Section 3 Forming a collaboration

A key element to successful collaborations is that they are mutually beneficial. Organisations should take time to understand why they would like to enter into collaboration, what they need and what they can offer, and how they can work to make the collaboration a success for everyone involved.

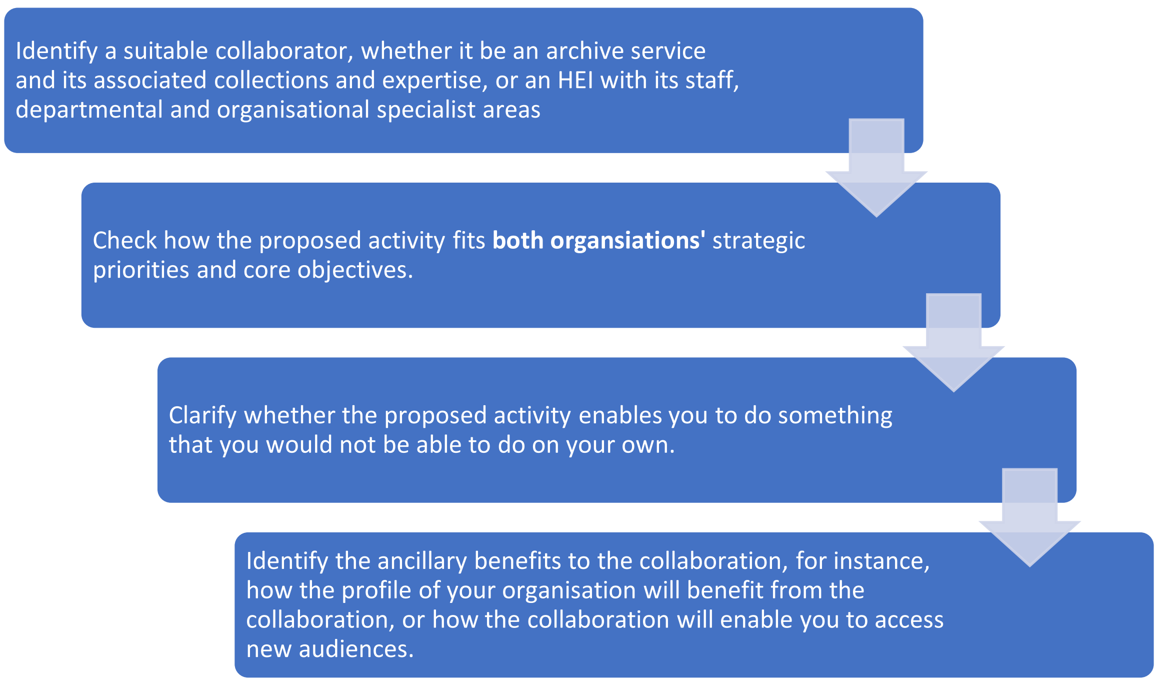
3.1 Advance thinking

Why?

Before organisations can begin to collaborate, it is important to explore the drivers, identifying the benefits to all parties involved, and what each party wants to achieve from it.

It is important not to enter into a collaboration for the sake of it. Before seeking, or entering into a collaborations, organisations should take time to consider how the collaboration would fit with the organisations aims, objectives, and strategic priorities; additionally, what benefits will the collaboration bring to the organisations, collaborations, and stakeholders involved.

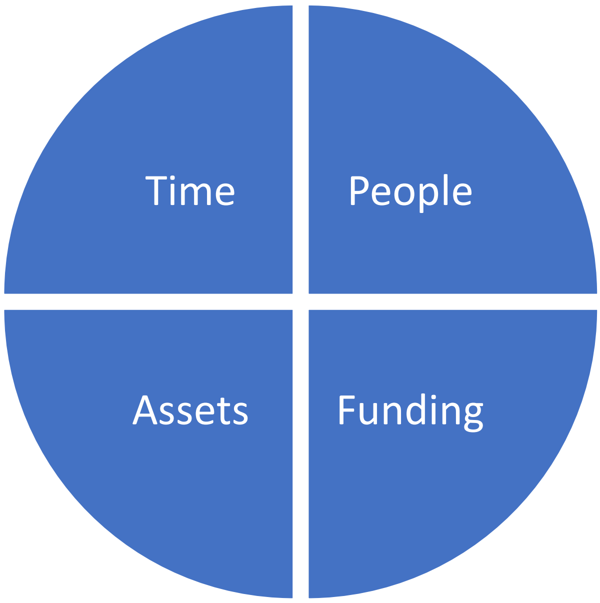
Once these have been considered, and an organisation is ready to enter into collaborations, one should take time to:



It is important that archive services and Higher Education Institutions take time to reflect on what **each** organisation can bring to a collaboration, and how **each** organisation, project, and the people involved benefit. It is likely that collaborations will identify a series of mutual and non-mutual benefits, and a strategic assessment at the start will enable you to make an informed decision as whether to proceed or not. It may also result in more successful collaboration in the long run.

What?

The next step is to think about resources and what you are able to contribute to a collaboration.



Time = individual and organisational time

People = skills and expertise of staff and volunteers

Assets = your collections, rooms, building, facilities, specialist equipment

Funding = core funding, project funding, income

The organisations involved in the collaboration should take time to consider the following questions – before the any collaborative activity takes place:

- Does the proposed activity require additional resource or could it, with careful planning, be accommodated from within existing resources?
- How much time and additional resource can each organisation afford to invest in the planning stages of the proposed activity?

- Have suitable funding streams been identified to support the collaboration? Can cross-sector funding be accessed? How much internal funding would each partner need to contribute?
- Can you afford for the project to 'fail'? What are the risks to each organisation and the people involved if the project fails?

How?

Finally, think about what you know about the way your organisation works and the impact that might have on the ease or difficulty of collaborative working.

Once you have considered the above and are comfortable with the capacity of your organisation for collaborative working, and how the process might work, it is vital that you spend time thinking about your potential partner organisation in similar terms. It is worth all organisations spending time together to identify the drivers for collaboration, what is needed to make it work, and highlight processes and support each organisation has to follow. By taking time to consider all these elements in before any activity starts will help in the long run.

3.2 Making contact and first steps

This section is focused on archives making contact with HEIs. Increasingly HEIs are contacting archive services to explore collaborative working. If you are approached by an HEI to get involved in a collaborative project you should still carry out the assessment outlined in the previous section before committing yourself.

Many collaborative projects grow from existing relationships between archive practitioners and colleagues in higher education institutions. Establishing initial contact without pre-existing relationships can be difficult but the following suggestions, made by archivists and academics, should ease the process:

- Research the institutional missions and goals of local HEIs and identify subject strengths or subjects that align with your collections and expertise.
- Make it easy for academics to contact you. Show how you can support research activities and provide contact information for named individuals on your website.
- Approach a librarian, archivist, public engagement staff, sector brokers, or cross-discipline development department within the university and ask them who to contact within the subject areas you have identified.
- Identify and contact higher education public engagement staff, sector brokers, or cross-discipline development departments; these people can provide a ‘gateway’ to a wider range of academics.
- Use contacts made with researchers and students who use your archive service in order to introduce your organisation to their HEI.
- Use university websites to identify academics within subject areas and to find out more about their research interests.
- Use social networking platforms such as LinkedIn, Academia.edu, or ResearchGate to find out more about individuals, as a route to making contact, or as a means of engaging in ‘group’ discussions about topics.

- Produce a brief summary of the collections / services that your archive service has and ask for it to be included in bulletins to academics, subject specialist groups and societies. Include relevant web pages and contact details.
- Follow and contribute to the blogs and Twitter accounts of subject areas, projects or individuals to keep up to date with activities and interests.
- Use academic mailing lists (for example JiscMail lists) to promote collections, activities or engage in online discussions.
- Network at local events such as exhibition openings, talks and seminars to meet local academics, find out about local initiatives and promote your organisation and its collections to peers beyond your own profession. These are generally open to the public and advertised via the university Events pages.
- Attend academic conferences in subject areas relevant to your collections or other events that target academics and don't be afraid to ask questions and talk to speakers after sessions.
- Make initial contact with academics by email rather than telephone but don't be put off if they do not reply immediately and do not be deterred from following up with additional emails.
- Some times of the year are particularly busy, for example it is best to avoid making contact at the start of the academic year and during exams and marking periods (particularly May and June).

