RecordKeeping news

Report on Archives in the Enlarged European Union

In May 2003, the Council of the European Union Culture Ministers adopted a resolution calling for a specially convened National Experts Group to write a report that would assess the situation of archives throughout the enlarged European Union, especially in the light of new information technologies, and would make recommendations for increased future cooperation on archives at the European level.

Since the 2003 resolution, a great deal of work has been done on the *Report on Archives in the Enlarged European Union* and on 14 November 2005 it was given final approval by the Council of EU Culture Ministers.

This Report examines the current situation of public archives in the Member States and the institutions of the European Union and their development in the future in light of an enlarging EU. It addresses the need for best practice in archival and records management and the continued improvement of archive services for the citizens of the European Union.

Prior to its approval by the Council, the Commission adopted a proposal for a 'Council Recommendation on priority actions to increase cooperation in the field of archives in Europe'. This Recommendation presents five priority action areas that warranted action by the archives services in the Member States. These five action areas are:

1   Measures to prevent damage to archives and the development of standards for archive buildings.

2   Reinforcement of the Document Lifecycle Management (DLM) Forum, in particular the development of an up-to-date specification for electronic document systems (MoReq2).

3   Creation and maintenance of an Internet Gateway to documents and archives in Europe.

4   Monitoring of legislative proposals at a national and European level which could have implications for records management and archives.

5   Measures to prevent theft of archives and to enable the recovery of stolen archives.

One of the main recommendations of the Report is the formation of a new European Archives Group, comprising representatives of the 25 member states (plus the two candidate members) and of the various EU institutions, under the aegis of the European Commission. The Group will meet in Brussels twice a year to monitor progress on the five main actions of the report, and the Commission will provide the secretariat. The European Board of National Archivists (EBNA), which is independent of the Commission, has done some preliminary work on the five actions and updates were provided at the most recent EBNA meeting, which took place at The National Archives on 17-18 November (see overleaf for futher details).

An international section has been created on The National Archives' website where you can find further details on the Report and a link to the document itself, as well as a full account of the EBNA meeting: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ interactivity/europe/report.htm

UK Meeting of the European Board of National Archivists (EBNA): *European Archives: Forming Partnerships in the Digital Age*

The UK meeting of the European Board of National Archivists (EBNA) took place at The National Archives on 17 – 18 November 2005.

The conference was attended by representatives from 24 countries, including two non-EU countries (Norway and Switzerland). The two-day programme, which opened with a keynote speech from Natalie Ceeney, Chief Executive of The National Archives, included a range of talks, keynote speeches and lively and informative discussions from national and international speakers.

In her talk, Natalie highlighted the main challenges facing The National Archives and how as an organisation it is responding to these challenges. Natalie also talked about how The National Archives has been working with European partners to promote the DLM (Document Lifecycle Management) Forum, monitoring the impact of EU Directives and advising on best practices for record management and archival networks.

The programme also included talks from Frank Brady and Pat Manson from the European Commission and importantly, updates from the five working groups taking forward the recommendations of the *Report on Archives in the Enlarged European Union* (see page 7 for details).

All sessions during the conference were simultaneously interpreted into English, French, German and Spanish.

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During the conference, four groups were formed to propose specific digitisation partnership projects, which included examining funding possibilities. The groups gave special consideration to the following themes: 'Recreating the virtual memory of Europe', 'Genealogy and Family Ancestry', 'Cold war in Europe' and 'Preservation of Audiovisual Archives'. On Friday 18 November, the conference proceedings were concluded with a short presentation by Lorenz Mikoletzky from Austria who provided details of the next EBNA meeting, which will be held in Vienna in early 2006.

A detailed transcript of the conference, speaker biographies and a full programme are available at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ interactivity/europe/

Irene Griffin
The National Archives

A digital future for the past

The strategic importance for Europe of the digitisation of cultural and scientific heritage has been recognised in a new Dynamic Action Plan launched by Culture Minister, David Lammy, in Bristol in November 2005.

The Plan was launched during the UK Presidency of the EU, and marked the end of a remarkable week which also saw Culture Ministers from across Europe support proposals for the creation of a digital library.

