners to William Bee & Co. of South Carolina. The letter (dated 10 February 1864) indicates that Carlin, while posing as a private individual, actually represented the Confederacy as Superintendent of the South Carolina Importing and Exporting Co. (SCIE Co) and went to some lengths to supply blockade runners, looking to place orders to build ships, as well as trying to buy existing vessels. His letter to the SCIE Co describes travelling around British shipyards, considering cost, speed and the need to transport the maximum cargo in as few trips as possible, before identifying Denny's as the best option.

The records of Sir James Lumsden of Arden, who later became Lord Provost of Glasgow, include correspondence dated 17 November 1864 (DC112/C/18/2/1), on the progress of a blockade-runner, the *Talisman*, and its cargo of 389 bales of cotton. Sir James's papers also include a prospectus for the Albion Trading Company (UGD112/C/28/6), a blockade running firm, quoting figures equivalent to £12 million today, and another document is a receipt for £1,000 – £44,000 today – of shares (UGD112/C/28/7) in the Universal Trading Company, another blockade-running company.

Returning to our project, led by Ela Wiklo, archive services preservation manager and paper conservator, and assisted by student volunteer Luke Doyle, my first impression of the plans was that their condition was slightly alarming, and I wondered how we could arrest their deterioration, safely making them accessible again. Some of the longer plans had curled at the edges, gradually leading to small tears, and sometimes tears extending quite far across the plan.

Another issue was the level of dirt and the time-consuming task of cleaning so many plans. Therefore, we gave priority to cleaning plans where dirt obscured the drawing itself, while the fragility of others meant we preferred less cleaning rather than risk further damage. This preventative approach also informed the repacking: previously kept inside higher-ph cardboard tubes, and wrapped in brown paper, we re-rolled the plans around

tubes with an acid free buffer, which supported the rolls from inside, preventing the suspension and fraying of edges.

Then we placed rolls sealed in bags inside telescopic boxes, minimising potential damage during handling by allowing the removal of individual, sealed bags, while leaving the other plans boxed on the shelf. We also created a document recording the plans' condition, along with other detailed information.

The historical significance of the plans for the blockade-runner *Will o' Wisp* and *Julia*, along with their condition, made their conservation a priority. These required wide-ranging conservation treatments, raising questions about their place in an industrial heritage collection: as working documents, we had to balance respect for their historical authenticity with the possibility that some areas could be retouched to recreate a finished 'square' item.

Then, in another people connection, we wanted to increase access to the collection, enhancing its global reach and reputation. The age and rarity of some of the material, including plans of blockade-runners, and the fact that many of the plans were beautifully drawn, provided plenty of scope to promote the collection. To date a Flickr set of the plans has had 1,500-plus views, we have received feedback from enthusiasts via social media, and the project has also generated some coverage in publications.

Looking back, working in a preservation/conservation team, synthesising different views, and publicising sometimes sensitive material while working within the integrated ethical framework underpinning our project, was a great experience.

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**Colin Vernal**

University of Glasgow

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Singer at the heart of Clydebank.  
Image copyright West  
Dunbartonshire Council

# Singer stories: talking about sewing machines

In the summer of 2017, West Dunbartonshire Council's Heritage team – custodians of the Singer archive and sewing machine collection – began developing an oral history project around the Singer factory and the experiences of those who worked in it, entitled 'Singer Stories'. The project finished a year later and I was fortunate enough to be able to present on the work we did at the ARA Conference in Glasgow.

At its peak, the Singer factory in Clydebank employed almost 16,000 people. Between 1885 and 1980, tens of millions of sewing machines were shipped all over the world from Clydebank. It is no exaggeration to say that everyone in Clydebank had a connection with the company, whether as an employee or a relative of one, or as a participant in the annual Singer gala or one of the many Singer recreational clubs. Indeed, it was not uncommon for people to complain that they – and the town of Clydebank – had been 'Singerised', so dominant culturally and economically was the company.

Given the centrality of the Singer factory to the town, with the 'Singer Stories' project we decided not only to interview former factory workers, but also their relatives, along with people who didn't work in the factory but owned and used one of the Singer sewing machines manufactured there. The aim was to look at how people in the community had already memorialised the factory and passed their experiences of it on to their children – and how those children themselves thought of it and understood its place in Clydebank's history.