Once you have made initial contact, follow-up quickly with a face-to-face meeting. Use the meeting to explore opportunities for collaboration in more detail, for example, by providing a tour of key collections and by introducing your contact to colleagues (for example in learning or outreach if you have one), by showing the space or facilities that you have available to support teaching, research or engagement activities. Use the meeting to find out more about research interests and the priorities of the higher education institution.

It is important that this initial meeting is as open and frank as possible – allowing all parties to discuss their drivers for collaboration, explore what resources each party needs and expects, identify how the collaborative project could work, and provide an opportunity to discuss common goals and cultural differences. Be open minded about the collaborative possibilities and be open to your project ideas evolving.

It may not be possible to discuss everything in detail in one meeting, so follow up meetings or video conferences may be necessary. Whilst it may seem time-consuming at the beginning, having reasonable planning time before a collaboration will result in a smoother and more successful project.

Case Study 3

Title: Operation War Diary
Archives: The National Archives (TNA)
HEI: Goldsmiths, University of London
Source: Professor Richard Grayson
Theme: First World War History – engaging the public in crowdsourcing data

In 2012 Richard Grayson was invited by the Imperial War Museums (IWM) to convene an Academic Advisory Group for their digital First World War centenary projects. This was on the basis of the 'military history from the street' methods developed for his 2009 book *Belfast Boys*. A key project was Operation War Diary (OWD) on which the IWM were working with The National Archives and Zooniverse. OWD seeks to gather data through crowdsourcing with 'Citizen Historians' tagging daily activities British army units during the First World War as recorded in official unit 'war diaries'. The academics advised on how to categorise the complex data in the diaries to enable subsequent analysis. Data gathering took place for three main purposes: to enrich TNA's catalogue descriptions for 1.5 million pages of unit war diaries; to provide evidence about individuals in IWM's Lives of the First World War project; and to present academics with large amounts of accurate data to help them gain a better understanding of how the war was fought.

The first research findings (in by far the largest such study ever) were published in Grayson's article in the British Journal for Military History in February 2016, receiving extensive media coverage. Key points were that infantry battalions spent 47% of their time at the front and/or fighting, with 62% for the artillery and 20% for the cavalry.

This led to headlines about 'Tommies' spending less than half their time at the front. The research used data compiled to 18th June 2015 when there had been 612,962 data tags from more than 12,600 registered users and more than 14,400 anonymous users. By the end of 2017 there were just under 16,000 registered volunteers, with 871,236 tags placed on 140,995 completed diary pages.

3.3 Common goals and cultural differences

Initial contact can be made by the archive service or instigated by staff and departments within HEIs. Once initial contact has been made, it is essential to establish honest and open communication channels. A successful collaboration is based on clear goals, professional respect, an understanding of mutual benefits, recognition of each other’s resources, and good communication.

The cultural differences between the HE sector and the archive sector can be significant, particularly in terms of motivation for collaborations. For example, the level of importance placed on scholarly research activities is very different. For individual academics there is often a strong personal motivation, with research being the primary purpose of their involvement in a project and linked to career advancement. Academic outputs such as conference papers, journal articles, and books are all highly valued by the HE sector, as is the ability to attract research funding. For archive practitioners research projects may be seen as ancillary to the core functions of the archive, though they bring benefits to the organisation, its collections and users, and staff. It is therefore important to understand the personal and organisational motivation for collaboration. Cultures can collide when the differences between team and individual motivations, and between the motivations of the two sectors, are not understood.

3.4 Planning

An activity stands a good chance of being successful if all parties have early input into its planning. Early planning sessions allow contributions to be made from the entire range of professional perspectives; they enable pitfalls to be spotted and ensure that expectations are well managed, and commitments clearly understood. It is often useful for one organisation to take the lead - for example whichever partner may be responsible for submitting a bid for funding to support the collaboration - and for everyone to have identified roles and nominated representatives.

