

London Archives Partnership

Practitioners Meeting

Wednesday February 25th 2015

London Metropolitan Archives

10:00am – 12:30pm

NOTES AND ACTIONS

Attendees: TNA, London Screen Archives, City of London, Hackney, Kingston, Hillingdon, Waltham Forest, Hounslow, Bromley, Bexley, Westminster, Croydon, Lewisham, Southwark, Harrow, Ealing

Apologies: Southwark, Wandsworth

1. Welcome and Project updates

Geoff Pick

First World War

Geoff Pick

It wasn't possible to go forward with a joint bid to HF as initial meetings with HLF did not show an appetite to take it forward. LMA looking at how to take it forward on a smaller scale.

50th Anniversary of the London Boroughs

Tina Morton on behalf of Souraya Ali

Souraya has been in touch with all those who submitted images for the online photo narratives to get clearance for use for the final selection. Responses have now been received from all participating archives. Officers at London Councils are currently drafting the narrative to go alongside the images. The photo narratives will be live for the anniversary in April, along with other material relating to the anniversary including a timeline, archive film produced by LSA, and political almanac which many of the archivists also contributed to. There are a few small gaps remaining in the almanac information (mostly in relation to Leaders in the late 1960s / early 1970s) so colleagues from London Councils may be in touch to try to fill these in the next couple of weeks. London Councils would again like to thank all those who have provided images and information for 50th anniversary activities.

As well as the work that London Councils is doing, you may remember that Professor Tony Travers is writing a book to mark the 50th anniversary. This will include a section looking at each borough individually. Again, many of you were asked to contribute information to this via Chief Executives. Work on the book is progressing well, and Tony will soon be sending drafts of the borough sections out to the boroughs for review. Publication is likely to be after the summer.

You may also be interested to know that HLF have announced their first funding award to a borough for 50th anniversary activities. The award is for Barking & Dagenham who are doing a '50 years a London Borough' photographic archive project. Decisions on applications from other boroughs are still pending.

Photo Portal

Simon McKeon

Boroughs including Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich, Barnet & Wandsworth have photographs up on the Borough Photos website(s). About 10 or so other boroughs are preparing images/data or have a contract with their legal team, so hopefully 6-8 will be up and running by the 50th anniversary event at Guild Hall on the 19th May. There will be some pull up displays that will promote the London Picture Archives portal at this event.

Procurement

Simon McKeon

11 Boroughs replied to Simon on procurement of preservation supplies/equipment

The total spend across the boroughs is around £18k mostly with PEL, CBD, Ryder & Pelaw

Most practical area for collaboration would seem to be in box buying. However, the spend is not big and there is a need to approach suppliers. Would also need to address delivery issue (possibility of using LMA vans for a fee).

Currently 5 different popular box sizes so would need to agree on a maximum of 2.

PLEASE CONTACT SIMON IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THIS COLLABORATION simon.mckeon@bexley.gov.uk

We will start with box buying and see if the framework works, then we could extend if practical.

Benchmarking

Tahlia Coombes

Tahlia is now on the steering group for PSQG – retitled The National Survey as it now falls under the ARA umbrella. The next survey will be a distance learning one in the Autumn. Tahlia would welcome comments on what the survey doesn't capture e.g. group visits, collecting outcome data - tahlia.coombes@hackney.gov.uk

Tina will be sending out a fee and charging and skills survey soon as part of the LAP benchmarking across London.

2. AIM25/LAP project

Ted Rodgers

SEE BUSINESS CASE CIRCULATED TO ALCL in appendix 1

This project presents an opportunity to work closer together.
First phase would include the transfer of high level data.
Technical side would work with AIM25 to include capability of a full catalogue and public access tool. Of the 32 boroughs only 13 have data in electronic format at present.
LAP should be ambitious in its proposal and include increasing outreach and public presence. Board is developing a funding bid to do just that – it has broad support from ALCL/Heads of Service. 2 year project proposal to include data transfer, publicity, community engagement, education, training, upskilling volunteers and community groups, as well as advice for boroughs and broad support to manage the data. It has support from TNA and LMA (will host archivists). LAP Board to develop HLF bid of c. £300,000 with backing of ALCL
Lots of benefits including:

- Less reliance on existing archival software
- Reach wider audience through better online presence
- Better value for money
- Anticipate that support costs will be less than commercial packages
- External hosting of data
- Common point of access
- Standardisation of system across London – facilitating sharing of resources, volunteers etc.