By also interviewing people who owned and used Singer sewing machines, we began to look at the other side of the factory's legacy in Clydebank – for example, what does it mean to earn your living from a machine made by your neighbour? Or, how do people feel about Singer when the activity of that now long-gone factory is embodied in a machine their mother used to sew their Halloween costumes on? In other words, people in Clydebank have a multitude of links to the Clydebank Singer factory:





Singer Stories Festival, Clydebank town hall. Image copyright West Dunbartonshire Council

for almost 100 years their experiences were mediated through the factory and the objects it produced. As the memorialisation of the factory takes on its own agency, the factory and the sewing machine continue to mediate and inform the production of Clydebank as a place.

With the project parameters set, we then looked at the methodology. Rather than arranging formal, appointment-based interviews, conducted by qualified professionals, we decided to look to the community itself and how we could help the community record its own stories. To this end, we recruited a team of community oral historians, ie people who had links with the area and were interested in its people and its history.

Our role then became one of facilitation, of empowering the volunteers through technical training – how to use the hand held recorders, how to fill in the permission forms, the legal and ethical considerations of oral history practice and so on – and through providing a solid grounding in the history of Singer in Clydebank; particularly, the key episodes in the company and factory’s history and the years of its decline, in essence the years that many of the interviewees themselves would have lived and worked through.

There were two main advantages to this approach. The first was that a peer-to-peer, relaxed, informal interview tended to result in a more relaxed loquacious interviewee leading to, hopefully, an outcome where they thought less about what they ‘felt they were supposed to say’ and more about what they actually thought. The second was that the interviewer, him/herself a member of the local community with a personal

view on, and relationship to, the Singer factory, became a part of the interview. In other words, we were looking to *embrace the biases* of the interviewer and accept them, even encourage them, as part of an intra-community conversation.

Once they were trained, we paired our volunteers into teams of two – usually trying to combine technical ability with conversational confidence, often resulting in a young/old partnership. Each team picked a two-and-a-half-hour slot at Clydebank Town Hall, a busy local hub. The sessions were advertised on Facebook and in local libraries, but most of those who were interviewed were in the Town Hall for something else and just happened to be approached by one of the volunteers. In this way, across two eight-week blocks of sessions, we gathered 24 recordings with 46 interviewees and a total of 498 minutes of recordings.

There is an element of truth in the idea that oral history recordings tell us more about the now of the recording than the then of what is being remembered and discussed: that was particularly true of the ‘Singer Stories’ project. The interviews were wide-ranging, organic explorations of people’s pasts and their memories. The project demonstrated how through the testimony of those who lived with the Singer factory, the past, and its continuing resonance, can be brought to life.

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**Christopher Cassells**

West Dunbartonshire Council

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# Setting up a records management programme

This year's conference in Glasgow was my first. I was presenting a paper in the records management (RM) stream about setting up an RM programme at ZSL (Zoological Society of London) and the challenges I have encountered along the way. I am the solo archivist and records manager at ZSL and hoped that my paper would provide some help or reassurance for fellow lone workers trying to set up similar programmes.

ZSL was founded in 1826 and has a rich history and archive. Managing both the historical archive and modern records, I have used the former to inform my set up of a programme for the latter. The archival material I already hold enables me to demonstrate to staff how the records they are creating now will become the archive of the future. As an organisation, we're also 'complicated', from a RM point of view, because we are at the same time: two zoos, a learned society, a membership organisation, running conservation programmes in 50 countries, and a centre of scientific study (our Institute of Zoology); so, essentially five organisations in one!

I took the role on knowing that there had been no formal records management done before at ZSL. My predecessor had attempted to start a programme 10 years previously, but had given up. From the few papers retained from that period, I could see that they had started out right – trying to gather representatives from different directorates, getting them to report back on what types of documents they held in their offices etc.

I think that what they underestimated is that, to set up a records management programme, you can't just have occasional meetings with reps and gather information from them. It takes a lot of time building relationships with all sorts of different colleagues because records management is about change, and process, and people. If you don't understand the way people work, then you're not going to be able to create something that colleagues can a) easily follow and b) easily achieve compliance.

ZSL is an organisation that understands the importance of history and the importance of good record-keeping – but usually that understanding is limited to within whatever department the person is working in – be it someone in the vets or in finance. The way that staff work can also create a risk of a siloed understanding of each other's work – and highlights the difficulty of implementing records management policies where some feel that their work is very separate from everyone else's.