The new Dynamic Action Plan was developed by experts nominated by each European Member State's Government to coordinate efforts to make Europe's cultural heritage available online. The Action Plan will guide the future coordination of digitisation activity within Member States, with the vision of creating a European Cultural Information Space. This will provide rich and diverse digital resources to support education and research, tourism and the creative industries, and enable digital access by all citizens to the national, regional and local cultural heritage of Europe. The plan focuses on four action areas – users and content, technologies for digitisation, ensuring sustainability and digital preservation. It sets immediate targets for the next two years, and establishes ways to measure progress over the lifetime of the Plan. The Plan is available to read at: www.culture.gov.uk/mobility/dynamic_action_plan.pdf

However, this plan was developed during a period of enormous interest in making culture and heritage more widely available. Large internet companies have been investing large sums of money in digitising materials, often from US university libraries, and this private sector interest has been matched by European political interest in ensuring that the diversity of European culture is fully represented in the digital world. The Heads of State of a number of European countries wrote to the European Commission, supporting the development of a

European Digital Library. In September 2005, Viviane Reding, Commissioner for Culture and Education, launched a Communication, seeking views about establishing European Digital Libraries.

The idea of a European Digital Library is at the heart of all these discussions. While some see this as being a single repository of literary texts, others see a distributed network of information and resources that reflect the full diversity of cultures and heritage found within Europe. These issues are hotly debated, including by European Culture Ministers at a meeting held in Brussels, and chaired by Tessa Jowell under the UK Presidency of the EU. The UK's position was outlined by Scottish Culture Minister, Patricia Ferguson.

"We should also ensure that market failure does not stop the European Digital Library from promoting cultural identity as a whole, using materials from all cultural institutions – rather than focusing on books and printed texts. We must ensure that materials in minority languages are available, including the Gaelic language that is such an important part of Scotland's Heritage.

There is also a danger that the unique materials held in archives, museums and galleries cannot be as easily scanned, and there may not be the same drivers that have generated the interest of Google and the Open Content Initiative. European Museums and galleries have been at the forefront of efforts to digitise their collections and make them available online in innovative ways, and we feel they must be involved in this initiative from the start. It is after all a very exciting initiative and a tremendous opportunity for widening access to Europe's great cultural heritage."

The idea was also discussed by the European Board of National Archivists at a meeting held at The National Archives in Kew, who welcomed the proposals, and were keen to see how archives could contribute towards the vision outlined by the Commission.

The European Commission opened a consultation on the creation of a European Digital Library, and have received contributions from many different organisations, including the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and a UK Government response. Many issues are raised by these proposals, including the ways in which information and knowledge can be accessed by all, whilst respecting the rights of creators. Copyright remains a major barrier, but there are also opportunities to create new

approaches that will enable innovative services to be developed. The Commission is now considering the responses to the consultation and is expected to outline a series of concrete actions, including the creation of a High Level Steering Group to take the initiative forward. This group will have representation from national libraries, and the IT and publishing industries.

The UK Presidency of the EU saw all these events come to fruition, and developments will be taken forward by the next Presidencies – including Austria and Finland. As Culture Minister, David Lammy said at the launch of the Dynamic Action Plan,

these developments will enable the creation of "rich and diverse cultural resources to support education and research, tourism and the creative industries, and to enable digital access by all citizens to the national, regional and local cultural heritage of Europe". Archives have a vital role to play in achieving this vision.

David Dawson
Head of Digital Futures
Museums, Libraries and Archives
Council

Consultation opportunities

There are currently several consultation opportunities of interest to the archives and records management sectors. The consultation deadline for each is 28 February 2006.

Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – Consultation on the shares of National Lottery money for the arts and film, sport, and heritage
This consultation is about proportion of Lottery money allocated to the arts and film, sport and heritage after 2009, and what the policy should be on how Lottery money is spent in each of these good causes. The current shares for the causes of arts and film, heritage and sport are set until January 2009. The present proportion of National Lottery money going to each of the good causes in this consultation is divided so that heritage, sport, and arts and film all currently receive 16.7%. The remaining 50% which goes to the good cause of "charities, education, the environment and health" has already been decided and is not part of this consultation. For more information, and to respond online, please see www.lottery2009.culture.gov.uk/index.html

Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) – Consultation on the Heritage Lottery Fund's next strategic plan 2008-2013
At the same time, HLF is beginning to

consult on its next Strategic Plan and is currently collecting views about its own priorities for funding after 2007. Again, the consultation deadline is 28 February 2006. For more information please see www.hlf.org.uk/future/

Culture, Media and Sport Committee - New inquiry: New media and the creative industries
The Culture, Media and Sport Committee has announced a new inquiry into the challenges and opportunities for the creative industries arising from the development of new media platforms. For the purposes of the inquiry, the term "creative industries" includes music, visual broadcasts, sound broadcasts, film, graphic art, design, advertising, fashion and games software. The Committee is particularly interested in receiving evidence on the following issues:

- The impact upon creative industries of recent and future developments in digital convergence and media technology.

