

# Connecting Histories

*"There is no time like now. There is no waiting for the moment."*

Vanley Burke, photographer, 21 September 2005

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Izzy, Community Access Officer, and David, one of the project volunteers, working on the Vanley Burke Archive

Connecting Histories is a series of interconnected activities aiming to bring to light the hidden histories of Birmingham's diverse communities. By making these histories accessible we hope to stimulate learning, encourage debate about our shared identities, our common sense of belonging and our multiple heritages, and to make a contribution to the promotion of social justice.

One of the strengths of the project is that it evolved within a long-standing partnership and builds on a raft of previous work. Birmingham City Archives, the School of Education at the University of Birmingham, Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery and members of the Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures group have been working in partnership over the past six years on a programme of projects and initiatives raising awareness of culturally diverse histories in the city.

These projects include *Using History to Build Community* which worked with a group of teachers to develop teaching materials for black history; *Making Connections: Birmingham's Black International History*, a book and touring exhibitions raising awareness of archive, museum and library collections; and *Connecting Identities*, a youth inclusion project which used archives and photography to explore issues of identity, pride and belonging. For Connecting Histories this partnership was extended to include the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick, and the project is supported by a grant of just over £820,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Connecting Histories aims to:

- Increase access to culturally diverse archive collections through cataloguing and selective digitisation
- Preserve sound and photographic

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archives through digitisation, notably 3000 reel to reel sound recordings in the Charles Parker Archive

- Increase the diversity of the workforce in the archive sector
- Increase the number and diversity of archive users
- Expand the archival knowledge and skills of local communities
- Provide e-learning environments for a broad range of users
- Provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to influence and inform archival policies and practices
- Expand and sustain existing partnerships
- Develop transferable models of working.

The project is being delivered by a multidisciplinary team of 14 over a total period of 30 months, supported by a Management Board, a Project Advisory Group and a number of individual, organisational and community supporters and advocates. The development of the immediate partnership and a critical mass of support was a significant factor in securing the funding for the project and will be crucial to ensuring its success.

### Access

For several years Birmingham City Archives and the Head of Photography at Birmingham Central Library have targeted collection development and photographic commissioning policies towards increasing the relevance of our holdings to reflect the cultural diversity of the city's population. Connecting Histories provides the vehicle for cataloguing some of these collections and for making them accessible, both on site and remotely over the project website which will be launched in March 2006. The collections included for cataloguing in the project are listed below (a brief summary of each one is included in the first project newsletter which is available at [www.birmingham.gov.uk/connectinghistories](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/connectinghistories)):

- Birmingham Hebrew Congregation Archive
- Indian Workers Association Archive and related papers of Avtar Juhl

The current project team consists of:

- |                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ■ Project Manager                | Siân Roberts  |
| ■ Community Access Officer       | Izzy Mohammed   |
| ■ Archivists                     | Helen Fisher, Jim Ranahan and Anna Riggs  |
| ■ Trainee Archivists             | Aishling Fox and Arike Oke  |
| ■ Digitisation Officer           | Brigitte Winsor   |
| ■ Research and Learning Officers | Recruitment currently underway for 2 posts  |
| ■ Academic Advisors              | Dr Robert Carter, University of Warwick and Professor Ian Grosvenor, University of Birmingham |

- Vanley Burke Archive
- George Hallett Archive
- Charles Parker Archive
- Banner Theatre Archive
- Papers and photographs of Derek Bishton and the Ten:8 photographic collective
- Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre Archive and related papers of Paul Mackney

### Learning

All of the collections share two common themes in that they are the archives of individuals and organisations involved in both documenting the life of diverse communities in the city and in actively campaigning for social justice.

Consequently these themes form the foundation of the five learning packages which are aimed at a wide

range of users from the 16+ age group and which will be hosted on the project website. The learning packages are on the following themes:

- How to research Black History and Heritage
- Advanced Research Skills (aimed at post graduates in the Social Sciences)
- Migration and Settlement
- Campaigning for Social Justice in Birmingham, from the eighteenth century to present day
- Challenging racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

The first two packages, which are currently being developed by Ian Grosvenor and Bob Carter, are focused on the development of research skills. The following three packages will provide users with an opportunity to build on those skills, and are more thematic and content driven in nature.

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The Project Team Back, from left to right: Dr Robert Carter, Professor Ian Grosvenor, Brigitte Winsor, Anna Riggs, Jim Ranahan; Front, from left to right: Izzy Mohammed, Helen Fisher, Siân Roberts, Aishling Fox, Arike Oke



In addition to the collections which are being catalogued as part of the project, the website and learning packages will draw on material from other City Archives collections including, for example, Birmingham Sikh Council, the Sparkbrook Association, Henry Gunter and the Afro-Caribbean Association, Birmingham Community Relations Council and the photographic archives of Sukhvinder Singh Ubhi, Terry Lo, Tim Smith, Pogus Caesar and others.

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David Lammy MP,  
Minister for  
Culture, during a  
recent visit to the  
project

The website will also host a variety of information and resources including photographic galleries and exhibitions; catalogues of archive collections; discussion board; community events notice board; guidance on how to plan, fund and do community history and archive projects; and information on careers and training in the archives and heritage sectors.

### Workforce development

One of the most important challenges for Birmingham City Archives, and for the archives profession generally, is how to make the workforce more representative of local and national demographic patterns. For this reason the project includes two positive action training placements for graduates from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background who will qualify as archivists by the end of the project. Arike Oke and Aishling Fox both began their placements in March 2005 and are currently working towards the archive qualification through distance learning with the University of Wales Aberystwyth while gaining experience on the project.

The placements were advertised locally and nationally in the press and through various interest based electronic lists and mailing groups. Nearly 50 graduates from BME communities applied for the placements and the quality of applications was very high. It was apparent from the application forms that although a small number of applicants had previously considered archives as a career, for the majority it appeared to have been a progression from an initial interest in the content, the aims and the ethos of the project, which led to a consideration of archives as a potential career. Interestingly a similar progression could be seen in a number of the applications for the Community Access Officer post, which also attracted a very different field from that usually seen in applications for posts at the City Archives.

One of the benefits of working in a multidisciplinary team is that it provides each team member with the opportunity to engage with a different



range of skills and working practices from across the archives, museums, library, voluntary and academic sectors. Early indications from the project are that this provides a stimulating and safe environment for both personal and professional development.

### Community engagement

A significant part of the project activities is the strategy for engaging individuals and organisations who have not previously used archives, primarily, although not exclusively, people from BME communities. As the project title implies part of the ethos of the project is to focus on shared experiences, connections and histories as a means of developing cross-community contacts and activities.

Izzy Mohammed is currently working with a broad range of communities, from long-established communities in the city to newer arrivals, on a number of heritage projects, supported by other members of the team. These include, for example, a group of African Caribbean women elders, a Bangladeshi youth group, a group of Iranian asylum seekers, and a consortium of groups from the city's Somali communities, all of whom are engaged in projects such as developing their own archive, researching the history of their communities, telling their life histories and experiences or developing history trails combining archives and the built environment.

We have employed a number of ways to promote the project's activities to community organisations. These include attendance at high profile events, such as the Adult Learners Fair and Celebrating Sanctuary, organising

our own events in community venues such as the African Caribbean Millennium Resource Centre, direct email and postal mailshots and appearing on local community radio. However, the most effective method has inevitably been personal approaches from Izzy, going out and about meeting and talking to community organisations and key individuals.

Another key element of the project is to facilitate the sharing of information, skills and practice between team members and City Archives' staff and individuals and community groups. There is a wealth of historical and cultural information and experience in the city's communities which should inform and enrich both our collections and professional practice. Similarly there is a huge interest locally from individuals and community organisations in opportunities to develop the skills and experience required for managing community archive and heritage projects.

Connecting Histories is therefore not seeking to actively collect materials from individuals or organisations but rather to assist with developing the capacity and skills within groups and communities to care for their own archives and develop their own projects. This capacity building activity is taking a variety of forms as each group has very particular needs, emphasis, skills and experiences. Activities currently range from providing advice and training on planning and delivering oral history projects and funding applications to actively delivering a six week training package in archive cataloguing and basic preservation skills. The latter



initiative involves around 10 volunteers who received training in the basic cleaning and repackaging of photographic prints by the Central Library's Conservation Department and who have since attended every Saturday to work with members of the project team in cleaning, repacking and cataloguing parts of the Vanley Burke Archive.

