

Libraries and Archives Canada Wallot-Sylvestre Seminar

25 September 2018

Archives Matter

- *[Archives Inspire video played]*¹

Introduction

- Thank you, it's a great pleasure to be here.
- I hope you will agree with the conclusion of the video you've just seen. Archives across the globe are **facing a paradigm shift**. And while it's an interesting and exciting time to be a part of it, we all recognise the need to work at pace to address the challenges and to embrace the opportunities on the horizon.
- So today, I'd like to talk about how The UK National Archives is **collaborating with archives and other institutions** in the UK and beyond, to meet this paradigm shift.

¹ nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/our-role/plans-policies-performance-and-projects/our-plans/archives-inspire/

- I'll talk about our ambitious, audience-focussed **four-year strategic plan**, *Archives Inspire* that sets out to *change the way people think about archives*.
- I'll talk about how the UK archive sector has **created its own robust and innovative strategic vision**.
- I'll then share how we are working to embrace the challenges and opportunities digital technologies present, and **our strategy to meet these**. I will argue that it is only by collaborating and working in partnership that we'll address these challenges. Finding pioneering solutions to problems like digital preservation is **an international team sport**.
- Finally, I'll talk about how *Archives Inspire* broke with our past strategies, how it articulates what archives are *for* rather than what they do – and to that end, why archives across the globe can deliver so much more than their public task and, in doing so, fulfil their potential as **a public good**.

Archives Inspire

- Imagine a world without archives. Without records, people could not prove where and when they were born, or who owns the property they live in. They could not trace their ancestry, explore their collective and individual identities, or hold government and organisations to account.
- The **impact of archives is felt right across society**, underpinning academic research, fuelling the digital economy and inspiring innovation and creativity.
- In short: **archives matter!**
- Over the last few years, the UK public has witnessed a rise in high-profile inquiries, and public appreciation of the importance of archives has never been higher. However, this comes with increased expectations about ease of access, and the ability to find *everything* at the click of a mouse.
- Archives are at a cross-roads. They **face unprecedented opportunities**, especially the ones offered by digital technology. But archives also need to undergo fundamental transformation if they are to capitalize on these opportunities.

- In April 2015, the UK National Archives launched ***Archives Inspire***, our ambitious, audience-focused, four-year strategy. It was a deliberate departure from our previous business plan, *For the Record, For Good*, which was largely an articulation of our public task to *collect, preserve and provide access* to public records.
- *Archives Inspire* speaks to the public good we deliver, **changing the way people think about archives** – by articulating what archives are *for*. It looks outwards, arguing that we need to think and organise ourselves differently, if we are to meet the needs of our four core audiences – government, the public, academia and the archive sector.
- From the outset, *Archives Inspire* explicitly identified **digital as the single biggest challenge** facing us all. Implicitly, it identified the need for greater collaboration and partnership across the UK and globally.
- *Archives Inspire* recognised the need to work together with the archive sector and its stakeholders to make the case for archives as a vital part of a nation’s heritage. In the UK, *Archives Inspire* was a catalyst for the archive sector to create its own strategic vision – *Archives Unlocked*.

Archives Unlocked

- *Archives Unlocked* is the UK government's strategic vision for archives. It was launched by the then Minister for Digital and Culture in March 2017.
- The development of the vision was led by the UK National Archives. However, it was very much the sector's own vision, developed through an extensive process of co-creation with the sector and with key partners.
- The scale of the challenges facing archives can be overwhelming, so the vision needed to present an inspiring message for the future. It had to be practical and grounded to help guide archives through the change. It also needed to be something that **resonated with the entire archive sector**, while providing a compelling message for decision makers and funders.
- The UK benefits from an extensive and distributed archival collection, and from sound professional practice that has evolved over the last century. The UK National Archives is proud to lead and work with over 2,500 archives across the country.

But the UK's archives are funded by – and belong to – a wide range of organisations including: local authorities, universities, businesses; charities, religious bodies and private individuals.