3. London Screen Archive

Rebekah Polding, Film London

Update on London Screen Archive and Film London programme.
Simon McKeon is LAP liaison as he is on both boards.

Bigger Picture project and Kino Van

London: A Bigger Picture project is a major three year project from Film London's London's Screen Archives, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund with support from the BFI and Creative Skillset.

<http://filmlondon.org.uk/whats-on/london-a-bigger-picture>

<http://filmlondon.org.uk/whats-on/kinovan>

Contacts: **David Whorlow, Volunteer and Archives Coordinator** david.whorlow@filmlondon.org.uk and **Louise Pankhurst Film Archivist and Screenings Coordinator** louise.pankhurst@filmlondon.org.uk

Activity includes: 10 week training courses in archiving film for volunteers and archive professionals (open to all boroughs); collection and digitising of film; screenings.

Non-partners can request Kino van screenings for a fee (£500) - have been at markets, museums, heritage open days etc. average 150 users over 3 hours.

Other projects include:

Specialist film storage in partnership with LMA

Cataloguing standards for film

Exploiting collections commercially

Sept/Oct major event planned in Trafalgar Square - Sing a long a London

Seven Stories – bookable film with speaker

Rebekah has a new job at BAFTA so will be leaving Film London.

4. FWW project and volunteers

Lucy Allen, Bromley

SEE PRESENTATION attached

Two and a half year project to tell the story of how Bromley contributed to caring for both military and civilian casualties of war

Extensive use of volunteers

Outputs include; a project website, touring exhibition, talks, interpretation panels at key sites, the recreation of a First World War allotment and more...!

5. Workshop on volunteering

Tina Morton – introducing the Love Libraries Love Volunteering: Managing Volunteers Toolkit

<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/culturetourismand2012/artsculture/resources/lovelibraries/llvttoolkitintroduction.htm>

Can we adapt it for use by archives?

Sally Bevan, LMA & Secretary of ARA volunteering sub-committee

The Committee have just submitted their 3rd Action Plan covering 2015-2017 which will be available on the ARA website once approved by the ARA Board.

In terms of work plan there are 9 aims which the committee works towards. These are firstly within the archive sector

1. To work with key Stakeholder groups to support volunteering in archives.
2. To engage with relevant opinion formers to develop understanding of the role of volunteering in archives
3. Promote diversification of archive volunteers
4. Improve evidence gathering and evaluation

Secondly for archive services

1. Share good practice
2. Encourage national recognition of volunteers' contribution to archives
3. Provide appropriate training opportunities within the sector

And thirdly for individuals

1. To publicise diverse options for work experience through volunteering in archives
2. Contribute to the ARA Competency Framework.

In 2009 the National Council of Archives produced a report entitled 'Volunteering in Archives' which sought to identify the motivations and benefits of volunteering from the perspective of volunteers rather than the service. It was felt that it would be of benefit to build on this survey data in order to identify areas of good practice as well as training and support issues, so the survey was repeated last year (2014). Caroline Williams was then tasked to do a short analysis of the results and compare them with the 2009 outcomes. Although many of the key findings were similar to previous surveys there were some interesting issues highlighted particularly relating to volunteering within Records Management Services (there's not much), 'Career volunteers' (a growing significant minority) and that the management of volunteers seems to be becoming more efficient and business like, (which can sometimes be off putting to volunteers). Overall however the volunteers' experiences were very positive. They valued the tasks, the staff and the social environment and often wanted to 'give something back' to services.

The report has just been published and is available on the ARA site if you want to find out more.

For archive services we continue to promote and run the ARA Volunteer award. Now in its 6th year the Award seeks to recognise and celebrate the contribution of volunteers within the archive sector and to promote good practice in volunteering.

It continues to attract a diverse and exciting range of nominations from across the UK. Last year's award went to the University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth. The 'Connected Catalogue' project (which had no funding) had volunteers including some with mental health issues, working within the archive to help catalogue, improve access to the collections and put on displays and exhibitions.

Anecdotally the two biggest impacts of the award are, maybe not unsurprisingly, as a way to formally recognise volunteers work and also as a tool to promote archive services to parent bodies and the broader public.