The response to these early initiatives has on the whole been extremely positive, and indeed has so far exceeded our expectations as to almost be overwhelming. After the first four months it became apparent that the emphasis needed to shift somewhat earlier than anticipated from formulating strategies to involve and engage groups, to developing strategies for managing the demand and levels of expectation, extending the project team's capacity to deliver, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the activities and interest beyond the life of the project.

One way we are extending the project's capacity to deliver is to develop new partnerships. We are currently developing an umbrella heritage forum for newer communities in partnership with the Midlands Refugee Council, and are also in the early stages of working with Birmingham University's Guild of Students to develop a network of students from their community

volunteering programme who will receive training from the project team to work with community groups on a variety of projects.

#### What happens next...

Connecting Histories began officially in February 2005 (with the project team in post by mid April) and is due to run until July 2007. The first six months have been far busier and more successful than we ever anticipated when we developed the project. Early indications are that the project will go a long way in fulfilling its brief to develop new models of working for the archive service and continue the cultural change which has been ongoing for the past few years. The challenge for the next few months is how we build on the early success to ensure a sustainable future for a truly active and participative community engagement with the archive service for as many of Birmingham's citizens as possible.

**Siân Roberts**  
Project Manager  
Connecting Histories

# The Charles Chaplin Conference: the importance of archives

It is very rare to find a scholarly conference devoted to a single figure from film history, but a little tramp can go a long way. The Charles Chaplin Conference took place between 21 and 24 July at the London College of Communication and was organised by the British Film Institute (BFI) in association with the University of Southampton. The conference was timely as there has been a recent surge of interest in Chaplin.

Whilst Chaplin remains, and it seems always will be, one of the most recognisable figures in international cinema, there has been a recent flurry of activity surrounding his work. *The Great Dictator* was re-released to healthy audiences, his feature films were released on DVD to strong sales, new restorations of his films have played a major part in the programmes of the Il Cinema Ritrovato film festival in Italy, and *The Kid* appeared on a list of films that children should see. Chaplin has also become central to the BFI's cultural activities through film restorations, DVD releases, a research programme, and now this conference.

The major aim of the conference was not to necessarily reassess Chaplin and his films, but to look at how his work fits in with the wider picture of twentieth century culture. To quote Michael Hammond, one of the conference organisers: "While there have certainly been retrospectives of his films at festivals there has until now been no attempt ... to consider his impact, his influences and the creative environment from which he arose and that he worked in."

Throughout the four days, the eventful programme of talks, discussions and screenings attracted historians, archivists, academics and fans from around the world. There was even a guided walk of Charlie's childhood haunts in and around East London. The diverse conference papers ranged from looking at the influence of the Music Hall, Chaplin's performance technique, his imitators and his collaborators. If there was one overall theme of the conference, it was the continued importance of archive materials. It was refreshing to find that archival issues were high on the agenda with two panel sessions devoted entirely to archives.

The first panel was a presentation from some of the key conservators currently involved in restoring the short films made at Keystone during 1914, the

company that introduced Charlie to cinema audiences worldwide. This is an international collaboration between the National Film and Television Archive (UK), Cineteca di Bologna (Italy) and Lobster Films (France) and demonstrates the importance of archives working closely together, particularly on projects of this size.

Whilst many of Chaplin's Keystone films have remained in circulation, they are invariably in very poor condition and appear in severely truncated versions, sometimes with the intertitles missing or changed, making them difficult for historians and scholars to study. These new restorations, where the original versions are reconstructed as closely as possible, are very welcome as it allows us to see how Chaplin developed as a performer and filmmaker. As in a lot of restoration projects, there were some technical and ethical challenges, but the end results were very impressive and showed the contribution that thoughtful film restoration can make to historical research.

The second panel of archive presentations concentrated on the 'supporting materials', the non-film archives. Whilst there has been a renewed interest in the films of Chaplin, there has also been a growing awareness of the various Chaplin-

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A wardrobe set record of Chaplin as Calvero in *Limelight*. From the archives of Roy Export Company Establishment



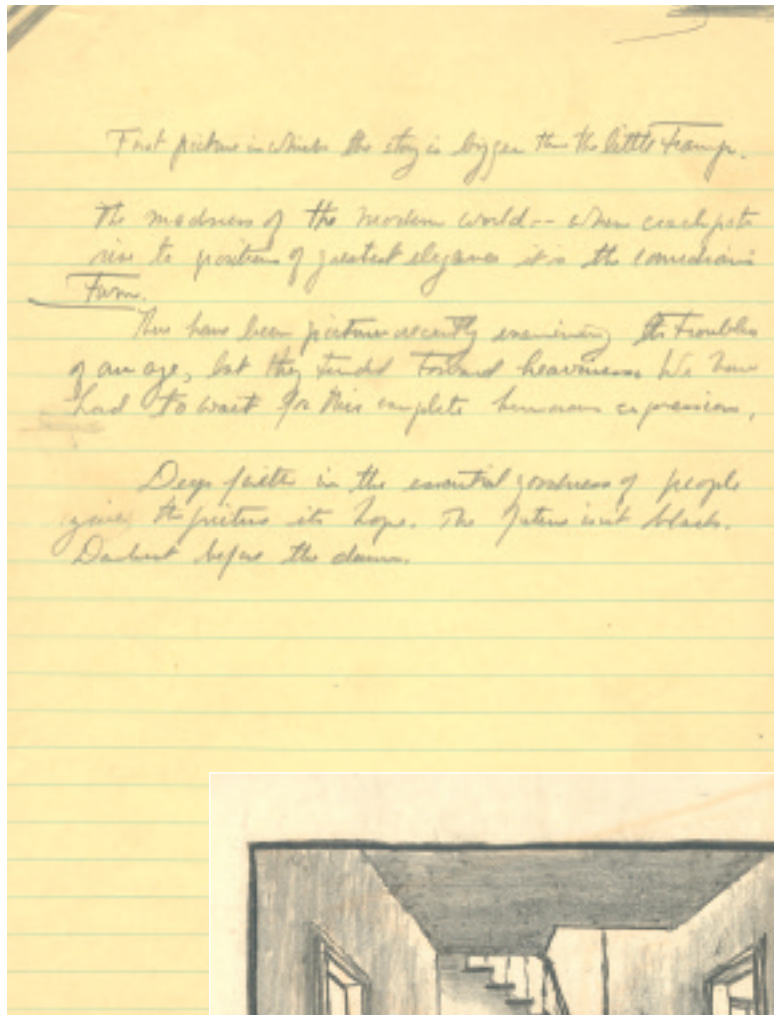
A page of Chaplin's handwritten notes for the famous final speech in *The Great Dictator*. From the archives of Roy Export Company Establishment

related archives, which are increasingly being made accessible. The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County has begun to electronically catalogue a number of its collections, including its Chaplin holdings. Whilst the museum does not sound an obvious choice for a Chaplin collection, it was originally known as the Los Angeles County Museum of History, Art and Science when Chaplin first made a series of donations beginning in 1932. As this is a classic example of an archive collection being housed at an unlikely institution, it was very welcome to hear some of the BFI's plans for its Chaplin research programme. One of the outcomes of the programme is to map the various archive holdings that relate to Chaplin around the world, which will form the basis of an online researchers guide.

Cecilia Cenciarelli gave a fascinating talk on the work that is currently being undertaken at the Cineteca di Bologna as part of *Progetto Chaplin*. Whilst the Cineteca is restoring the feature films and some of the Keystones at its L'Immagine Ritrovata film laboratory, they are also cataloguing and digitising the Chaplin paper archives. This is a diverse and vast collection, which includes scripts, photographs, set designs, production reports, music compositions and correspondence.

Since the mid-1950s, the majority of these archives were stored in the basement of Manoir de Ban, the Swiss mansion where Chaplin lived for the last 25 years of his life, before being transferred to the nearby Archives de Montreux in 1991. In 1996, members of the Chaplin family established the Association Chaplin to safeguard Charlie's legacy and work. The Association realised the cultural significance of the archives and entrusted the Cineteca di Bologna to research, catalogue and digitise the entire collection.