A couple of months after I started, some large office moves were going to take place. This was a fantastic opportunity to get about and meet different colleagues and to get a great overview of what sort of records they were producing/keeping - and looking at historical 'paper things' that they were holding onto. Of course, it is so important to take the time to help and advise on this sort of thing as much as you can – particularly in a small organisation – because this is what will make people take you seriously. There is no way to do records management that doesn't take time and engagement.

Equally, after the office moves, I knew that the standard retention schedule I had been working on wouldn't work. I spent the next 6 months updating it, liaising with different departments, and making all the necessary changes. Writing a retention schedule for a charity is a difficult enough task, but with the addition of all the quirks and non-standard elements of a lot of the work we do, it was a challenge to complete.

The retention schedule that I have written was rolled out across the organisation earlier this year. I think that GDPR helped to get people to engage with things around record keeping, so in this respect it was actually a great time to try and engage people with a document that they would otherwise see as 'dry'. I really utilised the relationships I had built up with colleagues in different departments to make sure that people knew about the policy and knew they could contact me with any questions. For staff overseas, I asked colleagues who worked directly with/travelled overseas to help with the advocacy where I couldn't go and again by asking overseas staff to direct any questions back to me.

I feel pleased with the way that records management is progressing at ZSL. The latest progression for the records management programme is the rollout of SharePoint later this year/early next year. I have a lot of work to do, but I'm looking forward to the new challenges.

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**Sarah Broadhurst**

ZSL

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The building blocks. Image copyright Leonard Cheshire Disability.

# Pop-up archives

Providing access to archives for disabled people and care homes.

From 2014-2017 the Leonard Cheshire Archive ran a Heritage Lottery Funded-project called 'Rewind: 7 decades of stories from Leonard Cheshire Disability'. This project ran 'pop-up' archive workshops, a digitisation programme of journals, audio-visual material and photographs and built an accessible online resource for people to browse as an online exhibition [www.rewind.leonardcheshire.org](http://www.rewind.leonardcheshire.org).

The collections selected for digitisation concentrated on the first ever 'Cheshire Home', Le Court in Hampshire, and the six services taking part in the project, all based in the south east of England. The idea derived from the fact that, despite the archive being physically accessible to wheelchair users, and across the car park from a care home, we had very few visitors or volunteers who were disabled people. Whilst we knew from interaction with

customers that people were interested in the subject matter of our archive, there were barriers in place stopping people from accessing them.

The term 'barriers' comes from the Social Model of Disability, which proposes that people are not disabled by their medical conditions or diagnoses but rather by the way that society is organised. Think of a wheelchair user who finds s/he cannot access a tube station because there is no step-free access. The disablement comes from the steps, not from the person's need to use the wheelchair.

The Social Model was a powerful tool in deciding how the Rewind project should be organised. We had to think about the barriers to our service, and ways to overcome them. We had to think about access in terms of design for disabled people, rather than in the archival sense (which





The power of partnership. Image copyright Leonard Cheshire Disability.

Eliminating barriers. Image copyright Leonard Cheshire Disability.

usually means catalogues and digitised records made available online).

My volunteer and I pondered this question. It was thanks to her that we tried out our first idea. Why not ask residents of our local home if they would like to volunteer doing archival tasks, with the volunteer acting as a personal assistant? In that way, it didn't matter if one particular volunteer could not talk, or could not use their hands. They would be supported in the task. This idea worked really well, and the waiting list for people to come and volunteer with us meant we decided to diversify and offer pop up workshops at the home itself.

We had already broken down one barrier of access to the archive by taking the archive to people, rather than designing a project without any real consultation with the people we were trying to serve. Using our large spare collection of magazines and photographs in handling activities and then copies in craft activities meant that people could handle items at these events – which broke down another barrier.







Our story. Image copyright Leonard Cheshire Disability.

The final plan for Rewind extrapolated from here, and you can find out more about how the project worked in our film at this link:

<https://rewind.leonardcheshire.org/rewind-comes-end/>.

The biggest learning curve was making our archive website-accessible. We decided not to host images in our catalogue, as it was a barrier to accessing them, and we retired our old catalogue completely. I found it very difficult to use in any case (having the learning disability dyscalculia) and it was not accessible to a screen reader.