- The effects upon the various creative industries of unauthorised reproduction and dissemination of creative content, particularly using new technology; and what steps can or should be taken – using new

technology, statutory protection or other means – to protect creators.

- The extent to which a regulatory environment should be applied to creative content accessed using non-traditional media platforms.

- Where the balance should lie between the rights of creators and the expectations of consumers in the context of the BBC's Creative Archive and other developments.

The deadline for submissions to this inquiry has been extended to 28 February 2006. For guidance on the preferred format of submissions, see www.parliament.uk/commons/selcom/witguide.htm.

Please see page 45 for further details of recently released guidance and publications.

Sex, Lies and Archives: the search for truth

Over 170 people attended the Archives Awareness Campaign debate *Sex, Lies and Archives: the search for truth* at the British Library on 28 November 2005. The event was organised by the National Council on Archives.

The debate, chaired by James Naughtie of Radio 4's *Today* programme, formally launched Archives Awareness Campaign 2005/6 – an annual event organised by the National Council on Archives which involves events, talks and other activities amongst 2,000 organisations to celebrate, promote and raise the profile of archives across the UK.

The panel looked at the quest for honesty and transparency in dealing with historical documents and archival materials, and also discussed the themes of the archival evidence regarding sex and lies in relation to specific historical figures.

The evening began with an extract considering issues of forgery and truth from Alan Bennett's play *A Question of Attribution*, read by actors Joanna David and Paul Bigley. This was followed by each of the panellists speaking about their individual chosen

> *"Nothing has really happened until it has been recorded."*
> Virginia Woolf

topics. Dr David Starkey spoke about (evidence of) the sex life of Henry VIII. Dr Colin Burrow, Reader in Renaissance and Comparative Literature at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, described literature's search for the real Shakespeare. The author Liza Picard took as her subject Dr Johnson, James Boswell and sex life in Georgian England.

Drawing on themes raised by the play reading, Norman Rosenthal, Exhibitions Secretary of the Royal Academy, spoke about fakes and forgeries in the visual arts. From her experiences in writing her recent biography of Isabella Beeton, Dr Kathryn Hughes described the biographical process and the importance of archives. Bringing the discussion into the hard world of pounds, shillings and pence, Francis Russell, Deputy Chairman of Christie's, described the monetary, as well as the cultural and historical, value of archives and how to distinguish the fakes and the forgeries.

These themes were explored further in the ensuing debate, during which members of the audience were given the opportunity to ask the panel questions. The evening was recorded, and subject to rights issues, it is hoped that recordings will be available through the National Council on Archives' website (www.ncaonline.org.uk) soon.

Ruth Savage
Policy and Development Officer
National Council on Archives

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The panel (from left): Dr David Starkey, Dr Colin Burrow, Dr Kathryn Hughes, James Naughtie (Chair), Norman Rosenthal, Francis Russell and Liza Picard

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IMPACT! Assessing the impact of the Archives Sector

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Charlotte Hodgson and Geoff Pick cut the PSQG birthday cake

The Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) held its tenth annual quality forum for archives and local studies at The National Archives (TNA) on 9 November, focusing on the theme of 'assessing the impact of the archives sector'.

Geoff Pick (PSQG Convenor) began the session by reviewing the history of the forum and its four main current areas of activity: the forum itself, the development of the Access Standard, the development of performance indicators for archives, and the PSQG user survey, now being extended to include a pilot survey of remote users. Future work is likely to focus on web access, the mainstreaming of outreach activity (including indirect learning) and the development of external assessment regimes – archives now have a window of opportunity to have input on what is assessed and how.

Paul Owens (Burns Owens Partnership) highlighted some of the conclusions of the Burns Owens Partnership survey of the economic impact of the archives, libraries and museums sector for ALM London. The sector has an important role in supporting learning and skills development, supporting enterprise through business re-use of resources, economic regeneration and tourism. He complimented the archives domain as a pioneer of an annual user survey which attempts to include questions on qualitative impact, but noted that there are still many areas where data is lacking, for example in relation to impact on tourism and the economic impact of indirect use by researchers and publishers.