The Cineteca has been digitising and researching the Chaplin paper archives for three years. The archives were transferred to Bologna for the duration of the project and will be returned to Montreux when it has been completed. 89,000 digital images have already been created, with approximately 25% of the collection remaining to be scanned. In 2003, an online catalogue was launched – [www.charliechaplinarchive.org](http://www.charliechaplinarchive.org) – where a selection of material is searchable with image previews of the original documents. Once the project is completed, the entire catalogue will be available online with the digitised documents available to view at Cineteca's library.



A set sketch of the interior of Lydia's house in *Monsieur Verdoux*. From the archives of Roy Export Company Establishment



Besides the online catalogue and access to digitised documents, the project also provides other significant access outcomes. The Cineteca has published books on the production of *Modern Times*, *The Great Dictator* and *Limelight*, which have used extensive material from the archives. And there have also been exhibitions on the making of *A Woman of Paris* and *City Lights* curated from archive material.

If anything was to be concluded from the conference it would be that Chaplin still remains a captivating figure in modern history. There still remains much to discuss and study about the man and his work, making the need for wide-ranging archive

sources ever more important. What makes the Bologna project so exciting is that for the first time, Chaplin's own archives will be made easily accessible to researchers, which will in turn open other avenues of exploration.

**Tom Vincent  
National Advisory Services  
The National Archives**

*Thanks to the Association Chaplin and Cecilia Cenciarelli at Cineteca di Bologna*

# e-RM at the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA)

The revolution in information and communications technology, and in particular the widespread adoption of email as a preferred form of communication, has steadily eroded the quality of the records kept by organisations in both the public and private sectors. For public sector organisations this is a particular problem, because of the high degree of accountability they have in exercising their public duties.

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Neil Lang

Recent well-publicised examples of deficiencies in record keeping and information use include the Soham and Damilola Taylor cases, and Peter Mandelson and the failure to make adequate records of telephone conversations regarding the Hinduja Brothers' applications for citizenship. All public bodies have a statutory obligation to keep records in accordance with the Public Record Act. The DCA e-RM project, which consists of new software, training, and records management procedures, will enable the Department to fulfil its responsibilities in this area.

## Drivers behind the project

The Freedom of Information Act, in force since January 2005, gives members of the public the right to have access to information held by government bodies. It also strengthens existing rights, afforded to the public under the Data Protection Act, concerning access to personal information. In order that public bodies are able to meet these statutory obligations they need to manage their information (and increasingly that means electronic information) effectively.

It was for these reasons that the Government announced, in its 1999 *Modernising Government White Paper*, its intention that, "by 2004 all newly created public records will be electronically stored and retrieved." This was always an ambitious target, but

the progress which has been made across government departments (and increasingly in local government as well) is very impressive. While Freedom of Information has been a major driver, the benefits of improved information governance are perhaps an even greater imperative.

## The DCA e-RM system

In simple terms, e-RM is the replacement of the old 'registered file' system with an electronic records system that is secure and scalable to meet DCA's ongoing needs. Potentially, the records created may need to be preserved for long periods of time. Hence, the system must be sustainable, and significant on-going investment will be required when the project transitions into 'steady state'.

DCA's e-RM system was selected by their IT business partner Liberata and their sub contractors Unisys on the basis of an output-based specification (a document which states what the Department wants from the software, rather than which software it wants). There are advantages to this approach, including reduction of risk and better concentration on the business requirement, rather than the technology marketplace. Tower Software's TRIM Context was selected, following an appraisal of the software on The National Archives' approved list. It consists of a shared information repository, in which documents and records will be formally managed, and a

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personal workspace called Top Drawer, in which staff can store draft documents.

TRIM Context provides:

- Ready access to records and easier sharing of information
- Better version control of documents
- Close integration with the office desktop operating environment
- More efficient use of network bandwidth, and email inboxes (through use of pointers, rather than file attachments)
- Compliance with legislative, industry and corporate standards
- Compliance with legal, evidential and accountability requirements

Following a successful pilot, the project began in earnest in April 2004. This was divided into two major phases – delivery to London HQ, and delivery to regional HQ functions. Over 2,300



users in DCA HQ are now TRIM Context users. This number will rise to 3,000 by the time the project sunsets in January 2006.

#### The Approach

The e-RM system has been delivered in a phased approach of 'tranches'. Each tranche consists of up to 250 users, with delivery typically over a 25 week cycle from the initial start-up meeting with the Head of Division, to 'e-Day' when the tranche goes live. Much of this time is spent in developing the functional business classification scheme for that tranche. The project has put in place a network of 'information managers' (IMs), who spend part of their time supporting e-RM for their area. There is normally a ratio of 1 IM to 30 staff. A crucial function of the IMs is the development of the fileplan.

#### Training

The e-RM project has taken an innovative approach to training. It has set up a training suite, which can train up to 20 users at a time, and developed a computer based training (CBT) package, based on Saffron's application (Saffron is the company which produced the package), which guides users through their initial training. The CBT is subsequently available for them to run from their desktop. The training is followed up by floorwalking support, and two 'one to one' sessions, during which the trainer sets up local preferences (such as shortcuts to the areas of the fileplan which the user will normally work with). The training has provided intensive support, and has received very good user feedback. It has been a much more cost effective and flexible approach to training than outsourcing.

#### Benefits of e-RM

e-RM will bring about a radical change in the way the Department handles information, and will yield significant benefits. e-RM delivers improved access to information, powerful search capabilities and a logical filing structure that will make finding information easier and faster – even after the authors of the records and those that know where they are stored have moved on. A single, shared information space will allow us to identify opportunities for working together and sharing knowledge and experience. e-RM will improve both our productivity and the quality of the work we do, by delivering the right information at the right time.

Business process re-engineering has largely been out of scope of the project to date, though the system put in place to handle Parliamentary Questions (PQs) electronically gives an insight into what can be developed on the e-RM infrastructure in the future. The e-PQ system is saving over 500 hours of registry time per year, but as importantly gives a number of qualitative benefits for the Parliamentary Branch. Parliamentary Questions need to be answered to a very tight timescale, and the system is helping to monitor progress as well as quickly identifying who in the Department is best placed to answer the question as 'action officer'.

#### Raising the profile of Information Management

The need for better information management is now being widely recognised in both the public and private sectors. In addition to the government targets put in place, which are raising standards, widely publicised failings in information management – such as the ENRON scandal, and associated legislative action (for example Sarbanes-Oxley) – is steadily moving the traditional 'records management' role in both public and private sectors from a low-profile back office function, to a higher profile 'information management' role (and the Chief Information Officer, or CIO, is becoming more commonplace as a Board level function). The future of electronic records management is looking bright indeed when its management is as likely to be found on the Board as in the basement!

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# The Penny Black Changed the World: a major digitisation project at The British Postal Museum & Archive

The British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) is the leading resource for all aspects of British postal history, managing both the Royal Mail Archive and the collections of the former National Postal Museum. From staff records to stamps and from transport to telegrams it cares for the visual, written and physical records from nearly 400 years of postal history.

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The Penny Black – the world's first ever postage stamp

The BPMA is dedicated to increasing access to its invaluable collections while ensuring their long-term preservation, and a great step towards achieving this came in Spring 2005, when it was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant for the digitisation of the R M Phillips collection of Victorian philatelic material. Entitled *The Penny Black Changed the World*, the project will provide online access to the world's most extensive collection of Victorian postal history and will interpret it for new audiences.

## Importance

The Phillips Collection consists of 45 albums of Victorian philatelic material presented to the nation in 1965 and held as Public Record. The collection is important as it documents the fascinating history of the development of philatelic design and technology from the Penny Black, through to the Jubilee issue of 1887 and beyond. The introduction of the penny post in 1840 was a pivotal point in British social history and marked the birth of mass communication. Previously expensive and therefore exclusive, the move towards an affordable postal service encouraged people to learn to read and write, and throughout the Victorian era,

the volume of mail sent per year increased 30 times over. The items in the collection are a unique resource for postal and social historians, and the story that they tell holds strong links with many areas of the National Curriculum for Key Stage 2.

