

Section 2 Collaboration



Collaboration can be defined as “the action of working with someone to produce or create something”,

This guidance uses the term ‘collaboration’ to embrace the range of ways in which the archive and higher education sectors work together.

While archive and higher education ‘sectors’ are referred to throughout the guide they are not always independent. Many archives exist within higher education institutions (HEIs) and are important instigators and facilitators of collaboration. In this guidance the term ‘archives’ is used to group together archive practitioners and ‘higher education’ for academics, researchers and students based in higher education institutions.

2.1 The context for collaboration

Collaboration is driven by common goals and the prospect of achieving more by working together than could be achieved by working separately.

At present there are around 2500 archives in the UK and 143 higher education institutions. Many archive services are parts of larger organisations, such as Local Authorities, businesses, and there are 287 archives within higher education institutions. The 143 higher education institutions contain within them schools, facilities, departments, research clusters, and centres. So, the scope for archive and higher education collaboration has huge potential.

The growth in popularity of collaborative working can be attributed to a number of drivers that are outlined below.

Accountability for public funding

Higher education institutions (HEIs) and archive services have been encouraged for many years to demonstrate accountability for funding. In the higher education sector this has seen the changes to regulatory and funding landscape, and the development of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF).

Accountability to students

Universities are increasingly accountable to their students. Increases in tuition fees, the increased use of student-based metrics, and the establishment of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) are resulting in a stronger focus on student outcomes.

Reduction in Public Funding

Many archive services have seen a significant decrease in funding over recent years which has had consequences such as a decrease in staff numbers (including professional staff), and a fall in the time that can be spent on curatorial or collection-based activities as resources are focused on maintaining front line services and 'open doors'. There has also been a reduction in central funding for higher education institutions.

2.2 Benefits and barriers of collaboration:

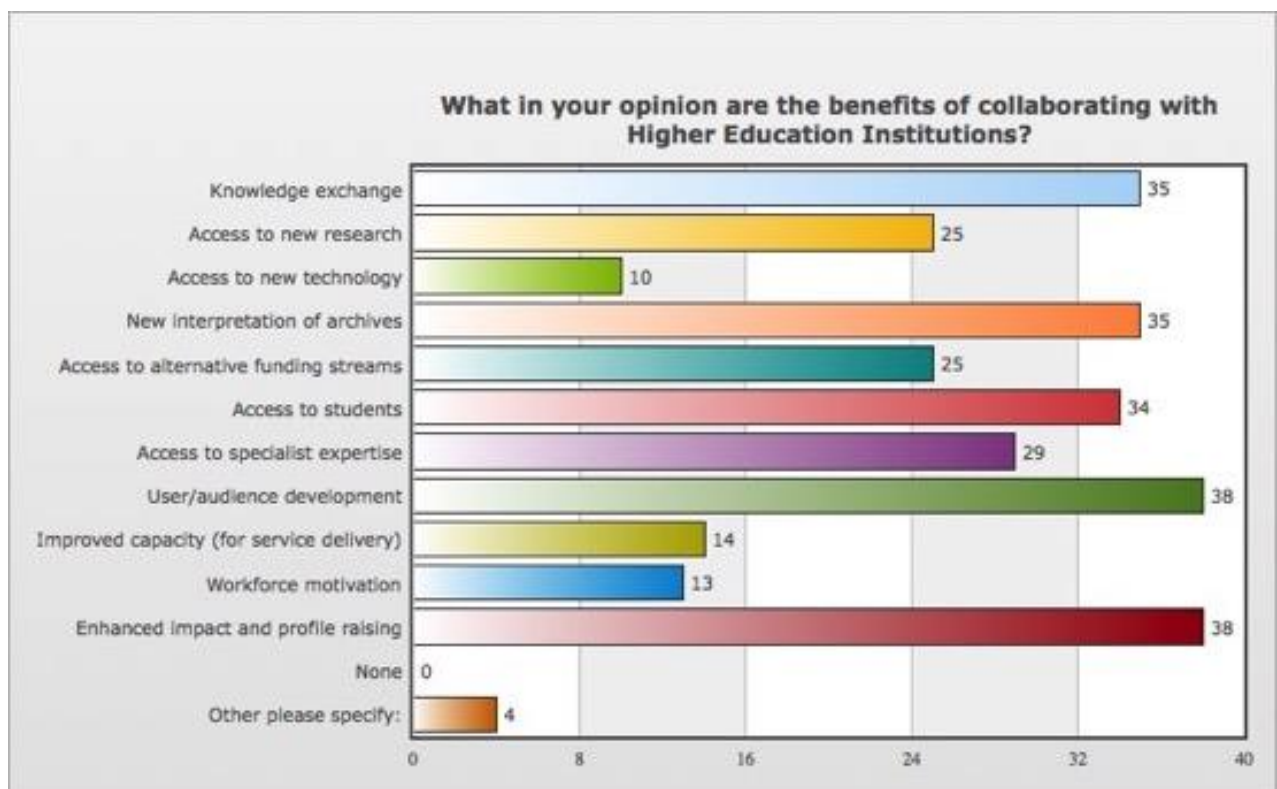
To complement the research carried out in 2015, an in-depth consultation with the archive and higher education sectors was carried out in Spring 2018. This identified a range of benefits and barriers to collaboration. The findings of this consultation have informed this updated guidance.