- **Each archive is therefore different**, and the leadership approach to the sector needs to reflect this diversity. Together, the sector is an *ecosystem* of collections that intersect to form the rich tapestry that is the nation's documentary heritage.

This is underpinned by a profession that is well-networked to support researchers to connect and analyse records from many different sources.

- The breadth and diversity of this archival infrastructure is a great strength, as it means archives are not dependent on one source of funding – and the ecosystem can evolve and adapt as funding climates change.
- However, such diversity also presents challenges when creating overarching strategies that are meaningful to such a broad constituency.

- Furthermore, agendas can change quickly. So, the new vision needed to focus on the ***fundamental values that archives bring to society***. This meant creating a vision that would remain inspiring over time – while providing both sustainability, and the impetus for sector transformation.
- The UK National Archives embarked on a year-long process of co-creation to develop the vision. From the outset, this was far more than just a consultation. The intention was to start with a blank sheet, **and for us to lead and work with the archive sector and stakeholders** to generate a vision that everyone felt they owned.
- It had to be **a real tool for change** – not a glossy brochure that sat forgotten on a shelf. The co-creation work began with a series of roundtable events throughout the country, attended by representatives from across the archive sector and beyond.
- The emerging vision was then tested through an open survey, and explored in a series of targeted interviews. We coordinated expert panels to draw in knowledge from organisations that sat within and around the archive sector, including digital bodies.

- To support this, we pulled together a reference group of thought leaders, innovators and sector leads, who critically assessed the emerging vision in terms of **ambition and deliverability**.
- And from this wide-ranging co-creation process, a coherent message emerged about the role of archives. This was then distilled into three core values – (i) archives will strengthen society through the **trust** they inspire, (ii) the **enrichment** they offer, and (iii) their **openness** to all.
- Archives are homes for our collective memory. Records give us new and often very personal perspectives on what we thought we knew about the past. They are vital resources that underpin research and inspire creativity. They connect us to our past, inform our present, and illuminate our future. Most crucially, they allow society to **hold those who held power – in government and elsewhere – to account**.
- In 1989, ninety-six people tragically lost their lives owing to fateful overcrowding in a football stadium in Sheffield, in the North East of England. The Independent Police Complaints Commission, the body then responsible for overseeing complaints against police forces in England and Wales, conducted an investigation into this tragedy, which became known as the ‘Hillsborough disaster’.

- The investigation provided a powerful example of **trust**, illustrating the vital role archives played in providing information and evidence to underpin the democratic process.
- The integrity of such archival processes, and the safe custody of records like these, **reassure** the public that archives can be relied on to support accountability.
- The vision used further case studies, including the archive of the children's charity Barnardo's, the archive of the John Lewis Partnership – one of the UK's most prominent retailers – and the digital mapping project for the West of England, 'Know Your Place'. These helped bring to life – in practical and inspiring ways – how archives are not just inspiring trust, but are also **enriching people's lives**, and **opening themselves up** to innovative use, and re-use.
- These practical case studies were complemented by think-pieces from contributors within and beyond the archive sector, challenging existing norms and provoking new ideas for the future.
- Finally, the co-creation process explored the key development challenges facing the archive sector, to enable the creation of a **clear action plan to underpin the vision**.

- This action plan was a vital part of building confidence in the vision, and in securing commitment from the wide range of delivery partners from across sectors. It was vital that the UK National Archives **didn't deliver the action plan in isolation.**
- Three specific areas for development were identified within the action plan: (i) to **build digital capacity**, (ii) **engineer resilience** and (iii) **demonstrate impact.** The plan includes a wide range of initiatives under each area, including pilot programmes and innovation testing, targeted grants programmes, training programmes, guidance and advice.

Archives Revealed

- The focus for the first year has been on developing coherent and multi-layered strategies for **workforce development** and **digital capacity building.**
- The action plan is supported by over 1.5 million pounds² of funding, including 825,000 pounds³ under *Archives Revealed*, a partnership programme between us, and the heritage grant-giving body, The Pilgrim Trust – with additional financial support from the Wolfson Foundation.

