



	A YEAR IN ARCHIVES			
			2019	
THE				
NATIONAL				
ARCHIVES				



TRUST

Democracy and society are strengthened by scrutiny of the archival record, holding institutions and individuals to account



“...it’s not just paper. You see, to them it’s just paper, words on paper, but to the person who’s reading it, who it’s about, it’s everything. It’s their life.”

Susan, Care Leaver

There are currently over 75,000 children and young people in care in England, and hundreds of thousands of practitioners involved in creating and maintaining social care records on their behalf. **The MIRRA (Memory, Identity, Rights in Records, Access) project**, led by University College London and funded by the AHRC, has been exploring how child social care records have been created, kept and used, to better understand the impact these records (or lack thereof) have on care leavers over the course of their lives. In partnership with the Care Leavers’ Association, the project has engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including regulators, social work practitioners, information professionals, researchers and – most importantly – care leavers themselves, who have been part of the research design team. The research collected interview and focus group data from nearly 100 care leavers, social workers and other practitioners.

The research findings highlight the importance of records to care leavers, helping them to better understand and come to terms with

their pasts and how they came to be in care. But they also point to the frequent failure of recordkeeping practices to capture the voices of the children and young people themselves, and the barriers many care leavers encounter in finding and accessing their records.

The MIRRA project calls for a shift towards more caring and co-created recordkeeping practices to address the balance of power and build trust. The project has published three key recommendations: that records should be co-created and include the voice of each child themselves; that best practice guidance for the creation and management of records be established; and that new standards for access to records for all care-experienced people be developed.

Project outputs to date have included a short film (<https://bit.ly/2PsaB87>), record keeping guidelines, a British Association of Social Workers best-practice guide and a new website (in collaboration with Family Action) to help care leavers access their records.

ENRICHMENT

Archives enhance and enrich our society intellectually, culturally and economically

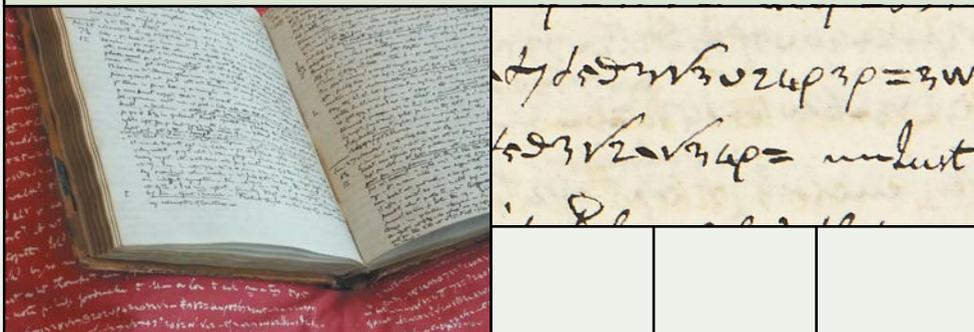
West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS) was able to capitalise on the soaring interest in the diaries of Anne Lister after the airing of BBC/HBO biographical drama 'Gentleman Jack'. As a result of the series' popularity, WYAS has seen a huge spike in enquiries and visitors to its service, including many LGBTQ+ groups and individuals, many of whom feel a real personal link with Anne's story of hidden sexuality. Talks and events about the collection have been a sell-out, even attracting international visitors embarking upon Anne Lister pilgrimages.

WYAS has long recognised the importance of the diaries of the 'first modern lesbian'. They were inscribed in the UNESCO UK Memory of the World Register in 2011, which acknowledged their significance as an important resource for studies in gender, sexuality and women's history, as well as providing a wealth of information about

politics, business, religion, education, science, travel, local and national events, medicine and health. The service has digitised the diaries and made them available on the WYAS online catalogue, with the generous support of Sally Wainwright, the screenwriter who adapted Anne's story for the screen. WYAS has, in addition, begun a project inviting volunteers to help with the transcription of the five million words that constitute Anne's diaries. This ambitious project is made more challenging by the fact that some of the entries are written in Anne's own coded 'crypt-hand'. This crowdsourced volunteering project currently has over 50 participants, enabling the service to offer a broader volunteering programme than is usually viable. Through these projects, the service hopes to make the diaries of this remarkable woman as accessible and impactful as possible.