2.2.1 The benefits of collaboration

There are many benefits to collaboration, and organisational and individual benefits are key drivers for collaborative projects being established. Many of the benefits identified were relevant to both sectors, for instance knowledge exchange and access to specialist expertise.

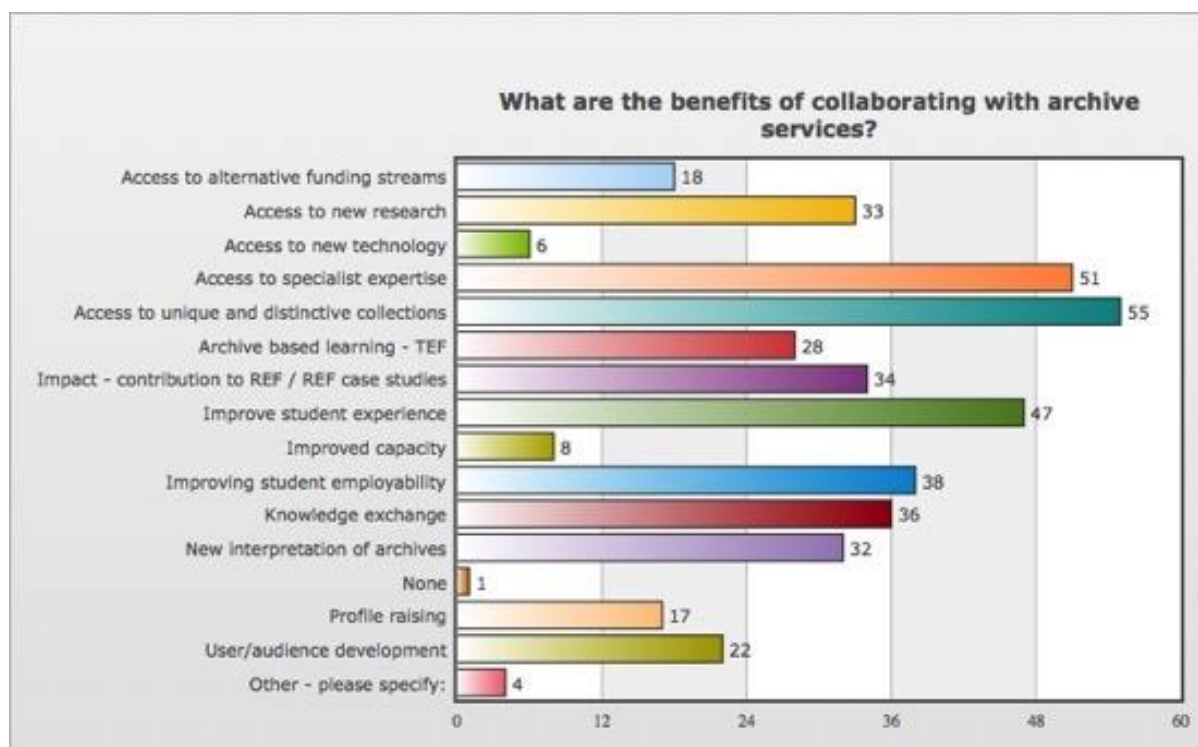
Archives identified the following key benefits of collaborating:

- Enhanced impact and profile raising
- User/audience development
- New interpretation of archives
- Knowledge exchange
- Access to specialist expertise
- Access to new research
- Access to new funding streams



Higher Education Institutions identified the following benefits:

- Access to unique and distinctive collections
- Access to specialist expertise
- Improving the student experience
- Improving student employability
- Knowledge exchange
- Impact – contribution to REF/ REF case studies
- Access to new research
- New interpretation of archives
- Archive based learning - TEF



Some of the benefits of collaboration that have been identified by each sector are expanded upon below.

Archives	Higher Education
<p>Enhanced impact and profile raising</p> <p>Profile-raising through association with prestigious partners.</p> <p>Opportunities to demonstrate the value and impact of archives to a wider audience.</p>	<p>Access to specialist expertise:</p> <p>Access to the skills, knowledge, and experience held outside of the higher education sector by staff and volunteers in the archive sector.</p>

Archives	Higher Education
<p>Knowledge exchange:</p> <p>Exchange of knowledge and ideas to address gaps in specialist expertise (e.g. IT or subject specialisms), and access to research frameworks.</p>	<p>Knowledge exchange:</p> <p>Exchange of knowledge and ideas and the opportunity for academic research to be utilised outside of the higher education sector.</p>
<p>User/audience development:</p> <p>Opportunities to expand audience - particularly student and academic audiences.</p>	<p>User/audience development:</p> <p>Opportunities to expand audience reach, particularly community and schools audiences.</p>
<p>New interpretations of archives</p> <p>Opportunities to engage with students and academics, and access to new technologies and approaches, on how archives can be used and interpreted.</p>	<p>Access to unique and distinctive collections</p> <p>Opportunities to access the collections held within archives can provide a richer student experience, and support research.</p>
<p>Access to specialist expertise and new research</p> <p>Opportunities to engage with academic specialist and experts in their fields; and to access areas of new research with relevance to archive practice or collections.</p>	<p>Enhanced learning and student experience:</p> <p>Increased learning opportunities – for example, archives as sources for dissertations, increased potential employability through work experience placements, and archives as location for alternative teaching methodologies.</p>
<p>Funding:</p> <p>Access to HE funding streams and associated programmes.</p>	<p>Supporting higher education frameworks (REF/TEF)</p> <p>Collaborating with archives can support higher education institutions in the REF scores and TEF ranking.</p>

2.4 Understanding barriers to participation

Whilst enthusiasm for collaboration between archive and higher education organisations is generally high, it is also useful to think about potential barriers to participation in collaborative activities and the things that can go wrong along the way. Many of the potential barriers can be avoided by understanding the pressures on each of the organisations involved in the collaboration or can be overcome by improving communication and planning.

Lack of time, timescales, and planning horizons

Both archive practitioners and academics cite lack of time and differences in peak activity periods between the sectors as a major limiting factor. Available time may vary at different periods of the year. For example, avoid the end of financial years (March in the archive sector, July in the HE sector), the start of academic terms, and exam season, as these are particularly busy times.

Decision making timescales can vary between the archive and HE sectors. Whilst many academics are used to dropping everything to plan and submit a funding bid for a project within six to eight weeks, many archive practitioners cannot work like this. The organisations in which they work require much longer planning horizons (commonly in excess of six months). Clearly the complexity of the project will influence how much time is needed for planning and decision-making but these cultural differences between organisations are an important consideration and should be stated as they are not necessarily obvious.

Familiarity and understanding with archive services

It is a common assumption of sectors to presume knowledge of their skills, processes, assets, and resources are understood by others from outside their sector; in reality this cross sector knowledge is uncommon. For instance, members of the higher education sector may not have a good understanding of the range of collections, materials and professional expertise that can be found in an archive service. High-level descriptions of the nature of your collections, both in terms of subject matter and type of material can be a useful way of highlighting the breadth and depth of collections available to academics. It is important to make clear

(preferably online) how academics can find out more about the collections held by your archive service.