² Approximately over 2,561,384.32 Canadian dollars

³ Approximately 1,408,949.96 Canadian dollars

- For 2017-18, *Archives Revealed* also welcomed an additional 50,000 pounds⁴ of funding from the Foyle Foundation. It is the only funding stream available in the UK dedicated to **cataloguing and unlocking archival content**.
- From the Heritage Lottery Fund – the body in the UK which distributes lottery funding to heritage projects – a further 749,000 pounds⁵ was secured to help expand digital expertise across the archive sector.
- The funding for this ‘Bridging the Digital Gap’ initiative was awarded as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund’s ‘Skills for the Future’ programme to fund 24 digital trainees. It aims to help drive forward the **digital archive skills** that are essential to the survival and promotion of the nation’s digital heritage.
- ‘Bridging the Digital Gap’ is supported by the Archives and Records Association – the professional body for archivists and records managers in the UK and the Republic of Ireland – and by the Digital Preservation Coalition.

⁴ Approximately 85,435.64 Canadian dollars

⁵ Approximately 1,274,739.29 Canadian dollars

The digital challenge

- So, *Archives Unlocked* frames the major challenges facing the archive sector. Of those challenges, the **most pressing and the most urgent is the challenge of digital.**
- The shift to digital is transforming **every aspect of the archival landscape** – be it appraisal and selection, preservation, access, presentation or use.
- **Each and every archival function** is in the process of being profoundly changed. Where yesterday's records were tangible, those of today and tomorrow are intangible. The very nature of what a record is has changed – from a world of letters, memos and minutes, to email, data and computer code. The ones and zeros **are the record.**
- Archives need to develop new capacity and capabilities to ensure that digital records can continue to be kept and used. It was therefore not surprising that, of the three major themes to emerge from *Archives Unlocked*, **digital capacity was at the forefront.**

- In the area of digital, the following actions were identified:
 - *Scope* a programme to build digital capacity for the sector, to address digital preservation, discoverability and digitisation;
 - *Foster* expertise and shared solutions through a learning set of archivists. This involves local and regional digital preservation projects;
 - *Increase* access to archives through innovation in online catalogues, data collection, analysis and re-use;
 - *Build* partnerships with digital and IT leaders to establish shared standards and models of good practice;
 - *And, develop* the archive service accreditation scheme, to assess and support improved management of digital collections.

- Since the vision was launched, we have worked hard to deliver initiatives to support this digital programme. An *Archives Unlocked* board has been established, comprising representatives not only from archives, but from the **wider digital, professional and cultural sectors**, to take forward the vision. Over the course of the rest of this year and 2019, a coherent strategy for digital capacity will also be developed, in conjunction with the board.

- In the meantime, we have already supported some specific initiatives. For example:
 - *Research* in Dorset, in the south-west England, into digital audience expectations. This will be used as a template for other archives;

 - *Funding* and support for a number of pilot projects in digital preservation;

 - and, the *delivery* of digitisation seminars to help address sector need – delivered in collaboration with the arts organization, Tate; and the not-for-profit digital services and solutions body, Jisc.

- In addition, the foundations have been laid for a number of broader pieces of work. These include kick-starting the facilitation of a Digital Action Learning Set, which will share learning through a series of events to join up knowledge and approaches. It also includes commissioning an audit of sector digital skills to inform a training and development programme.
- *Archives Unlocked* and the challenges it aims to address are of relevance to other sectors too. So, we have established a Memorandum of Understanding with Jisc, developed our current Memorandum with Research Libraries UK and, we continue to work on a range of issues with the Digital Preservation Coalition.

Digital strategy⁶

- The digital capacity strand of *Archives Unlocked* does not, however, sit in isolation from the rest of the UK National Archives. It is closely connected to our **digital strategy**, which was launched in the same month as *Archives Unlocked*.
- The digital strategy's focus on the areas of preservation, context, presentation, and enabling use, directly maps onto the *Archives Unlocked* ambitions of trust, enrichment and openness.