What is remarkable though, and what continues to inspire, is the pride and joy that volunteers take in contributing to the success of archives and the impact that the award can have on volunteers' esteem.

It is also reassuring that the Award seems to be having an impact on future funding opportunities and with promotion of services both internally and externally, through providing official recognition of successful audience development and community involvement.

And for individuals the committee will be working to encourage groups representing volunteers to join ARA as not-for-profit institutional members as well as contributing to the development of ARA's Continuing Professional

Development Framework which will support those working in the sector including those working as volunteers.

SEE APPENDIX 2 below for workshop discussion notes

6. Actions and Next steps (including ideas for future meetings)

Ideas for future meetings:

Accreditation

Income generation

Fundraising

Any additional ideas please send through to Tina Morton tina.morton@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Appendix 1 - Business case to ALCL for London Local Authority collaboration with AIM25 to generate savings and promote archives services Ted Rogers & Sue McKenzie

Synopsis: It is proposed that a consortium of London boroughs submit a bid to secure funding to enhance online access to archives whilst also delivering revenue savings, increasing opportunities for community involvement and stabilising the security of resources. If successful, the bid would secure support for authorities to make the transition and a significant amount of educational and skill raising work. The process may be achieved with only a small amount of capital investment from participating authorities.

Current position: Of the 32 London authorities (excluding the City), only 13 are currently using archival software for cataloguing and therefore are able to offer a web based searchable list of their holdings. Others rely on Microsoft packages such as Excel and Word, whilst a handful use either library or museum databases. All of the specialist software is obtained on licence from one of two providers, both of which charge significant annual licence fees, although there are great variations in the level of these fees. The majority of authorities without this software have no significant web presence at item level.

AIM25 is a consortium formed largely of academic and private archives within the London area (although one local authority is a member currently). AIM25 provides a joint high level descriptor catalogue which is searchable across all member organisations, but does not currently offer the facility to list at item level. Data currently available on this system is abstracted from the archival software of participating organisations or uploaded manually.

Proposal: It is proposed to develop the software package underpinning AIM25 to allow it to record data at item level and to offer the full functionality of the existing commercially available packages. This would allow staff to catalogue directly onto AIM25, and if existing data was transferred to AIM25 would eliminate the need for the commercial package. This would also allow a joint online presence which would be both searchable and customisable according to the wishes of participating authorities. This front end package could incorporate innovations which would make it attractive to users whilst preserving a back end that is suitable for professionals. As well as this, the package would allow the storage of and access to digital resources, such as scanned images. The data would be externally hosted and appropriate backup would be provided.

This would be achieved through the collaboration of a number of London local authorities to submit a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. However, both because of HLF's focus on community engagement and to maximise the benefits of the project, a significant element of the project would be locally based engagement work in order to provide educational resources, to upskill volunteers and community groups and to assist archival staff in making the transition. It is proposed to run the project over a period of two years in order to account for the scale of the work. In addition to the changes to the AIM25 software, it is proposed to engage two peripatetic archivists to advise and assist with data transfer in all participating authorities. The bid would also include funding to provide a project manager with additional responsibility for publicity and volunteer coordination and bought in educational providers. Whilst the proposal is still in the development stage, a fuller discussion of a potential bid is provided later in this paper. Both the National Archives (TNA) and the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) have expressed strong support for the proposal and are prepared to give cashable and non-cashable support.

It is anticipated that participating local authorities would need to contribute a (very) small amount of match funding and in-kind support in terms of staff involvement. There would also be a yet to be determined cost for data extraction.

Benefits to local authorities: The benefits to local authorities vary according to whether they already have an archival software package or not.

For those that do, the estimated annual licence costs would be reduced by an average of £5,000 compared to the commercial rates available now.

For those that do not, to establish an online presence is to improve value for money on the resources invested in archives, as no matter how good collections are, if people cannot find out about them they will be underused. The lack of a full catalogue online also means that customers cannot establish what material that they may require prior to visiting and therefore increases the amount of staff transaction time.

There are also benefits that are common to all participating authorities. Many archives have digital resources stored on local servers, external hard disks or CD-ROMs which are not backed up elsewhere. Much of this, particularly scanned images, represents many thousands of hours of staff or volunteer time but are exceptionally vulnerable to loss. Since under this proposal the data would be stored on robust external servers, this risk would be all but eliminated. The sale of images can also generate an income stream and a more widely disseminated dataset would enable this to be increased.