Reader registration requirements, appointment booking systems, handling procedures, security measures, preservation requirements and copyright restrictions can sometimes seem like a conspiracy designed to restrict access and use. This can be a particular issue when engaging with inexperienced researchers who have had less interaction with primary source material. Clear communication about the policies and processes you use at the outset of a project will help to avoid and overcome frustrations. The **Archive Service Accreditation** guidance includes a useful guide to what should be included in policies on access.

Reliance on familiar academic disciplines

The archive sector has a natural bias to directly-related archival, historical, or conservation-focused disciplines. The range of potential partner academic disciplines can be overwhelming. A result of this is that innovative and exciting collaborative projects with other disciplines can be overlooked as it may be felt that they do not 'fit well' with the archive's functions or collections.

Exploring the potential for collaboration with academics from across a broad range of disciplines is likely to open up greater opportunities for collaboration.

Uncatalogued, undigitised material and making your collection discoverable

People from both sectors can be surprised by the quantity of uncatalogued and/or undigitised material. Academics express surprise when they discover that relatively small proportions of material held by archive services are available in online catalogues, and archivists express frustration at the assumption that large quantities of material are fully described in online catalogues or available in digital format. For some academics, uncatalogued material is a golden opportunity for research and its presence can be turned into an opportunity for collaboration. Describing collections at a high level on an archive's website is useful, together with providing a named contact who can provide further information about the collection.

Related to the issue of uncatalogued material is that of finding relevant research material across disparate collections. Portals such as **Discovery** (which holds descriptions of the holdings of TNA as well as more than 2,500 archives across the country), the **Archives Hub**, and **AIM25** are useful resources for academics seeking to identify material from a wide range of sources as well as a means of promoting collections amongst diverse audiences.

Lack of knowledge of opportunities

Archivists and staff within their services identify the difficulty in finding out about current opportunities within the higher education sector. Knowledge of developments in relevant research fields could help archivists to raise the profile of particular collections and/or, prioritise cataloguing, conservation or digitisation.

It is useful for individual archive services to identify the research interests of local higher education institutions by individual archive services. Newsletters of major funders (such as the AHRC and the other research councils) can provide a useful insight into up-coming research topics, though the monitoring of mailing lists may not be feasible. An invaluable source of information can come from existing contacts in the higher education sector.

Lack of knowledge of the higher education funding and regulatory landscape

Higher Education has experienced considerable changes in its funding and regulatory landscape between 2016 and 2018. In 2018 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was closed, with responsibilities being taken over by two new organisations - United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Office for Students (OfS). UKRI brings together the seven research councils, Innovate UK, and the research and knowledge exchange functions of HEFCE. The Office for Students took over student and teaching focused functions of HEFCE and manages the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

There are three key higher education frameworks that may be particularly relevant for contextualising cross-sector collaborations – the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework

(TEF), and the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). More detailed information on these frameworks is in section 5 of this guidance.

Differences in institutional priorities

Archive services and higher education institutions are likely to have different institutional priorities, and this was cited as a significant barrier to developing collaborative working. Whilst it may appear that it is difficult to rectify this, in itself it may not be an insurmountable barrier. By considered planning, and frank and honest conversations between archive services, academics, and higher education institutions shared priorities can be established and harnessed to further collaborative practice,

Geography

Collaboration is often easiest between organisations that are close to one another geographically. Small distances make visits and face-to-face meetings easier and potentially increase the range of collaborative activity that is possible. Geography need not be a barrier to all forms of collaboration though. Large-scale research projects frequently involve partners from geographically distant locations which can be supported by various technologies. The key is to maintain communication through both informal and formal channels.