⁶ nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/our-role/plans-policies-performance-and-projects/our-plans/digital-strategy/

- Trust in the digital archive can only be achieved if users can be assured of the **provenance and authenticity of the records** contained in it. Furthermore, it can only enrich and be open if people can use it and find what they need.

- Our digital strategy sets out a radical new departure in thinking. It recognises that many principles in archival theory are fundamentally challenged, and identifies some of the practices that **are holding us back in the digital era**. It maps out some of the completely new capabilities that we need.

- The strategy therefore sets out ambitious plans to meet the challenges presented by digital records by:
 - *creating* the ‘disruptive’ digital archive;

 - *extending* our reach and engaging new audiences using the web;

 - *transforming* how the physical archive is accessed and used;

 - *developing* digital capability, skills and culture;

- and, *forging* partnerships with other archives progressing digital transformation.
- This searching focus on the challenge of digital ensures that we can continue to provide leadership and support to the wider archive sector, as the outputs of this high-level work filter down into common practice.
- However, in order to achieve the paradigm shift and to find solutions to the digital challenges and opportunities facing archives, the sector also needs to **invest in digital skills**, and undertake digital research.
- That's why, alongside the Heritage Lottery Funded programme, 'Bridging the Digital Gap', we are also investing directly in digital skills development. In 2017, five software developer apprentices from Ada, the National College of Digital Skills, started at the UK National Archives on a two-year apprenticeship as part of their foundation degree in Digital Innovation.
- Two years ago, we also commissioned work on digital research challenges, which was then subsequently taken forward to form a Digital Research Roadmap, since wrapped into our broader Research strategy.

- Our Head of Research has now developed research themes, priorities⁷ and questions so funding can be targeted. Research partnerships have been developed to test approaches that will address some of the key problems raised by the shift to digital.
- Staff at the UK National Archives are already working on projects to explore innovative solutions. For example, the **Archangel project**, in partnership with the University of Surrey, is investigating whether distributed-ledger technology could provide a new approach to digital authenticity.
- Meanwhile, our recent research project, **Traces through time**, links methodologies to mathematical certainty measures, to suggest potential matches for archival search queries. This offers researchers results they might otherwise have missed.
- It is through research and partnerships such as these that the wider information sector, both nationally and internationally, **will move forward**.

⁷ nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/our-research-and-academic-collaboration/our-research-and-people/our-research-priorities/

Archives Inspire the world

- Indeed, **collaboration is the golden thread** that links the UK government's vision for the sector, *Archives Unlocked* with our organisational strategy, *Archives Inspire and* our international strategy, *Archives Inspire the world*⁸.
- *Archives Inspire the world* aims to **leverage international collaboration** to build a future for archives on a truly global scale.
- It's an **international calling card** – encouraging partners from around the world to work together, to drive the development of an exciting future for archives. By working in partnership with other government bodies, archives, cultural and heritage organisations, academic institutions and businesses, we aim to help champion:

⁸ nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/our-role/plans-policies-performance-and-projects/our-plans/archives-inspire-the-world/

- *Collections* - by promoting their value and enabling greater access;
 - *Digital* - by pioneering approaches for digital preservation;
 - *Commercial* - by generating income through appropriate and profitable activity;
 - *Research* - by developing innovative resources and networks to share knowledge and expertise;
 - and, *Standards* - by supporting policy development, standard setting and access to legislation.
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- Fortunately, archivists are born collaborators, and there should be no geographical borders to collaboration. The challenges and opportunities facing the UK archive sector are **shared by archives around the world**. This is especially true of digital access and preservation.
 - As I said earlier, **digital preservation is an international team sport** but, like any sport, it requires determination, effort, and focus to achieve results, not just a predilection for collaboration.