Institutions in the sector are also significant players in the London economy simply by virtue of their role as employers and purchasers of goods and services, with a total turnover of £321 million, which makes them equivalent in size to the design sector in London.

Andrew Stevens (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council) reviewed the experience of the library domain in measuring impact in the context of the current and future Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) regimes, where it will be necessary to align with wider agendas outside the culture block. This work has been carried out by a broadly-based national steering group, using a pragmatic approach. The group looked at available research on which types of activity (such as library learning sessions) make a qualitative difference to people's lives, then developed quantitative measures of these activities, to measure impact indirectly.

The first six monthly figures have just been collected and these will be examined for possible inconsistency before setting CPA levels. Public Library Standards will also need to be revised to take account of impact measures and this is an important opportunity to influence the audit agenda.

Iain Watt (Library of the EU Parliament) made some observations from his long experience of managing for quality in frontline information services. The key was to avoid imposing 'quality initiatives' from above. Complaints from customers are a more reliable guide to what areas need attention, and management should seek to unleash the potential of staff, enabling them to connect with clients and be self-motivated. Training is vital in defining the essential skills and knowledge for the job and should be staff led. Informal staff teams can be used to address particular problems and to build confidence and communication. Even apparently unrelated training can encourage thinking 'out of the box' in developing services.

The afternoon sessions concentrated on public relations in the archive world.

Robert Smith (The National Archives) reviewed some of TNA's strategies in securing press attention. He stressed the need to ensure that the press not only pick up the story, but also mention the specific message wished to be put across. Stories should be human, topical, and quirky, with hints at more to be discovered and links to the news agenda. He also referred to the role of the Press Association in getting stories to regional media.

Charlotte Hodgson (Glamorgan Record Office) explained how concerns at declining individual, compared to group, use of the service, and a user profile not reflective of the community as a whole, coincided with opportunities in funding and branding to enable GRO to launch a concentrated promotional campaign. This included mobile exhibitions targeted at small branch libraries, video talks by staff, displays in retail parks and cheap bulk commercial distribution of leaflets. There was also a Community Access to Archives (CAAP) pilot project in the South Riverside area using a project officer in partnership with a dozen contact organisations in the area to reach new audiences.

Results were mixed, and it was difficult to assess what works. The media were most likely to pick up on stories for the August and January 'silly seasons'. Advertising research identified a TV bargain offer, which resulted in a TV advert screened 12 times which had a major impact on web hits, but less so on site visits. She suggested it would be useful to have a national comparator index to see whether an office is doing better or worse than the national average, which in turn might help to identify best practice.

Lucy Fulton (Archives Awareness Campaign) reviewed the success of the campaign in securing coverage for local as well as national services: 80% of coverage has been for local archives. She also noted the impact of the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are?* series, which produced a 24% increase in user numbers at TNA, and had a similar impact elsewhere. This time around, the Campaign is aiming to secure a different audience through a short story competition for younger people.

The session ended with a short and typically informal 'annual general meeting', and the cutting of a cake to celebrate PSQG's tenth anniversary.

Kevin Mulley
National Advisory Services
The National Archives

British Records Association Conference 2005

The growing awareness amongst traditional archivists of audiovisual matters was reflected in the recent annual conference of the British Records Association (BRA), held at the Royal Statistical Society on 6 December 2005. Titled *Seeing is Believing: Film and Sound Archives*, the conference gave equal footing to both moving image and audio, and was a valuable opportunity to find out about a number of case studies from archivists working with these specialist archive materials.

Crispin Jewitt, Head of the British Library Sound Archive, began proceedings by giving a welcome introduction to the audiovisual archiving sector as a representative of the Co-ordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations. Jewitt looked at the archive models that currently operate, and also at the various professional bodies that represent audiovisual archives and archivists. This general overview helped to contextualise the rest of the day's programme by illustrating how varied and large the sector has become.

Sound archives and oral history in particular were well represented by talks given by Margaret Mackay from the School of Scottish Studies (University of Edinburgh) and Colin Hyde from the East Midlands Oral History Archive. It was fascinating to hear some of the interview techniques that are used during the recording sessions, and how oral history can be used for research. As some of the sound recordings are over 50 years old, preservation issues were also covered, where the maintenance of playback equipment is just as important as the condition of tapes and discs.