Attitudes to risk

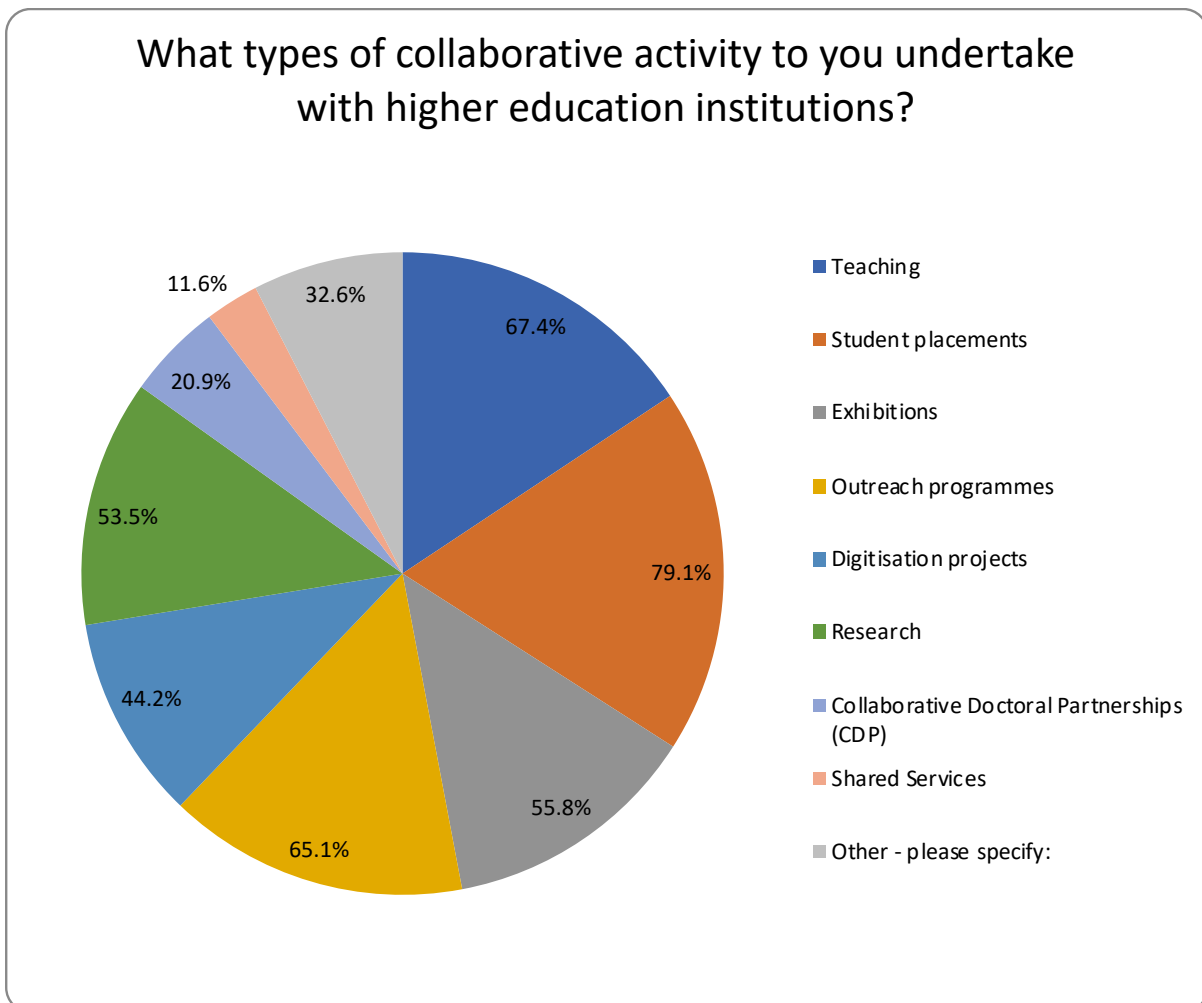
Research is an inherently risky business. From the earliest stages of forming a research proposal and the risks associated with time invested in bidding for funding, through to the outcomes of the research process, one cannot guarantee (or predict) results. In some cases, the tolerance for risk-taking in the HEI might be much higher than would ever normally be considered acceptable by an archive service as 'failure' of research projects is not seen as a negative but as a valuable learning experience. Both sectors need to be clear about their appetite for risk and which organisation carries the risk (or how much risk).