## Access

Until 1998, when the National Postal Museum closed, about two-thirds of the collection was exhibited but since then only a fraction of the original material has been displayed in the Royal Mail Archive Search Room. The online digitisation project is designed to increase access to this unique collection while minimising handling of the original material. It will also raise awareness of the collection as a heritage resource and help promote the use of less traditional sources for learning and understanding history.

## R M Phillips

Reginald Phillips of Brighton was a property developer and philanthropist who built up his collection over a period of more than 30 years, eventually winning the Grand Prix at the London International Stamp Exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall in 1960. His commercial success enabled

him to improve on and replace individual examples and to purchase additional smaller collections

to establish a definitive record of the development of the British postage stamp in the Victorian era. An obituary in the December 1977 issue of *Stamp Monthly* described Phillips as 'a shy man who shunned publicity', but his collection, which includes many personal observations, will become globally accessible with the launch of this online project.

## Content

The albums chart the design process and technological developments involved in producing a format for the adhesive stamp, a process which remains largely unaltered to the present day. They contain documents and correspondence; artists' drawings; unused designs; finished artwork; printers' proofs; trials of cancellation, perforation and paper and ink; in addition to thousands of examples of

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postage and fiscal stamps and items of postal stationery, including first day covers of the Penny Black, and illustrated stationery by William Mulready.

The collection shows how solutions to problems of security, cancellation and separation evolved. For example, a portrait of the Queen was chosen, not just as a symbol of nation and authority, but as a security measure because 'the eye being educated to the perception of differences in the features of a face, the detection of any deviation in the forgery would be more easy'; additional stamp values and

designs were introduced to meet changing communication and revenue needs in a period of rapid economic expansion; and it was discovered that too many perforations made sheets unnecessarily fragile, while too few made separation difficult.

Phillips meticulously listed the contents of each album page and wrote introductory notes to provide historical background information. These entries have been included unchanged in the online catalogue descriptions with separate archivist's notes to explain any inaccuracies, maintaining the overall feel of a very personal

collection. His 1965 valuations are also included for historical interest, but no attempt has been made to update these figures.

### Conservation

The exceptionally high monetary value of the collection and its very fragile condition means that handling and scanning must be carried out with extreme care, and the document inviting companies to tender for the contract set out the preservation and security requirements in great detail. Conservation surveys identified items that needed to be stabilised to ensure



safe handling before digitisation could take place and the BPMA conservator specified guidelines for best practice.

The album pages themselves are too flexible to provide adequate support for the material, and any flexing of the sheets could result in items becoming detached or damaged, or in the fracture of perforations. For this reason, each mounted album page stays in its Melinex pocket during scanning, so the scanning equipment used will have to be of a particularly high quality to ensure that no definition is lost. Documentation is overseen by the HLF Grant Officer assigned to the project and forms part of the contractual agreement between the HLF and the BPMA, so digitisation companies have to follow the best practice to the letter.

### Digitisation

The digitisation process began at the beginning of November and is expected to take five months. The 2,500 album pages will be scanned at 600 dpi, but will go online as links from the catalogue at a lower resolution, high enough to enlarge single items effectively on screen, but low enough to be downloadable in a reasonable time. The higher resolution images will only be viewable in the BPMA Search Room, but may be used on the web in the future. Digitisation seems particularly appropriate for a philatelic collection as the most minute detail can be appreciated, enhancing the experience of users.

Access to the original material at the BPMA is by appointment and with one to one supervision, which may seem a

little intimidating, and so is unlikely to attract casual interest, but the project will introduce the material to a completely new audience, providing an excellent introduction to stamp design and postal history. The images will obviously be of great interest to philatelists or anyone interested in design, but will primarily be used as the basis for education and outreach work.

### Education

The bid for funding was based around access, education and, to a lesser extent, preservation. The BPMA has recently appointed a project outreach assistant specifically to develop a Key Stage 2 education programme. After conducting consultation work with teachers, the outreach assistant will ensure that the programme is relevant and inclusive, and will develop creative ways to bring the subject alive for young children. There is scope to use the collection creatively to support a wide range of curriculum subjects from art and design to history and literacy, and also to address issues of national identity, community and citizenship. Most BPMA users are white British, but the project will make the collection available to the international community, and its use in schools will also introduce the material to groups from a diverse range of backgrounds. Online access is also more convenient for users with limited mobility and those with impaired vision, with the provision to enjoy the material in a setting best suited to individual needs.

The project has been managed and administrated by the BPMA catalogue manager Adrian Steel, with the learning

and outreach manager, conservator and philatelic curator. Once HLF support had been secured, an additional committee of cataloguing staff was established as a forum for determining and documenting the course of the project, to ensure that decisions were well informed and to bring together different areas of expertise in the team. The whole experience has been a valuable learning process for all staff and will inform other digitisation projects and help with the preparation of future funding bids. Whilst technology develops and digitisation becomes an increasingly important part of best practice for archives, it is especially important for the BPMA in terms of access as it currently lacks sufficient exhibition space. Once complete, the collections will be available on the BPMA website [www.postalheritage.org.uk](http://www.postalheritage.org.uk).

The Royal Mail Archive is based in Freeling House, Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DL

**Clare Stephens**  
Cataloguer, Philately  
The British Postal Museum & Archive

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Visitors using  
the Royal Mail  
Archive Search  
Room



# The British Library's online catalogue of Wolley Charters

The Wolley Charters, numbering some 1039 deeds, wills, marriage settlements, inventories, surveys and miscellaneous records, have hitherto had a low profile amongst the named collections in the British Library. Gathered together by the attorney Adam Wolley of Matlock (1758-1827) in the course of his antiquarian investigations, they relate mainly to his native Derbyshire and neighbouring counties, but include some material from further afield, for example from the towns of Berwick, Newcastle and Cambridge.

The dates of the documents range from the twelfth century to the mid 1700s, the bulk being of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As might be expected, two-thirds are in Latin (about 30 are in French) and all but 43 are on vellum.

Although the documents are predominantly concerned with transfers of land, highlights of the collection include papal bulls granting privileges to Dale Abbey between 1217 and 1283; charms against headache and toothache scribbled on a thirteenth-century grant of forestry; the sale in 1491 of 13 fother (over 292 hundredweight) of lead – a product of the local mining industry; a grant of arms made in 1660 to the London merchant William Fisher, son of William Fisher of Littleover, in recognition of his loyalty to the crown during the Interregnum; and the expenses of the summer assizes of Sheriff Francis Bradshaw in 1630-1631. There are some notable seals in good condition, especially on the early charters.

Adam Wolley bequeathed his research materials to the British Museum where they were received in 1828<sup>1</sup>. The charters retained their identity as a separate collection, numbered in twelve

series designated by roman numerals with piece numbers in arabic from i.1 to xii.144. Until now, handwritten calendars and selective indexes have provided the only finding aids, as indeed is the case with most of our charter collections.<sup>2</sup> The lack of printed copy for scanning meant that charters (except those in the Additional and Egerton series) had to be excluded from the retrospective conversion

project which mounted most of our mainstream legacy catalogues on Manuscripts Online Catalogue (Molcat) in 1999.

Not long after Molcat was first launched on the internet, Professors Caroline Barron and Nigel Saul of the Department of History at Royal Holloway, University of London, made us aware of a strongly-felt need

15  
Advanced Search  
screen of the  
Catalogue of  
Wolley Charters

15

The screenshot shows the 'Advanced search' interface for the 'CATALOGUE OF WOLLEY CHARTERS'. The browser address bar shows the URL: <http://www.bl.uk/10000015/rev/000011/00541018.html>. The search form includes the following fields and options:

- Charter Ref. No.:** A text input field.
- Name:** A text input field.
- Place:** A text input field.
- Year:** A text input field.
- Grantor:** A checkbox.
- Grantee:** A checkbox.
- Witness:** A checkbox.
- Any:** A checkbox.
- Type of document:** A dropdown menu.
- Cartular:** A checkbox.
- Language:** A dropdown menu.
- Medium:** A dropdown menu.
- Subject:** A dropdown menu.
- Search:** A button.
- Reset:** A button.