Based on the feedback from our sessions with our customers, we knew we needed to have a website with a good search function and to put all our digitised resources up with transcripts, audio description, subtitles and alternative text (alt text) where appropriate. We asked members of staff, volunteers and service users to test the website using their adaptive equipment and downloaded a free screen reader so we could test it ourselves, called NVDA <https://www.nvaccess.org/>.

We made the decision not to have our sound files on a platform like SoundCloud, because they are not accessible. Searching the platform help-guides with key words 'accessibility', 'deaf', 'blind' and 'subtitles' brought up nothing either. Instead, we converted the digitised sound files to films on YouTube; this enabled us to have subtitles as well. Then, we embedded films in our website so we could show them with a link to a downloadable transcript, in Word. We used Word for the transcripts because not all pdf files are screen-readable.

Finally, we selected a company that has experience in building accessible websites to do ours. There are Web Content Accessibility Guidelines out there to help you (we aimed for AA compliance). See here:

<http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>.

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**Stephanie Nield**

Leonard Cheshire Disability

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An Iodhlann, Tiree. Image copyright: An Iodhlann

# One size doesn't fit all

Accepting the diversity and value of remote recordskeepers and giving them professional support

**A**rgyll is particularly beautiful, but its mountains, lochs and islands create logistical challenges for those who live and work on the western edge of Scotland.

The area is particularly rich in history, from pre-history to the present day. Communities are deeply rooted in the landscape, with global diaspora connections. There are many small museums and heritage centres, free to access and managed by volunteers on the proverbial shoestring. They have archives alongside their artefacts, books and information, and volunteers are tasked with their care. I asked some of these 'archivists' what inspired them to get involved; what challenges they faced in caring for their collections; and what would they wish for if they had a magic wand. I featured four responses in my Conference presentation. The respondents all agreed that they needed

resources (not just funding), training in specific archives skills and support 'on the ground'.

One of the deliverables of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) - supported *Written in the Landscape* partnership project (WITL), led by liveArgyll Archives and the Argyll Papers at Inveraray Castle, was training in archive skills for community partners throughout Argyll. We removed all barriers to attending the training: it was scheduled by mutual agreement, there was no charge to attend, and the project paid travel expenses and subsistence.

The training was delivered by The Archive Skills Consultancy Ltd. Over three days, it covered collecting, accessioning, appraisal, arrangement and cataloguing; palaeography ('bad' handwriting) and indexing; and





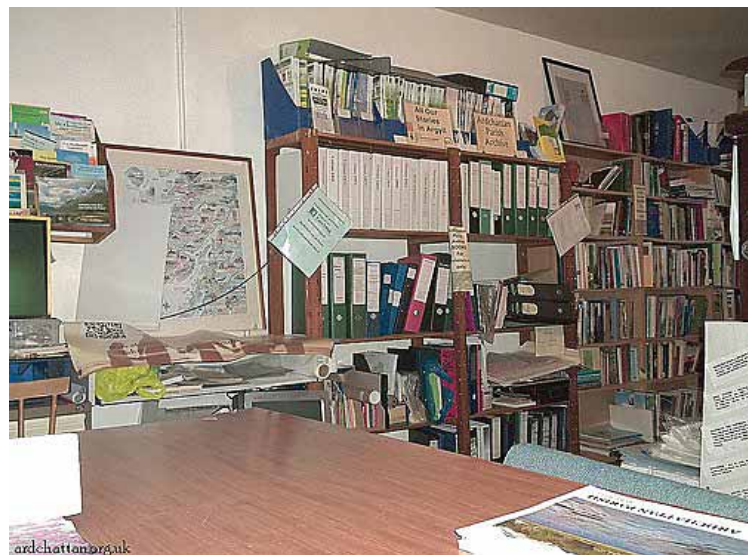
Ardkinglas. Image copyright: J. Maskell.

preservation management, including photographs. All three training days were well attended and warmly received, demonstrating the volunteers' enthusiasm, interest and willingness to learn. Feedback showed a desire for 'more' similar opportunities.

For these volunteers, working as para-professionals in Scotland, support is difficult. Scotland has no Arts Council; we have Creative Scotland to fund performance and visual art, Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) to fund museums and the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA). SCA organises and delivers training and other initiatives, generally in central Scotland, but it doesn't hand out funding. So where do you go for funding for basic archival needs like cataloguing? Even if provided free, the logistics, expense and time commitment required to reach central Scotland from Argyll can be prohibitive. Online training is an option, but connectivity in Argyll can be problematic, and a lack of computer skills can deter volunteers. There are also very real benefits from bringing a diverse group of people with very different experiences together in one physical space: the 'hive mind' and friendships which can evolve naturally into a mutually supportive network.