2.3 Types of collaboration

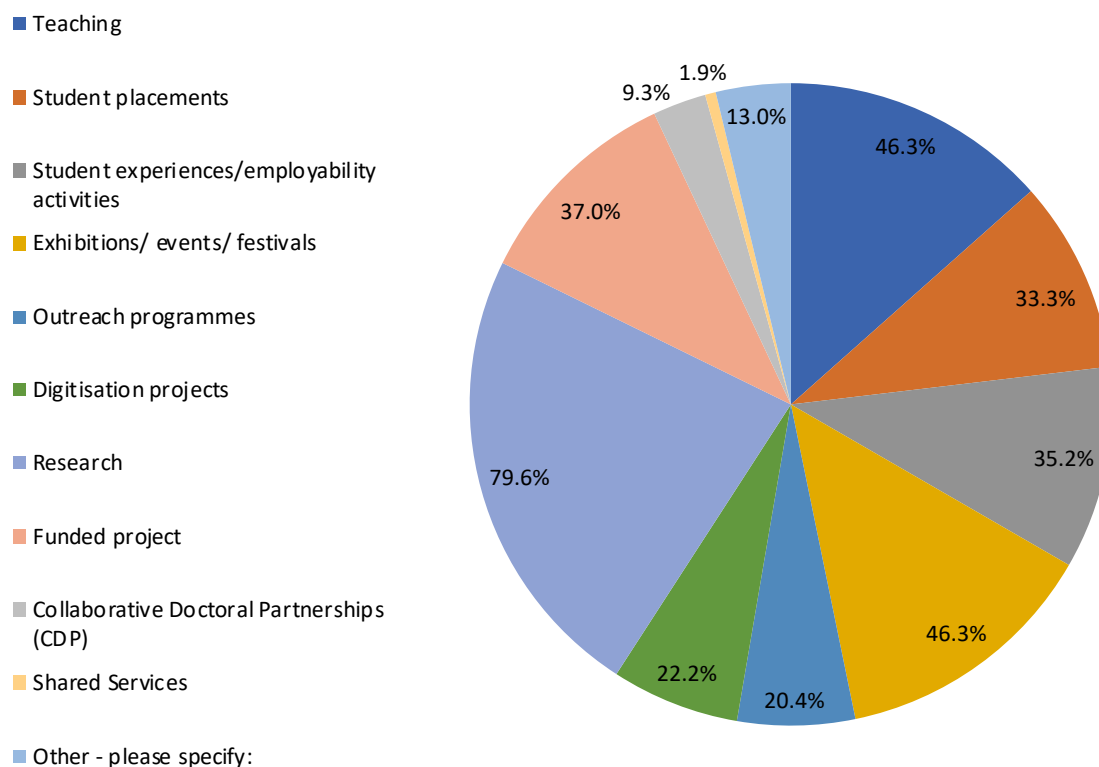
There are a variety of ways in which the two sectors can work together and there is scope for collaboration between organisations of all sizes and in a range of institutional contexts.

The most important part of collaboration is making initial contact and agreeing objectives between the organisations. Once this has been achieved, the collaboration frequently deepens as projects build on previous successes and trusted relationships. Examples of the areas in which archive services and higher education institutions collaborate are listed below and are outlined in more detail in the accompanying case studies. These activities are not necessarily distinct from one another and, indeed, one may lead to another.

The charts below, from the 2018 consultation demonstrate the different types of collaboration between the archive and higher education sectors



What types of collaborative activity do you undertake with archives?



As can be seen, teaching, student placements, exhibitions, outreach, research and digitisation are significant areas of collaboration between the sectors.

It is useful to consider all the types of collaboration available and be open to new ideas proposed by potential partners. To help understand these further a brief synopsis of each type of collaboration follows:

Collaboration type	Description and ideas for collaboration
Teaching and learning activities	Archives have a wealth of collections and knowledge that can be used by academics to complement their students' experiences