- Archivists are fortunate to work in a sector that finds itself at a 'once-in-a-lifetime' watershed moment. They have the commitment and the appetite, if not yet all of the skills, to enable transformational change.
- As I said earlier, we are proud to be the leadership body for the UK archive sector, and privileged to be the custodian of some of the nation's most iconic documents dating back more than 1,000 years. Archives present a uniquely personal experience within the cultural sector, and the sector must continue to engage audiences in new and exciting ways.
- However, the reality is that **digital has also transformed** the way that researchers and archivists think about records, the way that archives look after them, and the way that access is provided to them.
- But this isn't about a *shift* from paper to digital. It is fundamentally about preserving and rejoicing in the nation's physical documentary heritage, while also exploiting the endless virtual opportunities presented by digital technology.

- Digital has transformed access to that shared content, **opening up** collections and transforming people's lives wherever they live, irrespective of where the record resides.
- For the last 12-months, we've been working with volunteers from the Friends of the UK National Archives on an ambitious project to **open up** prisoner-of-war collections. This involves almost 200,000 records of allied servicemen captured in German-occupied territory in the Second World War. Not just British prisoners of war, but individuals from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.
- While at its heart a traditional cataloguing initiative, the project blog has attracted comments from across the globe, connecting generations, and enhancing the **collective understanding of who we are, where we came from, and where we are going.**
- The discoverability of, understanding of, and access to collections across the world is being enhanced through partnership working. In 2017, we started a collaboration with the National Archives of the United Arab Emirates to digitise and make available records relating to the UAE and other Gulf States. The **Arabian Gulf Digital Archive** combines the skills and knowledge of both institutions to make available 500,000 images from our holdings.

- In 2018, we also began a **ground-breaking 20-year research collaboration** with the University of Oldenburg – uncovering hundreds of thousands of letters and papers confiscated from ships captured by the British, between 1652 and 1815. The ‘Prize Papers’ project, as it’s known, is funded by the German Academy Programme, and is of unprecedented scale for a humanities research project.
- To capitalise on collaborative opportunities like these requires ambition and bold leadership not just at the local and national level but also globally.
- The Forum of National Archivists, or FAN is a section of the International Council on Archives. It is a body of national archivists responsible for developing high-level strategic responses to the contemporary challenges of managing archives.
- Like the UK, FAN has identified **digital as its key strategic priority**. It is now in the process of sharing best practice and digital resources while encouraging new approaches that **can inform and benefit national, regional and local practices**.

- Recently FAN also recently delivered an international digital symposium that took place at the UK National Archives, exploring the use of **artificial intelligence** and machine learning in archives.

Widening the public value of archives

- I hope that what I've talked about so far today has demonstrated why archives truly matter. How they can make an impact across societies; how they inform a broad sweep of research disciplines; how they enable pioneering solutions in digital preservation, and how they inform digital economies.
- Yet, there is no getting away from the fact that **archives need to be used to be useful**. Those of us that work in archives may well recognise or own value and worth. But, against rapidly changing societal and economic contexts, and rapidly evolving digital technologies, the future for archives across the world is **as uncertain as it is exciting!**

- I mentioned earlier that *Archives Inspire* set out to illustrate what archives are for, rather than what they do. There are things that we **have to do**, but there are also things that we **choose to do**.
Alongside our core purpose or task – preserving records and providing access to our diverse collections – there are also the things we do that add to our value, to the audiences we serve.

- In considering how an archive might widen its **public value**, realising more benefits above and beyond its core purpose, we could ask ourselves a few key questions:
 - Why are things the way they are?

 - How might things be different for archives for the future?

 - What does all of this mean for fulfilling our value as an archive, and in our case, as a public institution?

- We have come a long way since we started out on our *Archives Inspire* journey, but there are deeper strategic questions ahead. In our case, *Archives Inspire* will come to completion in April 2019, so it presents a timely moment to ask the question – What's next?
What more of our potential might we realise?