Recently, there appear to have been a number of initiatives and surveys of museums, heritage centres and community archives, including CHArts Argyll (Culture Heritage Arts Argyll); Community Heritage Scotland (Ergadia Heritage on behalf of the Scottish Government); and the SCA survey into community archives.

And what about ARA? In my view, ARA currently focuses on the recordkeeper rather than the records and archives: eg. protecting professional roles, pay and ethics. But in



Ardchattan Parish Archives. Image copyright: J. Bowis.



Dunollie Museum, Castle and Grounds. Image copyright: J. Shaw

situations where no professional archivist will be appointed, there is no need to be protective; and volunteers aren't paid a salary. ARA also has a responsibility to the archives and needs to ensure that volunteer archivists are given help and support to do their jobs properly.

Argyll's remote museums and community heritage centres are not ARA members: the cost of membership is prohibitive and the benefits questionable. The revised CPD foundation level might appear appropriate for new entrants, but I question whether retired volunteers are going to seriously consider joining ARA for its CPD scheme. We need to think differently about how these volunteers can be supported and how we offer free, local and supportive assistance, ideally alongside resources, both financial and in kind. We need to do some hand-holding here, and if the offer is good enough, perhaps some may become members.

The starting point for delivering this support is to recognise the problem – not just for Argyll but for many remote areas of the UK. Sharing this knowledge will, I hope, precipitate discussion which will eventually lead to practical ideas which can be implemented. I look forward to continuing the conversation.

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#### **Alison Diamond**

The Argyll papers at Inverary Castle

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# What you told us about #ARA2018 Glasgow

**M**any thanks to those delegates who completed the short Conference survey at the end of our three days. Over 170 of you took part, which is not just a representative sample, but also a comprehensive one!

As Mike Anson has mentioned elsewhere, the Conference committee is digesting the data – and the very valuable insights that all participants provided. We'll aim to release the findings (minus anything that identifies individuals) in the coming weeks. It's all about making Conference in Leeds next year and those in subsequent years better and more relevant.

So, here's what you told us:

#### **(Question 1) Who/what are you?**

55% archivists, 3% records manager, 11% both an archivist and records manager, 13% conservator, and 18% 'other', ie a professional or stakeholder in the wider sector.

#### **(Q2) Who paid for you to attend?**

8% self-funded, 75% paid by employer, 4% a combination of both, 13% 'other', such as bursaries.

#### **(Q3) How did you hear about Conference (a multiple answer option):**

21% ARA Today, 42% ARC Magazine, 33% ARA Conference website, 34% ARA website, 40% listservs, 22% social media, 29% 'other', including word of mouth and 'it's a regular fixture for me.'

#### **(Q4) How helpful was the ARA Conference website**

29% very helpful; 54% helpful; 16% fairly helpful; 1% not helpful.

#### **(Q5) How easy was it to register?**

44% very easy, 43% easy, 13 fairly easy, 0% not easy.



**(Q6) How helpful was the pre-Conference information?**

47% very helpful, 42% helpful, 10% helpful, 1% not helpful.

**(Q7) Was information in the Conference packs useful?**

29% very useful, 51% useful, 17% fairly useful, 3% not useful

This is how you rated the various organisational elements

**(Q8): Venue:**

58% excellent, 31% good, 9% fair, 2% poor, 0% N/A

**Ease of navigating the venue:**

45% excellent, 45% good, 8% fair, 2% poor, 1% N/A

**Catering:**

39% excellent, 40% good, 15% fair, 6% poor, 1% N/A

**Reception at Glasgow City Hall:**

19% excellent, 25% good, 8% fair, 0% poor, 47% N/A

**Gala dinner:**

7% excellent, 25% good, 4% fair, 0% poor, 34% N/A

**Agenda:**

45% excellent, 41% good, 12% fair, 1% poor, 2% N/A

On the question of what delegates enjoyed the most and least (Q9 and Q10) about the programme, there was a broad appreciation for what was on offer, and the role of ARA Scotland. A majority of respondents were positive about the keynote speakers and the need to tackle diversity in the sector, but there were some useful suggestions for the committee on how to help keynotes remain relevant. A number of people focused on individual 'stand-out sessions' for them, while others liked specific streams relevant to their own work or areas where they needed to develop.