After lunch, Wyn Thomas gave an insight to the work that is currently being done at the Archive of Traditional Welsh Music (University of Wales, Bangor), which includes publishing bibliographic volumes and liaising with international institutions in recovering lost recordings. The conference delegates were treated to a number of traditional songs, the highlight being a 1907 recording of a harp instrumental, which was located in Vienna.

The British Film Institute (BFI) was represented by two speakers. Patrick Russell, Senior Curator of Non-fiction at the National Film and Television Archive, gave a fascinating account of the recent high-profile restoration and access project involving the Mitchell and Kenyon films. And Mark Duguid, the Content Editor of Screenonline, the BFI's online educational resource, demonstrated how the BFI has made some of its archival holdings available on the web.

Whilst most of the day's programme concentrated on the preservation and access of audiovisual media, 'traditional' archive materials were not overlooked. James Codd from the BBC Written Archives Centre showed some examples of its holdings, which date back to the BBC's formation in the 1920s. This important collection of files, scripts and working papers document the programme-making process and the BBC's development as a broadcaster, and demonstrates that the preservation of documentation that accompanies audiovisual archives is just as important as the films, videos and sound recordings themselves.

The conference ended with the Maurice Bond lecture, which was delivered this year by Clyde Jeavons, a former curator of the National Film and Television Archive, and provided an excellent introduction to the history of the development of national film archive institutions.

One of the most interesting points that Jeavons raised was that the need for film archives was discussed very early on in cinema's history. Whilst the first major state-funded film archives were largely set-up only in the 1930s, a proposal for a film archive can be traced as far back as 1898, only three years after the first public film screenings in Paris by the Lumière brothers.

Overall, the conference was a good introduction to some of the major challenges involved with audiovisual archiving and illustrated the diversity of the field.

Tom Vincent
National Advisory Services
The National Archives

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One of the organisations represented in the talks was the East Midlands Oral History Archive
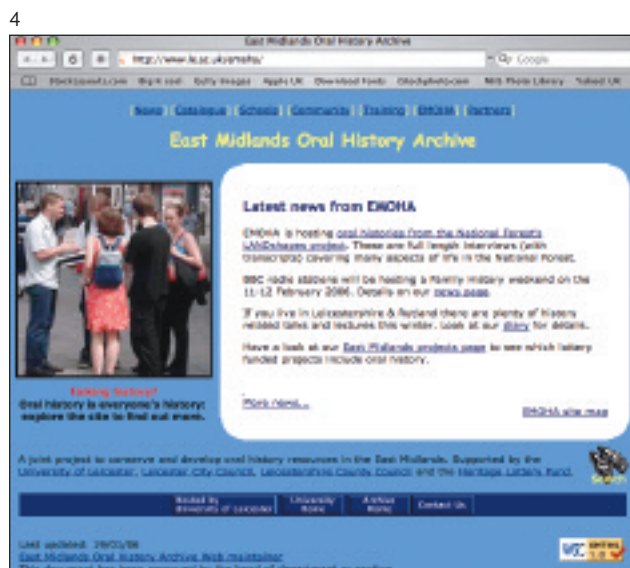
Capturing the Public Value of Heritage

This two-day conference (25-26 January 2006), organised by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), English Heritage and the National Trust, was designed to debate and explore some of the current thinking around the theory of Public Value.

Public Value is a concept first developed by Harvard Professor Mark H. Moore around how public services must create a value to the public, in the same way that the private sector creates shareholder value. This theory has since been developed by a number of academics and think tanks to explore how it can be used by the heritage sector to articulate our value.

The conference kicked off with a speech from the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Tessa Jowell. The Minister talked about how she came to write her pamphlet Better Places to Live: Government, Identity and the Value of the Historic and Built Environment, published in March 2005, which challenged the sector to contribute to the debate on Britishness and identity, and on how to capture evidence of the value of heritage. She talked about the responses she had received, including those that argued for these issues to be debated in a broader heritage context, and outlined how the event was part of this process of debate.

There followed three talks on how the concept of public value is being refined in an attempt to develop ways of measuring this value. Robert Hewison and John Holden from Demos outlined their work in this area, in particular the concept of the Public Value triangle. This is an attempt to breakdown the value of culture into three parts of equal importance – its intrinsic value, instrumental value and institutional value – and to outline the primary assessors of these three aspects of value (public, policymakers and politicians, and professionals). They argue that in recent years debate has been focused too narrowly on the instrumental value of culture and that it is time to engage in more debate with the public over the intrinsic value of heritage.