At the bottom of the page, there are links for 'About', 'Search tips', 'Advanced search', 'Help', and 'Contact us'. The footer text reads: '© The British Library Board'.

within the academic community to have information about charters also online and accessible remotely. After some deliberation about realistic timescales and competing commitments, we agreed to work together on a project under the formal concordat for scholarly co-operation between Royal Holloway and the British Library. Together we were successful in obtaining funding from the British Academy for a six-month pilot to take place between September 2004 and February 2005.

16  
Bull of Pope  
Martin IV  
confirming  
privileges of Dale  
Abbey, co. Derby,  
1283. [Wolley  
Charter xi.23].  
By permission of  
the British  
Library

Our partners brought to the project an expert understanding of how researchers would want to exploit the data, not just for local and family history, but also in other disciplines such as sigillography and place name studies. They could envisage which types of search would be most popular and anticipate where misunderstandings might arise. We were in agreement that a new structured database should be developed especially for charters to allow targeted searches, for example to find a particular name as witness rather than as grantor, and that transcription of original spellings should be mandatory alongside modern equivalents. The small Wolley Charter collection was an ideal candidate for testing our proposals in a pilot application because we knew that we could deliver a complete, usable dataset within the timescale. From our own point of view, and more importantly to satisfy the funding body, this was preferable to capturing a tiny proportion of a larger collection such as the Harley Charters, seductive as the latter might be as a resource for in-depth research.

The British Academy award covered the salaries of an IT student on work placement for six months to build the database and user interface, and a postdoctoral researcher for four months to prepare and input the data. They worked for the whole period at the British Library, although they were formally employed by Royal Holloway as British Academy rules required the fund-holder to be in the higher education sector. The database is modelled on the British Library's standard architecture for small systems using Microsoft SQL Server, with the web interface in asp.net. It is a separate catalogue at present but in due course it will be made cross-searchable with Molcat

17  
Seal of William  
de Gresley on a  
grant of land in  
Hetley, co. Salop.  
Early 13th cent.  
[Wolley Charter  
v.33]. By  
permission of  
the British  
Library



and others in the second phase of development of our Integrated Library System.

After research into existing rules for charter description and analysis of data we found already online, for example the charters of Canterbury Cathedral on the Kent Archives Service website, we agreed the following fields for our database: charter reference number,

document type, language, date in original form, modern date, medium, measurements, condition, content, endorsements, public memoranda, administrative memoranda, bibliography, seals, witnesses, grantors, grantees, and place names. A field was provided for provenance, but it was not populated for Wolley Charters since their earlier ownership is generally unrecorded. With the exception of the original date, measurements, condition, endorsements and memoranda, all elements can be searched singly or in combination in the Advanced Search. The Quick Search option on the homepage allows the user to enter a keyword or words, with Boolean operators and truncation as required, to search any field.

To compile the information the researcher, Dr Jessica Freeman, worked systematically through the collection, reading each charter in turn, and writing a new description, including a full witness list and territorial location to the level of field names where appropriate. By referring at the same time to the handwritten calendars, she was able to correct some long-standing errors, and she could also supplement earlier published works such as I. H. Jeayes, *Descriptive Catalogue of Derbyshire Charters* (1906). The timescale was an aggressive one, aiming at an average throughput of 65 items per week, and it was a notable achievement that all the charters were catalogued within the deadline. However, very little time was left for

checking, editing and standardising names. These refinements had to be undertaken by other personnel after the end of the project and are not yet completed.

Medieval names do not make much impact on our current accessions cataloguing, but with over 3,300 personal names in the charter database, we were forced to face the issues of how to treat them consistently. We began by recording all the original spellings, although we were well aware that these forms would be unsuitable for computerised matching. As we became familiar with the collection, and with families reappearing in different guises and spellings, we were able to pull together some of the variants. However, in many cases preferred forms still need to be established and cross-referenced fully in an authority file to allow accurate and comprehensive retrieval. This could not be attempted until a body of internal evidence had been assembled, as there are few external sources of reference for people who may be unknown outside their immediate localities.

The vexed question of surnames, patronymics and toponyms is also not fully resolved yet. We have followed the rule of noting the form used in the document, rather than trying to determine on slim evidence whether Richard, son of Adam de Stanton is properly recorded as Richard Stanton or Richard Adamson. To guide users through the potential confusion, we offer a Browse List, accessed from the Advanced Search screen, which presents the variants from which they may make their choice. Place names were more easily standardised, and modern forms have been added down to parish level on the authority of Bartholomew's Gazetteer and the English Place-Name Society's *Place-Names of Derbyshire*.

Those who know what they are looking for can make targeted searches via the web interface, or they can browse the list of names. However, unlike a printed catalogue, the database offers no overview of its contents or easy access by subject, and beginners will encounter technical terms which are not explained. In due course of time, we would like to add enhancements such as glossaries, with background and interpretive essays modelled on other British Library web catalogues.

#### Further Information

1. Adam Wolley bequeathed a further set of original documents and transcripts, bound into 53 volumes and numbered Additional MSS 6666-6718. These are not part of the Wolley Charter database.
2. Additional MS 6699, a volume received with the Wolley charters, is a handwritten catalogue with indexes of persons and places. Its descriptions are superseded by another handwritten, undated calendar without indexes. Place name entries for Wolley Charters are included in the *Index to the Charters and Rolls. in the . . . British Museum* (2 volumes 1900, 1912).
3. The author of this article will be pleased to demonstrate the catalogue on request and answer queries. Email: rachel.stockdale@bl.uk or telephone 020 7412 7749.

Images were not a deliverable of the pilot project, since we could not guarantee to produce them within the timescale, nor could we properly address the difficulties inherent in digitising vellum documents with attached seals. Nevertheless, experiments with selected documents demonstrated that it would be feasible to include images in a follow-on project and gave us an estimate of costs and rates of throughput to support a funding bid. We now hope to continue the partnership between the British Library and Royal Holloway and utilise the practical experience we have gained to re-catalogue the Harley Charters (approximately 13,300 documents) in the same format. An application for a three-year project, starting in 2006, is currently under consideration by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The Wolley Charter Catalogue had its formal launch on 5 July 2005 at Derbyshire County Record Office in Matlock, with the enthusiastic support of the County Archivist, Dr Margaret O'Sullivan. The opportunity to describe our work and offer demonstrations and hands-on testing to an interested local audience raised the profile of the collection and fostered useful contacts within the region. Members of the Derbyshire Victoria County History (VCH) Trust have since commended the catalogue and offered some corrections based on their own research, and ongoing work on the Wolley Manuscripts has been brought to our

attention, raising the possibility of future collaboration. A display of charters from the holdings of Derbyshire County Record Office, which included names familiar from the database, contributed to the success of the launch, and for the London visitors, Adam Wolley finally came to life when we were shown the entry for his baptism in the parish register of Matlock St Giles.

The Online Catalogue of Wolley Charters can be accessed direct at [www.bl.uk/catalogues/wolleycharters/Home.aspx](http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/wolleycharters/Home.aspx) or via a link from the Manuscripts Online Catalogue homepage at <http://molcat.bl.uk><sup>3</sup>

**Rachel Stockdale**  
**Head of Manuscripts Cataloguing**  
**and Collection Management**  
**The British Library**

# Limbo: the story of the Hayes Repository

The recent disappearance of the Intermediate Repository at Hayes in Middlesex from the records management picture seems to have happened without fuss and without its role over the second half of the last century being marked in any way. *RecordKeeping* asked Kelvin Smith – a former Officer in Charge at Hayes, now Head of the Cataloguing and Accessions Unit of The National Archives' Records Management Department – to put this right.

The Hayes Repository always fought shy of calling itself a records centre. This may have been because it was set up before the descriptor became common but it was also because it did not truly carry out the functions of such a facility. It was usually referred to as the 'Public Record Office (PRO) Intermediate Repository' and, when it was first established, as the 'Limbo accommodation at Hayes'.