"It was truly a wonderful experience watching her tumultuous, brilliant, profane associations spill out onto the page."

Transcription volunteer



OPENNESS

Archives cultivate an open approach to knowledge and are accessible to all



“Honouring the selfless contribution of our wartime staff may have been our starting point but one of the project outcomes has been an incredible audio showcase of the diverse voices that make up TfL’s workforce in 2019.”

Melissa McGreechan, Assistant Archivist, TfL Corporate Archives

Transport for London (TfL) Corporate Archives

has been working with staff members from across the organisation on a project to turn its hundreds of historic First World War letters into audio recordings. The letters, sent by Underground, bus, and tram staff to the staff magazine, T.O.T. (Train, Omnibus, Tram), describe their experiences fighting overseas, their memories of home, and their hopes for the future. By creating audio versions of the letters, sharing these recordings online and adding them to the permanent collections of the Corporate Archives, these stories are being made available to a much wider audience, including people with visual impairments. With support from TfL’s staff disability network, the project is the first part of an ongoing initiative to increase access to the organisation’s collections for disabled audiences, recognising the huge interest in these collections and their research potential.

At the heart of the project are the more than 160 volunteer readers, all current TfL staff members, whose voices have brought the letters to life and into the present day. The volunteers are representative of the diversity of today’s TfL workforce in terms of gender, race, nationality, and background. The letters reveal many connections between the past and today, but also help to show how far TfL has come as a modern, inclusive organisation. The project has raised the profile of the archives across the business, reaching new audiences inside and out, including former members of staff, their families, and local schools, as well as people of all ages with visual impairments.

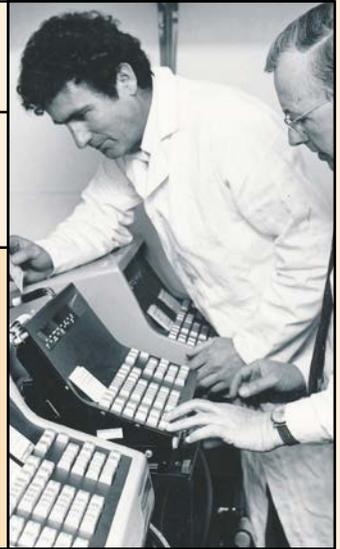
A second phase of the project will focus on the letters from the Second World War, again working with volunteers to bring the stories of former staff to life. The project is due to finish in August 2020, the year of TfL’s 20th anniversary, with the online launch of the recordings and a selection of accompanying images.

DIGITAL

Creating and sustaining archives in the digital age

“Working on the project has changed attitudes across the Trust on how we should approach access to digital records and their long term preservation.”

Graeme Edwards, Archivist, SWHT



South West Heritage Trust has developed new integrated collections management and digital preservation systems to transform the way it cares for digital archives. The Trust is an independent charity delivering a range of heritage services in South West England. It includes archive services for Somerset and Devon, at centres in Taunton, Exeter and Barnstaple.

The Trust originally approached the digital records challenge as two separate projects. First, they worked with Metadatis to develop a more flexible and up-to-date collections management database, bringing together a range of existing resources such as accession and catalogue databases, and a spreadsheet recording collection loans and productions. A separate project to conduct a full audit of digital records across the Trust and transfer these onto an open-source digital preservation system, managed by Arkivum, was also underway. The Trust recognised that these two systems could be integrated, creating a seamless way to look after and provide access to digital collections.

While both services had previously used a proprietary software solution combined with in-house datasets for accessioning and cataloguing, the projects identified variations in the structure and quality of this data. Tidying this took longer than expected but has provided the Trust with confidence that catalogues now reach a consistently high standard. Participation in both projects by Trust staff allowed them to pool their existing knowledge while learning about the new systems as the project developed, increasing skills and confidence across services and teams. The retrospective digital accessions audit across the Trust has enabled collections to be prioritised for inclusion in the new system. Workflows for processing digital material have greatly improved and updated guidelines for potential depositors have been created.

The integrated systems can be updated instantaneously, providing users with fully up-to-date catalogue information. The Trust can also quickly produce statistics to demonstrate collections use and access. The new systems have helped to ensure that collections are better managed than ever before.