Records of interest to the researcher are not limited by local government boundaries and a wider dataset will increase ease of access and lead to 'cross pollination' of research across different authorities.

For those considering outsourcing heritage services, the use of a standardised system would facilitate transfer to or between external providers.

Access to local authority systems by volunteers and external organisations has proved problematic in many authorities. As the data is stored separately from local authority servers, the importance of this issue would be reduced, although it is recognised that different levels of access would need to be built into the architecture of the system. This does mean that there is a potential to work more closely with local community archives and group, something which is likely to find widespread political support. This in turn can lead to collecting which is more representative of the community. Where material is collected in digitised formats only, the cost of physical storage is eliminated.

Outline bid to HLF: The following is given as an example, based on the participation of 20 of the possible 32 authorities, and with LMA and TNA support. It should be noted that this is scalable both internally of the number of participants and also in the level of grant available.

Costs

Software upgrade costs supplied by AIM 25:	£30,000
2 x 0.5 FTE archivists for two years to assist authorities with data transfer and ensuring cataloguing is at an appropriate standard	£80,000
Project coordination and volunteer support in local authorities	£80,000
Educational work in local authorities	£40,000
Costs for educational resources	£20,000
Publicity	£20,000
Expenses	£20,000
Evaluation	£20,000
TOTAL	£310,000

Funding

TNA seed funding	£8,000
Contributions for local authorities (£1,000 per year for two years)	£40,000
Grant funding	£262,000

In-kind contributions

LMA management of project staff	£20,000
TNA project support	£10,000
Local authority staff time (three weeks per year per authority)	£80,000
Total	£110,000

The benefits of the project that will be included in the bid are:

- Increased access to archives
- Involvement of volunteers and community organisations
- Potential to widen collections to reflect community
- A combined resource for London
- Increased sustainability of services through collaboration
- A model that can be replicated elsewhere

Risks: There are some risks which should be mentioned at this stage. The most obvious are:

- Failure to get sufficient funding
- Failure to attract a critical mass of authorities
- Increased costs throughout project
- Failure to deliver a suitable package
- Emergence of a viable and less expensive alternative

There will need to be robust business plan to mitigate these risks, and this has yet to be developed

Appendix 2 - Workshop on volunteering

WHAT ARE VOLUNTEERS USED FOR?

- Cataloguing
- Listing/sorting
- Repackaging
- Front of house (considerable resistance to this by some due to lack of reliability/public image/perception of paid staff)
- Basic enquiries
- Community outreach
- Research for projects or publicity
- Volunteer coordinator
- Team or 'super' volunteers – deliver refresher training, induct new volunteers

ISSUES

- Volunteer expenses can be an issue (many archives can only pay in exceptional circumstances)
- Can be difficult to find the right tasks, some volunteers find box listing for example boring.
- High turnover
- Reliability
- Quality
- Roles should be tailored to volunteer rather than trying to fit a square peg into a round hole
- High degree of management input sometimes required – benefits only realised with longer term volunteers
- DBS issues around data access
- Perception that volunteers could never be given any access to customer records of even the most basic kind

POSITIVES

- Volunteers can widen audience and liaise with community groups especially younger, non-traditional volunteers

RECRUITMENT METHODS

- Open days
- Social media
- Recruitment of archive researchers
- Local history societies and similar
- Referral from volunteer agencies
- Working with UCL to attract those interested in a career in archives
- WEA, U3A

WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER?

- Would be good to be part of a bigger group/cross London network where boroughs could pool volunteers
- Sharing volunteers with particular skills e.g. website redesign, which may only be used for a short time in each authority (but volunteers are often only prepared to work in own area)
- Share training and types of task e.g. digital, marketing, social media, web copy
- Oral history training and equipment
- Have a cross London offer for University Students
- Templates and role descriptions
- Share case studies and best practice
- Capacity to manage
- Shared fact sheets/volunteer welcome packs/policies
- Shared advertising of roles and referrals to other archives where appropriate
- Sharing information and experience
- Common list of volunteer opportunities
- Chance for LAP/ALCL to talk to London HR managers body to ensure common standards for volunteering across the capital, not only in archives but in local government more generally

- Collecting evidence on how volunteering in heritage contributes to independence and preventative health agendas