The word limbo was first coined in 1943 when accommodation problems at Chancery Lane and the rapid increase in the creation of public records led to government departments increasingly making their own arrangements to house their records when they ceased to be current (it must be remembered that this was before the structured approach to appraisal put forward by the Grigg Committee in 1954). In many cases such departmental accommodation was highly unsuitable and there was a temptation, once they were disposed of in that way, for the departments to make no further effort either in the way of arranging and weeding documents or by transferring those suitable for permanent preservation to the PRO. The remedy was therefore the 'limbo project' – the single intermediate repository under the general supervision of the PRO in which departments might house obsolete or obsolescent records with the staff necessary to weed and

prepare them for transfer for permanent preservation.

Provision was made unexpectedly soon after the Second World War for the realisation of the scheme by the occupation of temporary accommodation in deep shelters – parts of underground railway stations not yet brought into service – and other buildings. These included Belsize Park (War Office files), Camden Town, Clapham Common (Admiralty and Principal Probate records), Clapham North (Board of Trade records), Goodge Street and Yeading (Ministry of Health records).

However, in 1949 tenure of the shelters was prematurely cut short or threatened. With much difficulty and delay more permanent quarters were sought and eventually found in 1950 at Hayes. The buildings on the Hayes site (at Bourne Avenue) were erected in 1941 and 1942 as a Royal Ordnance factory (ROF). They included a hospital and some living quarters (production went on 24 hours a day during the War). There were also some very large water tanks (for use against incendiary bombs), which by the 1980s were mysteriously full of fish! The buildings on the site were each allocated a letter as a ROF and this arrangement

18  
The Southall railway steam engine in 'W' building



continued when the PRO took the site over in 1950. The two largest buildings (A and Y) were racked out first. This took longer than expected, mainly because of a steel shortage at the time, but by the end of 1952 they held records from 27 government departments (291,000 linear feet) and all the deep shelters had been cleared of records.

By the 1960s the repository was in full swing, housing semi-current records and employing staff from 39 government departments (engaged in review, deposit, retrieval and replacement of records). The site covered 39 acres and its perimeter fence measured one mile 140 yards. The total amount of records stored on site reached a peak of 1,145,000 feet (220 miles). There were also two film vaults (X and M buildings) holding cinematograph film that, because of its nitrate base, had to be kept under very special conditions, and an underground store (S building) housing magnetic tape and the PRO archival microfilm library. In the 1990s there were several missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) undertaking microfilming of the 'burnt collection' of First World War Soldiers' Documents.

Other buildings on site included box stores, canteen (C building), first aid post (B), garage (R), and small records stores. Some buildings were put to unusual uses at times:

- *W building* was largely unused and, by the 1980s, fell into a rather dilapidated state. Until then it held ballot papers from parliamentary elections (which by law are kept for one year and a day after the election). The days after a general election were always hectic times for the site. Fleets of Post Office vans delivered the ballot papers

from all over the country to extra Lord Chancellor's Department staff drafted in on site especially for the event. 1974 was a particularly busy year (two general elections). Later, new accommodation for the papers was made available in the shape of Z building. W also, at various times, housed an ancient fire-fighting tower, parts of Richmond Terrace, London, during its refurbishment and a railway steam engine (an unusual favour to Southall railway enthusiasts).

- *V building* was occupied by the Passport Office and held records of passports issued and similar material. Its claim to fame was an appearance in the film *The Day of the Jackal* when police tried to link a birth certificate of a dead individual with a passport application – you know the scam ....
- *J building* was largely used by Customs and Excise to store cars seized at Heathrow Airport. A Rolls Royce and a Bentley were kept there for (it seems) some years.
- In 1953 some of the unoccupied space in *A building* was made available for the storage of furniture given by the public for the relief of victims of the great flood disaster of that year.

The site was run by the PRO, which had on average about 15 staff there, including a typing pool. It was run from O building (the 'Administration Block'), which also housed a very active unit of the Ministry of Defence (MoD). There was also a small search room for carrying out Chancel Repair searches; there was a regular trickle of solicitors' clerks to look at such records. Altogether on site were over 200 staff employed by the various government departments. I must not forget in that



number was Nelson, the one-eyed cat adopted by MoD's Polish Section, who lived on site for several years.

The Hayes Repository was a most enjoyable place to work. It had a decidedly family atmosphere where everyone was friendly and always prepared to help out their colleagues, right across the range of staff from the night security guards to the officer in charge. The PRO staff were drawn from what is now the Records Management Department. When officers in charge of the site were chosen (it was usually a bridge between what is now Records Management Executive and Client Manager) they were always wary of what they were being let in for. However, I think without exception all left Hayes with happy memories.

**Kelvin Smith**  
Records Management Department  
The National Archives





## Standards and guidance

# Digital Preservation Documents from the National Council on Archives and The National Archives

The National Council on Archives (NCA) has published a new Advocacy Document to help archivists convince other people why preserving electronic records is an urgent issue. This Advocacy Document, called *Your Data At Risk*, is designed to be a companion to a Digital Preservation Handbook being prepared by The National Archives (TNA).

To tackle sustainable digital preservation of an organisation's records successfully requires a strategic direction and policy commitment from the top of the organisation. This strategic direction then needs to be translated into operational effectiveness. In many local authorities, let alone many other community or public organisations, neither of these have yet come to fruition.

The most up-to-date data available, a survey carried out in December 2002, across local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland, found that none had a facility for the storage and preservation of electronic records, and only 5.9% had contracted support. No doubt things have improved since then, but this is indicative of the magnitude of the job to be done.

### Advocacy Document

*Your Data At Risk* is aimed at explaining the need for digital preservation to people who need to know about it who

may be non-computer specialists, and/or non-archivists, such as Chief Executives or Directors of Finance.

This Advocacy Document explains, in layman's terms, the importance of digital preservation, the dangers of ignoring it, and gives a brief outline of some strategies to tackle the problem. Copies are available from the NCA website, [www.ncaonline.org.uk](http://www.ncaonline.org.uk) and hard copies can be requested from Ruth Savage, NCA Policy and Development Officer. She said, "The reality is that the longer an organisation leaves doing something about digital preservation, the worse, and the more expensive, the problem gets, and the more material will already have been lost. Also, it should be made plain that digital preservation is not a 'project'. Thanks to increasing business pressures, legislation and the modernising government agenda, it is now part of how everyone does day-to-day business, including local authorities and archives."

The business reasons for digital preservation now and in the future are the same as the business reasons for preserving paper records now and in the past, except that, due to increasing legislation and information creation, these reasons are now ever more urgent. These reasons include the exploitation of Intellectual Property Rights and Copyright; increasing demand by auditors and customers for information, both current and historic; efficiency gains in administration costs; and legal imperatives such as Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Environmental Information Regulations and Corporate Governance. And the issues concerning increasing data creation continue to grow: it is estimated that we humans have created and stored 100 times as much information in the period since 1945 as in the whole of human history up to that point, and creation continues to grow exponentially.

While a piece of paper or vellum can last for centuries left alone in a dry,

dark room, nothing created by a computer has that kind of longevity. Computers and their contents only survive by the active and ongoing help of human beings. There are various issues with digital preservation: degradation of tape and plastics, the ICT framework used to accession, store, catalogue and preserve digital items as well as the obsolescence of hardware and software, even CD-ROMs and DVDs. However cutting edge any particular technology is today, there is no guarantee that it will be readable or even accessible in a few years' time.

For instance, The Domesday Book of 1086 can still be seen and read by the public at The National Archives. In 1986, BBC Domesday was launched to celebrate the 900th anniversary of the original Domesday book with the idea of capturing a massive range of information on the social, environmental, cultural and economic make up of the UK. Contributions from researchers and thousands of school children from across the country were recorded onto two 12" videodiscs that could be viewed using a special BBC Microcomputer.

The project was a landmark in terms of both its scale and its technological achievements, costing around £2.5 million. In a terrible irony, the problems of hardware and software dependence have now rendered the system obsolete. What was cutting edge in 1986 was virtually unreadable by 2000. This is one of many case studies in the Advocacy Document that illustrates the urgency of digital preservation.