RESILIENCE

Evaluating different service delivery models for archives and fostering innovative approaches

Among the collections at **Derbyshire Record Office** are a number of mementos gathered in the mid-nineteenth century by Lady Jane Franklin, second wife of Sir John Franklin, the British Royal Navy officer and Arctic explorer. Until very recently, these objects were kept together loosely in a single box. The service decided that the collection was a prime candidate for a crowdfunding project, hoping to raise enough to purchase the appropriate storage boxes to keep the objects safe and easier to display and access.

Over the course of her life, Lady Jane Franklin created a 'museum' in her home, a display of treasured keepsakes serving as a reminder of her adventurous travels around the world, many of which were alongside Sir John during their 19 years of marriage. The resulting mementos from their shared life have provided a fascinating box of objects, including a small doll believed to have once belonged to an Aboriginal girl that the Franklins adopted whilst in Tasmania, pieces of mummy cloth

from Thebes, drawings from an Inuit guide enlisted in an attempt to recover the lost voyage, and a palm leaf manuscript from Madras.

Realising that the majority of people will not be able to view these items in person, the service has made information about these objects available on their blog. As well as being repackaged, each item has been professionally photographed and the images are showcased in an online exhibition on Google Arts and Culture.

Having exceeded their crowdfunding target of £1,000 in just 35 days, the service hopes to use this model to fund more preservation projects. Although it raised a relatively modest amount, this trial project demonstrated the success of a crowdfunding approach and provided valuable skills and experience for tackling larger projects in the future.



“Lady Jane’s Museum gave us the perfect opportunity to test a new fundraising model. Planning and running the crowdfunding also helped us develop invaluable skills in social media and profile raising.”

Sarah Chubb, Archives and Local Studies Manager,
Derbyshire Record Office

IMPACT

Ensuring the full value of archives is recognised

De Montfort University (DMU) has launched the **Stephen Lawrence Research Centre**, inspired by the archive collection of their Chancellor, Baroness Doreen Lawrence. The centre will be a hub for innovative and interdisciplinary research, with target areas for research including the histories and cultures of BAME communities in the UK, denials of justice, and the concept and practice of institutional racism. At the heart of the centre is a permanent exhibition, shaped from items in the Lawrence family collection and documenting the family's fight for justice following the murder of Stephen Lawrence in south east London in 1993.

Prominently located on the DMU campus, the centre has already become a popular and inclusive meeting space for students and staff as well as a variety of local audiences. Students feel empowered by the space and it is used to host writing clubs, student drop-in sessions, and a recent meeting of the Radical Pedagogies network. DMU currently has a 50% intake of students from BAME communities, and the centre serves as a valued component in supporting Freedom to Achieve and DMUAspire, two projects aimed at closing the BAME attainment gap for existing students and encouraging local teens to recognise that they could attend university.