Collaboration type	Description and ideas for collaboration
	<p>Archives can benefit from having groups of younger people involved</p> <p>These types of collaborations can be developed between organisations and may lead to more specific projects</p> <p>Think beyond the ‘traditional’ humanities subjects (history, archive studies etc.) – arts, social sciences, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects can also benefit from partnering with archives</p>
<p>Student volunteers, placements, and internships</p>	<p>Undergraduates, post-graduates, and doctoral students all have placements with archives and may have already ‘worked’ with them</p> <p>Many students now volunteer with archives, but the terminology may differ according to the nature of the project/work they are carrying out. Many ‘internships’ are actually work placements.</p> <p>Students can bring energy and new perspectives to archives</p> <p>Archives provide valuable experience and employability skills</p> <p>Archives gain research into their collections that is increasingly hard for them to carry out at present funding levels</p> <p>Archives can provide space for students to develop ‘real world’ skills</p>

Collaboration type	Description and ideas for collaboration
Exhibitions	<p>Academic research, knowledge, and expertise contribute to public exhibitions</p> <p>Exhibitions can be temporary and/or located off-site</p> <p>Archives can contribute their collections and in-depth knowledge of these to collaborative exhibitions</p> <p>Need to ensure that suitable interpretation is conducted for a public audience</p>
Outreach	<p>Academics may want to engage communities to assist in their research or learning activities</p> <p>Archives have developed community engagement activities</p> <p>Funding can be from either academic or heritage sources depending on the focus of the activity is and why it being carried out</p>
Research	<p>Archives have unique and distinctive archival material that is not found elsewhere and support academic research</p> <p>Research is likely to be from individuals or small groups and can be carried out by undergraduates, post-grads, doctoral students, or academics.</p> <p>Archives support and assist student and academic research though are not always recognised or cited in research results/publications. Where possible archives should seek that their contribution is recognised.</p>

Collaboration type	Description and ideas for collaboration
Digitisation (and Research & Development)	<p>Digitisation of archival material can unlock research and user potential</p> <p>R&D is the focused researching, developing and testing a technical processes, product, machine, or service. It may not always result in an end product, but the process is still valuable</p> <p>Archives can offer a range of collections, audiences, or spaces for academic R&D</p> <p>Archives may benefit from access to new technologies or the applications of technology</p>

Case Study 1

Title: Undergraduate First Year History Students Explore the Trial of Charles I

Archives: Canterbury Cathedral Archives, The National Archives

HEI: Canterbury Christ Church University

Source: Dr Sara Wolfson SFHEA

Theme: Teaching; Using archives for alternative teaching formats

Canterbury Christ Church University has experimented with workshops rather than traditional lectures across all levels of undergraduate study using archival material from The National Archives and Canterbury Cathedral Archives and Library. This differed from the way history has conventionally been taught, with third year special subjects primarily adopting the workshop approach.

Students in their historiographical first year course recreated Charles I's trial of 1649 with the help of an external scholar, Dr Simon Healy from History of Parliament. The core reading for the task was split up amongst the students, who then separated into prosecution and defence teams. Role-play, historical investigation, teamwork and interaction presented the course in a creative way to highlight the historical debates that are still very much alive today. Students were tasked with listening to an audio extract on The National Archives website from a report of the trial of Charles I, January 1649, (Catalogue ref: TNA SP 16/517).

On reflecting upon the experience of workshops, a first year student emphasised the holistic benefits of this form of teaching: 'This approach has inspired me, and certainly others I have noticed, with confidence to articulate and develop my thinking on a given topic'.

By working directly with archival material in an interactive manner helped to shape the individual student experience, while maintaining the academic rigour of historical study.



Case Study 2

Title: Our Criminal Ancestors

Archives: Hull History Centre and East Riding Archives

HEI: University of Hull, Leeds Beckett University

Source: Dr. Helen Johnston (Hull), Professor Heather Shore (Leeds Beckett), Victoria Dawson (Project Researcher)

Theme: History, Criminology and Family History

This collaborative Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project emerged as a follow-on from the AHRC funded research network, 'Our Criminal Past' (2013-14).