And it isn't just formal documents that we should be worried about. Emails and web pages are documents which, like traditional paper-based letters, newspapers and other documents, may be fleeting and worthless, or they may have intrinsic or contextual worth. All the traditional skills of the archivist are important in deciding which electronic documents are preserved. As an archivist, you already have all the skills you need to deal with that. But the problem isn't the content of digital items, but the format and media they are stored in and the processes involved in making sure they survive.

The fragility of digital assets means that they need careful management

from the moment of creation and a proactive policy and strategic approach to their management to secure their preservation in the long term. What is key is that all those who have an interest in the life of the digital resource are involved. There are three main strategies that can be used as a means of dealing with the challenges of digital preservation. Each approach has its own benefits and drawbacks.

The 'do it yourself' strategy assumes that the organisation takes an 'in house' approach. This is a good strategy if there is sufficient organisational expertise to support a cross-disciplinary team drawn from structurally distinct groups. It promotes skills sharing and team working which results in stronger retained organisational competence and enables a greater degree of organisational control and ownership of results which delivers a good outcome in the long term. However, this strategy is not a realistic option for organisations without the capacity to support staff with appropriate expertise, for instance, small charities, especially as the initial stages in developing this kind of strategy can be

1  
Digital storage media such as CDs carry a high risk of loss or damage if not properly managed



time consuming because of the issues involved in establishing successfully functioning cross-disciplinary teams.

A 'consortia' strategy assumes that an organisation takes a partnership approach, working with other external organisations with a similar interest. The process of establishing the partnership secures commitment from each organisation and a clear allocation of responsibility, while it can leverage economies of scale, enabling the pooling of expertise across organisations. This strategy can lay the foundations for longer-term collaboration in other areas. However, the initial stages of developing the partnership approach may be time consuming if you do not work in partnerships already. Communications across different organisations can be difficult while the implementation stage of this strategy can become difficult if the reality of divergent aims amongst partners becomes more apparent.

Lastly, an organisation may decide to contract out or outsource its digital preservation function. This strategy can be a sensible option where an organisation can benefit from external expertise and a new perspective. However, it still requires 'in house' skills to define and manage what needs to be done in terms of any legal,

organisational and contractual problems and in the long term while not necessarily promoting in house ownership of the pan-organisational processes that need to be in place. Furthermore, there are limited options for contracting out in an underdeveloped market.

No matter which approach you and your organisation choose (and you may use all or any of them over the course of the next few years), the important thing is to start doing something. Develop a strategy, thinking about the capacity of your organisation and its needs. Make sure that you have a champion in authority who can argue on your behalf. Start to create an ICT history for your organisation. Think about how electronic records are managed from creation to archiving within your organisation's records management system. Make sure that you raise any concerns about electronic records with any other organisations with whom you do business, especially if this may affect your legislative duties.

#### **TNA Digital Preservation Handbook**

The primary audience for the TNA Digital Preservation Handbook is archivists in regional and local archives. The Handbook is intended to be less technical than some of the detailed

manuals that are available dealing with these subjects, and to help people make the best use of those manuals. Both *Your Data At Risk* and the Handbook list sources of further help and advice and there are lots of them. For instance, there are good web pages and manuals from The National Archives and the Digital Preservation Coalition.

The Handbook will provide a quick introduction to the Open Archival Information Systems (OAIS) standard. OAIS is an International Standard for digital archiving, originally developed by NASA to archive the digital information and documents produced by the Space Programme. The new Handbook will cover all the basic processes involved in digital archiving.

If all this seems overwhelming to you, don't panic! Help is available: *Your Data At Risk* lists a number of sources of assistance. Get your copy now from [www.ncaonline.org.uk](http://www.ncaonline.org.uk) or from Ruth Savage, NCA Policy and Development Officer on [ruth.savage@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.savage@nationalarchives.gov.uk)  
T: 020 8392 5376.

**Ruth Savage**  
**NCA Policy and Development Officer**

# Interpreting Electronic Record Management Requirements: the development of formal rationales

Earlier this year the Records Management Advisory Service (a component service within The National Archives' National Advisory Services) started to develop a major new piece of guidance to assist record managers and also software suppliers and developers to interpret the complex requirements contained within the Functional Requirements for Electronic Records Management systems (ERMS), which were last revised and published in 2002.

These requirements have been used since March 2003 as the benchmark for the electronic record management software evaluation programme which The National Archives (TNA) has offered for the assessment of electronic document and record management (EDRM) software applications. Final applications for the evaluation programme were accepted in March 2005, with the last tests due for completion in 2006. While new products may no longer be presented for evaluation against the 2002 Functional Requirements, it is hoped that the combination of the requirements, test scripts and additional published guidance may still be relevant to those using or developing ERM and EDRM products.

The requirements against which ERM and EDRM products are subjected to test and evaluation (including those in the four optional modules) total 432. Furthermore a new module on Case Management and Workflow has been added which provides a further 67 requirements, giving a grand total of

499 requirements. The team within The National Archives, which is responsible for the development of these requirements, became aware that many in the records management and archival community find the requirements difficult to place in context as they are technical requirements and the relationship with the fellow requirements is not always entirely clear upon a casual read of the document.

We recognised that to produce the level of information which had been sought would require a major new piece of work and in January this year we began to consider what was required and how best to explain the purpose behind each requirement; this would also include guidance on how each requirement should be interpreted together with explicit linkages and relevant dependencies. The purpose of the Rationale documentation is to provide the fundamental reasoning and principles behind each requirement in the core and optional modules in a clear and unambiguous manner. In addition to straightforward Rationale

text, illustrative examples are included where appropriate.

The first initial product of this project has recently been published on the TNA website page entitled *2002 Rationale for functional requirements* available at: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/electronicrecords/rat2002/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/electronicrecords/rat2002/)

This first stage currently covers only section A1 Record Organisation of the core requirements but that alone covers some 68 functional requirements. Initially this release has been provided in the form of a PDF document named *ERMS Rationale – Section A1*. In addition to progressively providing the complete set of requirements in PDF format, the Rationale data will be more accessible to users as it will be incorporated into a simple, searchable online database on the website.

In its final form it is hoped that the Rationale will be of use to all records managers who have an interest in the functionality of systems and will help

organisations to get a much better understanding of why the requirements exist – and also how ERM and EDRM products actually have to deliver the required functionality. We also hope it will assist those involved in specifying the business requirements for records management systems and also third party integrators who increasingly are being asked to integrate ERM and EDRM solutions into an organisation's IT infrastructure.

Each requirement is analysed within a table and each Rationale attempts to explain the reason and purpose for the requirement. Examples are intended to provide a practical explanation of how the requirement should actually be implemented. Where this will assist understanding, the text is supported by graphical illustrations (Figure 1).

The development of these graphical illustrations is just one way we are hoping to explain how specific functionality should actually work and provide a tool for interpreting if a system is actually delivering what is required. Requirement A1.21M is a good example of this approach. (Figure 2 includes an illustrative example as used in the Rationale.)

The requirement itself states that:

*"The ERMS must support inheritance of metadata by lower levels of the classification scheme so that, by default, addition of a new class results in automatic inclusion of those attributes by the new class, which are defined as inherited from the higher level (i.e. inheritance on creation)."*

The Rationale we have developed for this requirement states that:

*"The ERMS must have the ability to define which metadata elements will be inherited. When classes are added to a classification scheme, child classes will initially have some of the same metadata attributes as the parent. The aim is to achieve consistency and make the creation of the classification scheme easier, with the user not having to populate all the fields manually each time a class is created. Authorised users should be allowed to edit metadata elements during the lifetime of each object as appropriate."*

This is supported by an illustrative example, an excerpt of which was used for a recent presentation (Figure 2).

An overall key to explain the format and structure of the example diagrams has also been provided in PDF format on the 2002 Rationale for functional requirements webpage.

Figure 1

Figure 2

The work is still ongoing and is expected to be updated both with the addition of the remaining requirements and also with improvements based on user feedback. The plan calls ultimately for the establishment of a last updated feature and a glossary.

This work is intended as a major new resource for record managers and project teams charged with specifying their requirements for ERM solutions but it also serves a further purpose to support the forthcoming proposal for the development of a new European Commission sponsored standard for records management. The DLM Forum is formulating a proposal to the European Commission this autumn for a revision of the Model Requirements for the Management of Electronic Records (the MoReq standard).