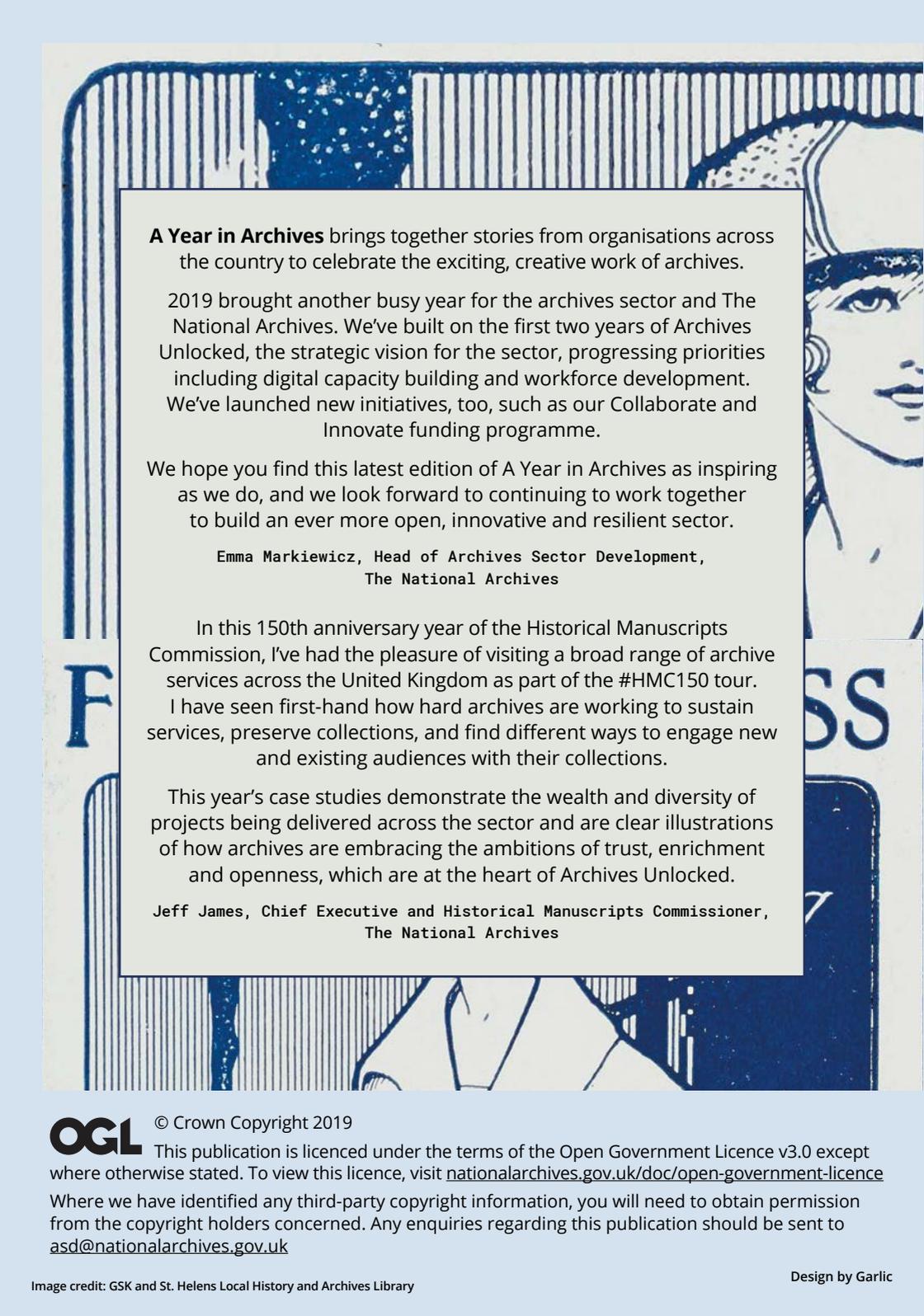
Engagement with local schools has been just one of the elements that the centre has undertaken so far. A 'Stephen Lawrence Day' event held in April 2019 brought students from four local schools to spend the day on campus, featuring a workshop on material in the archive such as Stephen's schoolbooks and a range of family photographs. They were prompted to think about what they might put in an archive to represent themselves.

The exhibition has also proved a valuable tool in engaging and building trust with other local community groups, as the thoughtful way in which the documents have been displayed and captioned has demonstrated how the archives of a person of colour have been valued and respected.



“Stephen’s schoolbooks, in particular, really resonated with the school groups. They were familiar, with their exercises and red ticks, and were something the pupils could really relate to.”

Katharine Short, Archivist and Special Collections Team Manager,
De Montfort University



A Year in Archives brings together stories from organisations across the country to celebrate the exciting, creative work of archives.

2019 brought another busy year for the archives sector and The National Archives. We've built on the first two years of Archives Unlocked, the strategic vision for the sector, progressing priorities including digital capacity building and workforce development. We've launched new initiatives, too, such as our Collaborate and Innovate funding programme.

We hope you find this latest edition of A Year in Archives as inspiring as we do, and we look forward to continuing to work together to build an ever more open, innovative and resilient sector.

**Emma Markiewicz, Head of Archives Sector Development,
The National Archives**

In this 150th anniversary year of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, I've had the pleasure of visiting a broad range of archive services across the United Kingdom as part of the #HMC150 tour. I have seen first-hand how hard archives are working to sustain services, preserve collections, and find different ways to engage new and existing audiences with their collections.

This year's case studies demonstrate the wealth and diversity of projects being delivered across the sector and are clear illustrations of how archives are embracing the ambitions of trust, enrichment and openness, which are at the heart of Archives Unlocked.

**Jeff James, Chief Executive and Historical Manuscripts Commissioner,
The National Archives**



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