Greg Wilkinson of Accenture then outlined work he has been undertaking for the National Trust to capture intrinsic value and use value (similar to Demos' definition of instrumental value) in a Public Sector Value tool. This attempts to put weightings on various outcomes in order to measure performance and gives the National Trust a more sophisticated way of measuring the value of its various properties than solely visitor numbers. Ricardo Blaug of The Work Foundation outlined their thinking on public value. By using the example of Jamie Oliver's campaign for better school dinners he introduced the concept of 'refined preferences', that professionals can, through education, information and deliberation, change the preferences of the public in terms of their perception of value. This session was rounded up by panel discussion where the speakers were joined by Fiona Reynolds of the National Trust and Mark Friend from the BBC.

The second session looked at the question of instrumental value, or the economic, environmental and social benefits of heritage. Following an introduction from Kate Clark of the HLF, Sue Wilkinson of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) gave a brief talk on the Inspiring Learning for All Framework. David Throsby, Professor of Economics at Macquarie University, Sydney then explained how the concept of 'cultural capital', first developed by sociologists, had evolved through the work of economists to seek to measure non-

economic value. He highlighted the importance of this work in giving the sector a language to express values that economists (and thus the Treasury) could understand and which enables the application of tools like benefit cost analysis. He outlined how it enables values to be placed on issues like sustainability and inter-generational equity but acknowledged that there were some collective values that could not be captured in this model. His talk was followed by a panel discussion including Professor Randall Mason from the University of Pennsylvania and Ece Ozdemiroglu, Director of Economics for the Environment Consultancy.

The afternoon session demonstrated practical examples of public engagement on issues of value. Members of the HLF Citizens Juries from Nottingham and Cardiff and Deborah Mattinson from Opinion Leader Research discussed how they had reviewed a number of HLF-funded projects, identifying common themes and values. Another discussion period was followed by a stirring performance from the HLF-funded Urban Roots Dance Project and a drinks reception.

Day Two moved the debate on public value from the theoretical into the more practical sphere. Professor Christina Cameron from the University of Montreal talked about how Parks Canada has attempted to address the issue of public value. In particular she highlighted the problems for World Heritage Sites in fulfilling the needs of universal (or international) value whilst respecting local values, particularly when these values are strongly linked to cultural or spiritual values.

Edward Impey from English Heritage outlined the work they have been undertaking, based on the concept of the public value triangle, towards the publication of English Heritage's *Conservation Principles,* and about the virtuous circle of understanding, valuing, caring and enjoying that they are endeavouring to create. Councillor Heather Garnett from North Yorkshire gave another practical presentation, this time on the role of being a Heritage Champion within a council framework (this included the only mention of archives during the conference!).

David Lammy, Minister for Culture at the DCMS, argued that historically the heritage sector has been elite-led but that the drivers for development have been social change within periods of economic change. He called for experts to move away from conversations with each other, or talking to the public in the language of experts. His words were followed by a pre-lunch performance from the Castleford Schools Pyramid for the Arts Choir, singing a series of songs commissioned to recall the heritage of the town.

The afternoon began with a speech from Baroness Andrews, Sustainable Development Minister in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, on the importance of heritage in developing sustainable communities. This was followed by Julia Thrift, Director of CABE Space, who outlined the work CABE has done on articulating the instrumental and intrinsic values of public spaces and on the development of a Place Consultation Tool, based on the design quality indicator.

The final session brought together a panel of experts such as Baroness Lola Young, Bonnie Greer, Ben Rogers from the Institute of Public Policy Research, Simon Thurley from English Heritage, and Graham Wynne from RSPB, chaired by Nick Higham, to discuss some of the issues covered. All agreed that more discussion was needed on the public definition of heritage, on considering levels of public involvement and in particular engaging young people, and on how much leadership the sector can and should give. Speakers from the floor welcomed a move away from a focus on economic models of value and hoped that there would be input from philosophers, psychologists and other disciplines to add to the debate. There were also voices arguing that there should be a move away from discussions based upon the concept of experts 'thinking and knowing' about a subject and the public 'feeling and believing' as this did not fully recognise the expertise on many areas of the heritage held by the public, or indeed the passion that led most experts or professionals to work, and continue to work, in the heritage sector.