The following template identifies things to think about at the planning stage that will help you identify common goals and minimise the impact of cultural differences; it brings together recommendations from both the archive and HE sectors. A copy of this template is in the Resources section of this guidance

Strategic drivers for collaboration	
Archive	HEI
Summary of the proposed collaborative activity:	
Desired outputs and outcomes	
Benefits to collaborators	
Archive	HEI
Target audience	
Archive	HEI
Task	**Lead person/ organisation**
Project manager (PM)	
Organising meetings and maintaining project records	
Budget holder/ responsible for financial reporting	
Contract management	
Employment/ management of staff	
Project sponsors (the decision makers in each organisation)	
Archive	HEI
Timelines/ key dates relevant to this project? (decision meetings)	
Archive	HEI

<table>
<tr><td>Skills required</td><td colspan="2">Resources required</td><td>Gaps</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Costs (including staff time and back office functions)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Archive</td><td colspan="2">HEI</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">In-kind Contributions</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Archive</td><td colspan="2">HEI</td></tr>
<tr><td>Insurance implications (policies checked)</td><td colspan="2">VAT status(checked)</td><td>Copyright and licensing (checked)</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2"></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Measuring impact: approach</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Disseminating results/ Publication strategy</td></tr>
<tr><td>Method (articles, conference papers, online hosting)</td><td colspan="2">Lead</td><td>Timeline</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Access to collections</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Reader registration requirements</td><td colspan="2">Document handling</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Booking appointments</td><td colspan="2">Security and preservation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2"></td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">University ethics board requirements for research (if relevant)</td></tr>
</table>

It is worth investing time at this stage to avoid misunderstandings later on. Record and share this information so that you have the same list and a common understanding of what is involved. Feedback from academics and archivists alike has stressed the importance of being particularly clear about research goals and the beneficiaries of research projects.

Try to ensure that you are speaking a common language, even for seemingly basic matters, for example:

- Explain sector specific acronyms
- Do you have a common understanding about what is a ‘large’ or ‘small’ amount of money?
- Does the contribution of half a day’s time for a meeting have the same implications for staff from the archive and the HEI?

Different organisations and different forms of collaboration will determine the degree of formality with which this information is recorded. Even the most informal of collaborations should be backed up by an audit trail. Other options for recording how the collaboration will work include recording minutes of meetings, establishing a Memorandum of Understanding, following a formal project management approach (e.g. PRINCE2), using a funding bid as the project documentation, or establishing a **partnership agreement**.

Case Study 4

Title: Bath Spa University Archive Project

Archives: Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre (W&SHC)

HEI: Bath Spa University

Source: Dr Alison Hems

Theme: Planning a new university archive with contributions from students and academics.

Disciplines: History and Geography, visual arts, performing arts, and heritage management.

This project involved setting up the University archive with the support of Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre (W&SHC). Led by the History Department, its initial aim was to safeguard the institutional memory of the University during a period of significant internal change. At the same time, the campus sits within a complex historic environment, and documentary evidence relating to its many pasts form a rich resource from which our students can draw, across a wide range of disciplines.

Preliminary work to create the archive was overseen by W&SHC and academic staff, through a series of small student projects. A student volunteer, who had already worked in the Wiltshire archive, managed these projects on a day-to-day basis.

Work on and in the archive has led to the creation of walking tours of the University estate (combining History, Heritage, and Geography); research for a History PhD on the early history of the University and its specific role in women's education, a series of small cataloguing, collections management and exhibition projects for Undergraduate students, and a performance project with our Drama students, set on campus and drawing from the archive.

The University Archive is now formally recognised as one of our teaching resources and there is part-time professional archive assistant in post.

This is just one of a number of such collaborations with W&SHC over recent years.

- The History Centre has provided a range of placement opportunities for our MA Heritage Management students

- The History Centre runs orientation and demystification sessions for our undergraduate students, who have used the archive for creative projects, in History and in other disciplines
- The University is a frequent contributor to W&SHC conferences (e.g. Artists in the Archive in 2013)
- The partnership has led to further collaborations with artists and other archives (e.g. Animating the Archive with Salisbury Cathedral Archive in 2017).