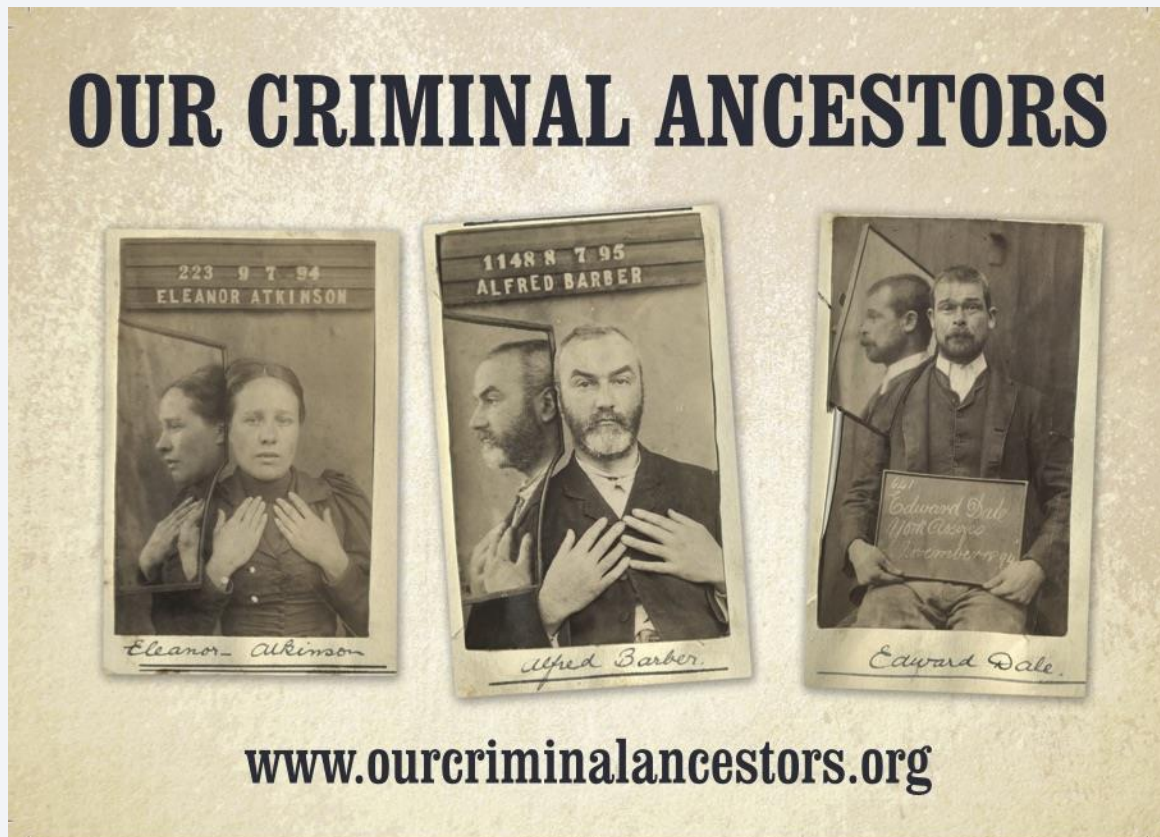
The project aimed to stimulate and facilitate creative public engagement with crime history through knowledge exchange, interactive workshops and website dissemination.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Establish and maintain an interactive and open access website which guides, assists and directs members of the public in tracing their criminal ancestors
- Create and produce an accessible source guide on the use of criminal records
- Identify the national and most important local criminal record collections held at the Hull History Centre and the East Riding Archives
- Run three interactive workshops

Three projects were held at the Hull History Centre, focused on crime, policing and punishment. Talks from expert speakers were combined with document handling session and workshops. The participants (members of the public) developed their skills as family and community historians by gaining an introduction to and familiarity with criminal justice and related records. By focusing particularly on local records, the events were specifically designed to encourage participants to explore and use the rich local archive collections. The expert talks were orientated towards gaining skills and proficiency in interpreting records. Speakers included established academics alongside PhD students, who were able to gain experience in public engagement. At the third event the project website was launched along with the

hardcopy booklet, which was prepared in collaboration with the Hull History Centre and East Riding Archives. The booklet provides historical context on crime, policing and punishment along with information on the related documents that are held in the archives. It is available as a free hard-copy resource at the archives and as an electronic download on the website.



The website (<https://ourcriminalancestors.org>) aims to provide free expert advice for those interested in tracing their criminal ancestry. It also allows individuals to 'pin' details of their ancestry or crime history research on to the [History Pin](#) map. This draws on crowd-sourced methods to develop public participation in historical research.

Image: East Riding Archive