The concept of Public Value appears to be one that will influence our sector over the next few years, and as other heritage organisations are already beginning to use it to consider the ways they are engaging with the public, and to argue their case for funding, it is important that archivists are engaged with this concept or we risk further marginalisation. The proceedings of this thought-provoking conference should be published in due course and I hope they will provide a useful introduction for archivists to this debate.
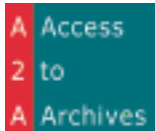
Louise Ray
Archive Lottery Adviser
National Council on Archives

5
The Castleford
Schools Pyramid
for the Arts Choir

5

Access to Archives, past and present

Access to Archives (A2A) is now in its fourth phase, following the completion of 3 successful phases. The initiative has provided repositories across England with the opportunity to have their material appear on what is effectively a 'one-stop' website (www.a2a.org.uk/).

Funded principally by Heritage Lottery grants, regionally based consortia have contributed widely to the site, which has also provided smaller repositories with a public forum that may otherwise have been denied.

The site currently catalogues 8.7 million filed items from 395 record offices and other repositories (as of December 2005). These figures are set to grow with the next phase. Archives 4 All, which began in September 2005 and is set to run until March 2008, seeks to build on A2A's previous success by expanding the current user base. Archivists will be encouraged to work with those unfamiliar with archives and to utilise current internet technology in order to highlight learning and outreach opportunities.

To celebrate past A2A successes, we have brought together the testimonoies of those involved at first hand. Previous contributors and a stakeholder member describe the benefits of the project on various levels: effects on individual repositories, benefits to regions that have participated, as well as the positive effects to archive communities and other communities as a whole. Thoughts on the current phase and the opportunities it provides are also given.

Jane Langford
Supervisory Editor
Archives 4 All

A stakeholder perspective

Nick Kingsley, Head of National Advisory Services at The National Archives

A2A was created as a response to the 1998 National Council of Archives report, Archives Online, which articulated the vision of a world in which the catalogues of all archives in the UK were searchable through a single point of access on the internet. Of all the projects which grew from the report, A2A has been the largest and most successful, and has become an invaluable tool for researchers in a huge range of fields.

The multi-level character of the data gives users the detail that they need about collections: the catalogue descriptions on A2A often answer people's queries and mean they don't have to look at the records at all. This is a real vindication of the importance of cataloguing and of digitising catalogues.

A2A needs now to develop in three ways if it is to fulfill the original Archives Online vision. Firstly, it needs to be joined up with the other national resource description projects – the National Register of Archives (NRA), Scottish Archive Network (SCAN), Archives Network Wales (ANW), the Archives Hub, AIM25 and so on – and with the catalogues of individual institutions. This is the role which the Archives UK (aUK) project will play (see www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/partnerprojects/auk/ for further details).

Secondly, it needs to be made yet more comprehensive. A recent survey of retroconversion shows that only something like 44% of all catalogues of records in responding institutions are online in a multi-level format, and so we have a long way to go (see page 7 for further details). Finally, as is planned through Archives 4 All, the archives community needs to reach out to and embrace the resources held in community and other informal archives, so that the picture of our national archival patrimony presented online can become truly comprehensive.

Re-membering Asian Performance Project (RAP) (2004/05)

Dr Alda Terracciano, Co-Founder and Director of FUTURE HISTORIES

Re-membering Asian Performance is the result of a collaborative effort by FUTURE HISTORIES, the first national repository for African, Asian and Caribbean performing arts in the UK, the Access to Archives (A2A) Central Team and motiroti, an internationally acclaimed arts organisation based in London, with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Arts Council of England.

As part of the project we preserved, catalogued and made accessible for the first time the archive of motiroti; digitised and made available both on the A2A and the FUTURE HISTORIES website (www.futurehistories.org.uk) a substantial number of items from the FUTURE HISTORIES' collections, including motiroti, Nitro and Black Theatre Forum archives; and produced a series of workshops on the 'Art of

Archiving' targeted at performing arts companies producing work relevant to people of African and Asian descent in London, Manchester, Bristol, Leeds and Birmingham.

As the only cataloguing project of its kind to participate in the A2A programme, RAP contributed to the development of the A2A web site as a virtual space where the multiplicity of histories making up British national identity coalesce and interlink with each other. This is of benefit not only to the community of researchers interested in accessing resources on British history and culture, but to the wider public, nationally and internationally. As a result of the successful outcomes of the programme, Phase 4 is expected to offer a platform for stories yet unheard, and to facilitate the contribution of archival material from communities currently unrepresented in the annals of British history.