- It might help to frame this by way of a story. At their best, **archives are storytellers, after all.**
- At the UK National Archives, we have a wonderful education service. We believe it's vital to bring children into direct contact with the primary sources we hold.
- Our Head of Education could tell this story perhaps better than me, but in essence, here's how it goes. In every school in the UK, five and six year olds learn about the Great Fire of London in 1666. Indeed, speak to a six year old and you will find that they know a lot about the Fire. They know where and when it started, and how much of the city burned. They know that the fire started in Pudding Lane.
- When groups of five and six year olds come to visit us at Kew, there is, therefore, little to be gained from teaching them about the Great Fire of London – they know it all already! Instead, we teach them about the importance of evidence, by way of a **momentary existential crisis.**
- We ask the children to tell us what they know about the Fire. We compile the whole story from these young minds and from what they know. And then we ask them, **how do they know?**

- The typical answers that come back are usually ‘my teacher or my mum told me’, and we gently point out that, old as their teacher may be, they weren’t alive in 1666. It is then that you see the thought dawning on the children. *How do we know? In fact, how do we know anything? How do all of these people telling us all these things know anything?*
- At this precise moment, the moment of crisis and doubt, we **introduce them to the record.**
- *[See slide 8 of the Archives Matter PowerPoint presentation].*
On the image on the right, you can see the name Thomas Farriner, Baker who owned one oven on Pudding Lane. It is amazing to see a child respond to seeing this document. *This* is how we know; **we know because of the record.** It’s not just what we’ve been taught – it is what the evidence leads us to understand.
- Hopefully, those children will grow up and still work with, and enjoy, and **experience the joy of discovery that is the archive,** and remember the importance of evidence.
- This joy of discovery is a huge part of what it means to experience an archive.

But – it's also interesting to think about what the joy of discovery will be for **records that are in a very different form, in the digital age**. Aided by advanced technologies, what new discoveries might we be able to unearth from our extraordinary collections?

- Thinking about the future, it's today's children who will perhaps most benefit from our work – to identify, capture and preserve the current record of government, as prospective users of the archive in 20 or 30 years' time.
- **The right information, in the right place, has the power to change lives.** The rise of the World Wide Web has given wonderful opportunities to archives. It has enabled us to reach and engage new audiences. By making our catalogues available online, people who never knew that an answer to their question might be found in an archive, can find us in a click from a Google search. With digitised content, learning resources and research guides – **the archive is in people's hands in a way that was unimaginable 20 to 30 years ago.**
- The economics of content in the information age also pose new questions. At the UK National Archives, we've pioneered the commercial digitisation of our collection; and it has worked brilliantly to widen access. But, it also means people pay for the content they

use when accessing the archive from home. We work hard to avoid it, but in charging, there is a risk that some people might be excluded. But without charging, hundreds of millions of records would never have been digitised in the first place.

- What is the right thing to do for an archive in this scenario? What are the right sets of decisions? Especially when funding constraints exist, and archives need to turn to additional sources of funding to open up their collections?
- It's a tricky issue. We are long time advocates of the benefits of open data. But, **we are also a cultural and heritage institution** looking to maximise our public value with rich content online – more than we can afford to produce with taxpayer funding alone – and through the power of physical records, by drawing people into the archive through inspiring events and activities.
- So, how do we go about maximising our public value? How does this relate to our public task? Where best to deploy our taxpayer funding, and how do we take advantage of commercial opportunities in the service of our strategy?