There were suggestions, too, in terms of areas to improve, such as more on public/community engagement, talking about 'audiences', and digital archives; also, tying lightning talks in with poster presentations, avoiding a 'what I did at work' approach to presenting, and the need to ensure we maintain space for constructive disagreement. All in all, there was loads of good, frank feedback in the responses.

Back to the mainstream questions, ie what participants thought of the information village (Q11): 8% excellent,

28% good, 27% fair, 6% poor, and 31% did not attend. A number of respondents suggested creating a quieter space with more room, which the committee is looking to address in 2019.

In terms of what delegates like most and least about Conference and general comments (Q12 - Q15), as ever there was plenty of positive stuff about being able to meet and learn from colleagues and reflecting collectively on the issues raised in the programme. Many of you liked being in Glasgow and felt warmly welcomed and included – a top priority for the committee! – and being challenged and taken out of the comfort zone. Oh, and er, the ice cream, the ceilidh and the Tunnocks wafers....

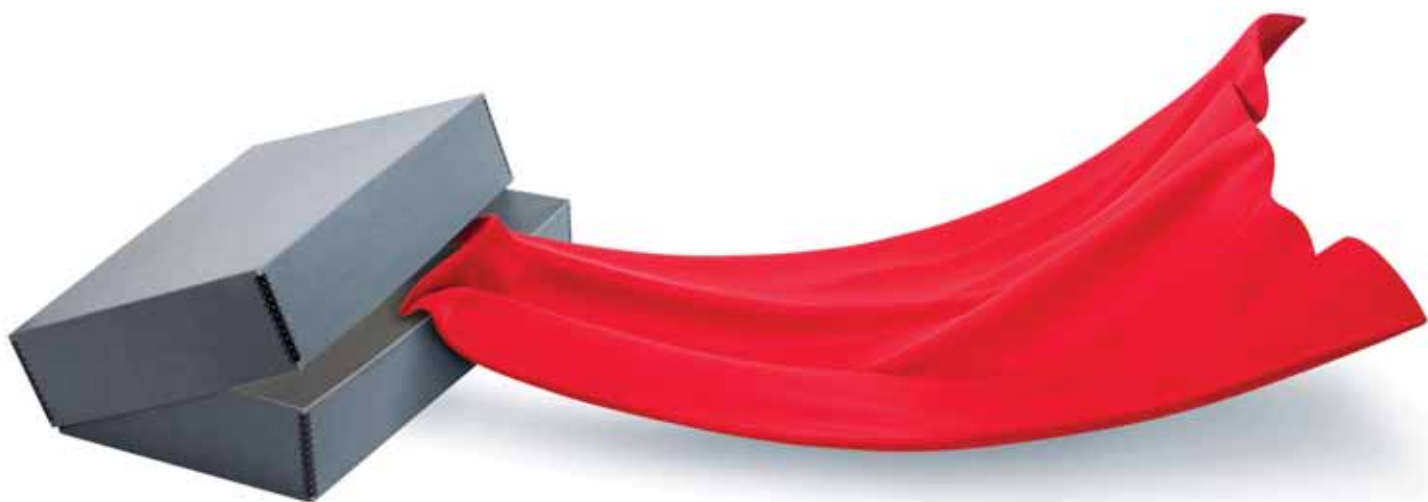
Regarding improvements, here is a selection of comments and ideas. There are too many to put in an article, but the committee will look at them all:

- Let people know in advance which sessions will be filmed – that way, we can attend other things and watch later;
- More space and capacity in lunch breaks, better food labelling and variety and support for those with special food and other needs;
- Printing the programme in bigger font;
- More time to discuss what the ARA is doing: Board members and their portfolios, professional development, etc.
- Improve signage, etc;
- Have a general induction for delegates;
- Arrange programme abstracts in 'session order';
- More records management and 'digital' sessions;
- Cost: the ARA Conference is among the lowest cost in our sector, when you factor in accommodation, food, etc. And fees have been kept roughly flat for the past five years. But it is always good for the committee to hear that this is a high priority for delegates;
- More 'hands-on' sessions and practical focus;
- More 'critical reflection' by speakers in their sessions;
- Bigger fonts in presentations – also sub-titles where audio-visual is being used;
- Maybe have a free afternoon?

Thanks again to all who took part!

**Jon Elliott**

ARA, Head of Public Affairs



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