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LMA's experiences with A2A

Nicola Avery, Principal Archivist, Acquisitions and Cataloguing, London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)

London Metropolitan Archives has been involved with A2A since its pilot 'Places of Deposit' project in 2000.

Originally we had estimated that retro-converting all LMA's paper-only catalogues in-house would take around 25 years. Thanks to A2A we have completed the work in five years – an incredible achievement which could not have been contemplated without the help of the A2A initiative and its Central Team.

In addition to our own lists, LMA have also re-coded and retroconverted the

entire Corporation of London archive after we took over administration of the Corporation's Record Office in 2003; again, something we would not have been able to do without the help of A2A. I know our many partners in regional bids have also benefited hugely from this opportunity to bring their catalogues into the 21st century.

In addition to the retroconversion aspect, it has been extremely useful to have an online stage on which to display our lists, as at present LMA is still without a proper web catalogue. The value of A2A as a 'one-stop' shop

for English archives in general cannot be over-estimated, and it is wonderful to see long-split collections coming together, albeit in a 'virtual' way, on the site.

Access to archives in Shropshire

Mary McKenzie, County Archivist

Shropshire Archives coordinated two regional Access to Archives projects, 'Muck & Brass' and 'Seven Ages of Man'. Together they converted over 88,000 pages of catalogues from the West Midlands, 15,000 of these from Shropshire collections.

The projects have had a huge impact on both our users and our staff. As well as adding data to the national network, converting our catalogues added greatly to the information on our own CALM database. This now contains over

170,000 entries and this year (2005) has been published on the internet at www.shropshirearchives.co.uk. Both users and staff now use the database as a first point of reference.

This is a big change from the past use of index cards, though ours were never very comprehensive so being able to do an 'any text search' was a revelation!

For me, the projects were a great opportunity to learn about writing funding applications and developing

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and managing projects. This has certainly helped me and the service as a whole. We haven't looked back in terms of the number and range of projects, many externally funded, that we have been able to develop since.

A2A – one archivist's viewpoint

Anne George, Former A2A project Co-ordinator

I have been involved with A2A from its first phase, working on three different projects, two for the Yorkshire and Humber Region, and one for Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

I would say that the benefits have been enormous! My first project, 'Yorkshire Signpost', brought together, through the work of A2A, collection level descriptions from a wide spectrum of 150 institutions in the region. Their information was accessible from just the one site, with linked information to contact details – and this was a side benefit, the adding to and updating of ARCHON directory information. A2A was a unifying factor: every participant could take advantage of the same extensive search facilities and the guaranteed maintained database presence. This was especially advantageous to the small institution with no hope then of mounting that information itself on the internet.

From the users' point of view, A2A must be considered a vital tool for researchers. There is so much there now: names and places to check, with the prospect of finding useful information in a most unlikely place. The benefits have accrued as the Phases have progressed. Now there is such critical mass of archive information accessible, so much more than previously, when it might have seemed more of a coincidence rather than anything else if you found something you actually wanted.

A2A – Past and Future

Bruce Jackson, County Archivist of Lancashire

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Example of a Quarter Session Petition, Lancashire Record Office. In the first live month of A2A (May 2001), over 63% of catalogues viewed were from Lancashire – the vast majority being Quarter Sessions petitions

Lancashire Record Office has contributed content to all A2A Phases from the initial pilot onwards, and we have benefited hugely from this involvement. It has offered a quick, cost-effective means to retroconvert the majority of our catalogues created over the previous 60 years, and with much of the editorial and quality control carried out for us.

The capacity within A2A to provide offices with EAD (Encoded Archival Description) versions for uploading into the service's own cataloguing and management system has let us populate this far more quickly than would otherwise have been possible.

A2A has been essential in this process of making such a high proportion of existing catalogues available so quickly, which has in turn made the explosion in remote use possible. For Lancashire alone users had viewed over 1.4 million catalogue entries by the end of October 2005. It is important not to forget the enormous benefits which have been experienced by searchers as a result. The impact A2A has had in opening up little known collections by making them locatable and searchable has been enormous within the user community.

The next step is further interoperability across A2A, the Archives Hub, and other key providers, while continuing to plug gaps in previous retroconversion work, and ensuring that offices continue to provide new descriptive content. The new direction implicit in Archives 4 All is challenging to both archivists and future users and is part of a wider debate that will need to take place as users seek ever greater interoperability

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across databases relating to widely varying material. What we can say with certainty is that A2A will form a core element of this future environment.