- Our public value is so much bigger **than the sum total of the things we have to do**, to meet our legal obligations. *Archives Inspire* speaks to a sense of a wider public value – and potential value beyond that. As I mentioned earlier, the strategy sets out how an archive is hugely useful for many different people, for many different purposes, and that we should act to help realise more of our potential.
- So, we are rightly focussed on the things the law says we must do, on our public task. But, we are also keenly aware of the things we might choose to do, and **know what we are capable of doing** as an archive, such as educating children.
- When we look into the future, underlining all of this is a wider sense of the potential value of archives – and **this potential is enormous.**
- We are all having to change the ways in which we work, and how we engage with the world because funding is scarce. Funding constraints concentrate the mind, but we have also known for decades that **we are more than the common expectations people hold.**

- We have already found new ways for people to access our collections, such as making more records available online. And, this wider sense of public value already exists at the heart of *Archives Inspire* – a **determination to realise more of our potential**, coupled to the belief that **archives matter** – for our societies and our economies.
- In economic terms then, the archive is part **Public Good** and part **Merit Good**.
- Some of what we do is a **pure public good**. We offer value that is both non-excludable and non-rivalrous:
 - Having **non-excludable** value means that archives can be considered in the same way as the criminal justice system. Everyone benefits from the system, and if it is funded, you cannot exclude anyone from receiving the benefits.
 - **An archive is also non-rivalrous**. Its value doesn't get diminished through its use.

- We are also an economic **public good** in at least two respects:
 - **Preservation** - by keeping records in the present we make it possible for people in the future to benefit from the archive.
 - **Intellectual control** - by cataloguing our collections, we enable people to reference the records we hold. People can make claims based on records held in the archive, and point to a source.
- But the archive is also a **Merit Good**. There are things that we do that are simply beneficial for society. For instance, at the UK National Archives, we provide free access to our reading rooms, and, as I mentioned before, we provide ways for children to experience original evidence that complements their state education.
- Understanding all of this helps us be clear about how we deploy the funding we receive from Her Majesty's Treasury. This is important because in real terms, our government funding is getting smaller.

- We could just concentrate on delivering our core public task, be more efficient, and do things for less. But, if we stuck to that world view, we'd cease to realise the **value of the archive beyond what the law requires us to do**. The potential public value of the archive would go unmet.
- *Archives Inspire* says we will widen the public value of the archive. When we generate commercial income, for example, with projects such as the Arabian Gulf Digital Archive, it is to fund our wider public value.
- This is one of the reasons why we are looking to expand our revenue base by setting up a charitable arm, The National Archives' Trust.
- This is really important when it comes to looking at, for instance, what we do with our website and charging. At present, we are also exploring introducing a subscription offer on our website – partly to raise money, but mainly to realise **more of our value** by having a more effective system for charging. This could grow the numbers of people that are using our collection, and **widen the amount of use they are making of it**.

- It's a difficult concept, but finding ways in which we can do this online is a huge opportunity for us and our audiences.
- So, what are the yardsticks for thinking about this? What is our public task? What has the taxpayer paid for? Where is the market demand? Is this something only we can do, or something other people can do? What should be free? What are our constraints? Can we identify the sweet spots – where we both widen our public value and generate income – as we have done with commercial digitisation?
- These are quite a complex set of things to think through, and being clear about the economics – the archive as a public good; the archive as a merit good – helps.
- It comes down to a **determination to maximise the public value of the archive**. That we have so much more to offer than our statutory obligations. In essence, it means thinking hard about the value we can provide for the children of today, and for them as the future researchers of archives that we hope they will be in 20 or 30 years.

Conclusion

- This is a truly exciting time for archives. For those who care for them and for those who use them. The records, both physical and digital, held in archives around the UK and across the world can change people's lives.
- There is **no doubt in our minds that archives matter**. The challenge for archivists is to ensure that the records of the past and the future not only survive, but thrive.
- By working in partnership, locally, national and globally as part of a broader archive ecology, archives can ensure that **more and more people are connected and inspired** by the records they look after.
- Our audiences are mostly aware of our most popular story – that we protect the records about the heritage of our nations. But **our public value is so much wider** than what people know and believe. It is up to us to act, to realise the enormity of the potential we can wield.

- But digital technologies are fundamentally transforming the global archive community as we know it, and it will keep rapidly changing for the foreseeable future. The opportunities ahead are within our reach. Ultimately, together, we can help change the way people think about archives, now and forever.

End of speech