The National Archives is actively supporting this proposal and our current Functional Requirements for Electronic Records Management systems will form part of the research

material, which will be provided to the authors of the new standard. TNA's functional requirements are regarded as one of the core benchmarks for ERM specifications and the development of the Rationale document will inform the author's understanding and interpretation of our requirements.

Our intention is to publish the full Rationale by the end of the business year. We would welcome feedback and anyone who wishes to approach us direct either with comment or questions should e-mail the Records Management Advisory Service at: [rmadvisory@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:rmadvisory@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

**Richard Blake**  
**Head of the Records Management**  
**Advisory Service**  
**National Advisory Services**

# Recently released useful publications

## Publications from The National Archives

### Annual report and resource accounts 2004-2005: History for All

The second annual report and resource accounts on the work of The National Archives has now been published, along with the second report of the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives. [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/operate/reports.htm](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/operate/reports.htm)

### Assessment of UKDA and TNA Compliance with OAIS and METS Standards

In conjunction with the UK Data Archive, The National Archives have released a report comparing their preservation practices to the leading internationally recognised standard for digital archives (see page 9 for more details). [www.data-archive.ac.uk/news/publications.asp](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/news/publications.asp)

### FOI Matters

The Records Management Department's Freedom of Information Unit have released the first edition of *FOI Matters*, a quarterly newsletter designed to keep the departments they consult under the Freedom of Information Act informed about the work of the Unit and their application of the Act. You can request a copy by emailing: [RMDrequests@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:RMDrequests@nationalarchives.gov.uk).

### Inspection services for archive repositories

The National Advisory Services at The National Archives co-ordinate advisory work and undertake inspections of repositories under the Standard for Record Repositories (2004) and the supporting framework of standards. This leaflet offers further information and advice about the inspection process. [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/framework/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives/framework/)

### 2002 Rationale for functional requirements

The National Archives' 2002 functional

requirements for electronic records management systems (ERMS) specify mandatory, highly desirable and desirable levels of functionality. The purpose of the rationale documentation is to provide fundamental reasoning and principles behind each requirement in the core and optional modules in a clear and unambiguous manner. The first initial product of this project has recently been published online (see page 43 for more details). [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/electronicrecords/rat2002/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/electronicrecords/rat2002/)

### Memorandum of Understanding between the Information Commissioner and the Keeper of Public Records

The Information Commissioner and the Keeper of the Public Records have signed a Memorandum of Understanding setting out how they will work together on promoting and monitoring the records management code of practice. [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/policy/foi](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/policy/foi)

## Publications from other organisations

### Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)/Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) – Cultural Connections

DCMS have joined up with the local government IDeA to develop the Cultural Connections web resource. This provides information on good practice and service improvement for local authority cultural services, and MLA is working with DCMS to develop archives content. [www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelD=76729](http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelD=76729)

### Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – Hague Convention Consultation document

The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (the Hague Convention) was signed at The Hague on 14 May 1954. The UK decided not to ratify the Convention when it was first drafted because, along with a

number of other countries, it considered that it did not provide an effective regime for the protection of cultural property. In September 2005 DCMS launched a consultation document, which asks a number of important questions on the most suitable way for the UK to meet its obligations under the Hague Convention. [www.culture.gov.uk/global/consultations/](http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/consultations/)

### Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) – Local Area Agreements

Local Area Agreements are agreements between central government and a local authority and its partners about the priorities for a particular area, and are a means for delivering new resources and ways of working. MLA has produced a briefing on how the sector can benefit from engaging with LAAs. [www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/aio/983051](http://www.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/idk/aio/983051)

### National Council on Archives (NCA) – Your Data At Risk

The NCA has published a new Advocacy Document to help archivists convince other people why preserving electronic records is an urgent issue. *Your Data At Risk* is aimed at Chief Executives of local authorities, Finance Officers and other non-specialists in positions of authority who may make policy or resource decisions that affect archival services (see page 40 for more details). [www.ncaonline.org.uk/publications/reports/](http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/publications/reports/)

### Revised Data Protection Code of Practice for records managers and archivists

The draft code of practice for records managers and archivists under section 51 of the Data Protection Act 1998 has been revised and version 3 is now published for comment. [www.archives.org.uk/about/revisedcodeofpractice.html](http://www.archives.org.uk/about/revisedcodeofpractice.html)

## Contacts

# Contacts and staff news

### Staff changes

#### Records Management

##### Department:

Tomas Bianchin, Christine Gazley and Lynsey Aylmer have joined the Cataloguing and Accessions Unit as Accessioning Administrators. In the Inspection and Client Management Unit, Justine Rainbow and Mandy Goldsmith have joined as client managers. Katy Baldwin has joined the Unit as a fast streamer for nine months.

We wish them all well in their new jobs.

### Contacts

Tel: 020 8876 3444 (followed by staff extension)

Fax: 020 8392 5286

**All staff email addresses are of the format  
firstname.lastname@nationalarchives.gov.uk**

#### **National Advisory Services**

Enquiries to nas@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Katie Woolf, Communications and Advocacy Manager  
x 2380

#### **Advice on places of deposit and public records**

Including disposal, legislation, standards for storage and access:  
Andrew Rowley, Head of Archive Inspection Services  
x 5318

#### **Advice on non-public records**

Including standards for storage of and access to private archives, advice to grant awarding bodies, sales monitoring and liaison with regional archive councils and regional agencies:

Norman James, Director of HMC Advisory services  
x 2615

#### **Regional Archival Liaison**

Scotland	– Alex Ritchie
Wales	– Michelle Kingston
Eastern Region	– Anthony Smith
South East Region	– Melinda Haunton
Yorkshire and the Humber Region	– Amy Warner
North West and Northern Ireland	– Mary Wills
East Midlands and West Midlands	– Liz Hart and Rosie Logiudice
North East Region	– Catherine Guggiari
South West Region	– James Travers
London	– Rachel Bell

#### **Electronic Records Management**

Enquiries to e-records@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Ian Macfarlane, Head of Electronic Records Management Development Unit  
x 5366

#### **Records Management outside central government**

Enquiries to rmadvisory@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Advice on developing effective information and records management systems for paper and electronic records:

Richard Blake, Head of Records Management Advisory Service  
x 5208

### ***Records management in government departments***

Enquiries to [records.management@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:records.management@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

Meg Sweet, Head of Records Management Department  
x 5315

Kelvin Smith, Head of Cataloguing and Accessions Unit  
x 2303

Howard Davies, Head of Inspection and Client Management Unit  
x 5340

Malcolm Todd, Project Manager: Sustainability of electronic records  
x 5340

Stuart Abraham, Access Manager  
x 5346

### ***Key contacts in other National Archives departments***

#### **Information legislation**

- Advice on Freedom of Information and its impact on records management and archives
- Information on proposed records and archives legislation
- Guidance on data protection and its impact on records management and archives

Susan Healy, Information Policy Project Manager

x 2305

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/policy](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/policy)

#### **Digital Preservation issues**

Enquiries to [digital-archive@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:digital-archive@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

Adrian Brown, Head of Archive Services and Digital Preservation  
x 5257

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/preservation](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/preservation)

#### **Conservation and preservation of traditional materials**

Enquiries to [conservation-preservation@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:conservation-preservation@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

Mario Aleppo, Head of Conservation

x 5263

#### **Copyright and intellectual property issues**

Tim Padfield, Copyright & Policy Manager

x 5381

#### **Advisory Council on national records and archives**

Tim Padfield, Secretary

x 5381

#### **Social inclusion and diversity issues**

Including online and cataloguing initiatives and The National Archives' User Advisory group:

Rachel Hasted, Social Inclusion Project Manager

x 2531

#### **Archives awareness initiatives**

Lucy Fulton, Archives Awareness Campaign officer

x 5277

#### **Education, learning and access, schools and universities**

Tom O'Leary, Head of Education & Interpretation Department

x 5298

#### **Academic publications and development of material for the higher education and lifelong learning sectors**

Vanessa Carr, Head of Research, Knowledge & Academic Services

x 2212

#### **The Catalogue and Archives 4 All**

Louise Craven, Archival Catalogue Programme Manager

x 5232



£2.00

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