



## **Coming Together - The Formation of the National Archives**

As announced by the Minister for the Arts, Baroness Blackstone in July this year, the functions of the Public Record Office (PRO) and the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) will be joining together in April 2003 to form a new body, the National Archives. Nick Kingsley, Chairman of the NCA commented "*We rarely get Ministerial announcements about archives, and I cannot remember one that is likely to have such a major impact on the archival landscape*".

The NCA firmly supports the creation of the National Archives and believes it will deliver a number of advantages. For the first time, there will be single body with clear responsibility for national archival policy across the public and private sectors. This surely means that archives will have a stronger voice in Government. The National Archives should have a clearer remit to work with and actively support other public sector archives than the PRO has had in the past. Although the nature of the relationship between the National Archives and Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries will take some time to emerge, the NCA is confident that there is commitment on both sides to reach a clear division of responsibility for the benefit of our users. Of course, the Archives Task Force (see p3) will help to cement the relationship and ensure a common agenda. The merger will also create a further imperative for proposed archival legislation (see p2).

As a force behind the National Archives Network, the national project to ensure archival catalogues are available on-line, the NCA is particularly pleased that the desire to ensure the viability of the Network has been one of the reasons behind the Government's decision to give the new body the full budget of its predecessors. The associated efficiency savings from merger should help ensure the sustainability of the Network. (*Contact: Nick Kingsley, Chairman of the NCA on 01452 425299*)

information systems and relations with the wider archival community, where both organisations have strong roles in support of professional record keeping standards and preservation, either by inspection of facilities or input into methodology and research. The results of this evaluation will be given form in the new corporate plan of the National Archives for 2003-4, setting out the short and medium term strategy for the new body. Preparing for the creation of the National Archives will be a priority for the HMC and the PRO over the next six months.

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## **So how are the PRO and HMC approaching the merger?**

To create this new body the two organisations have started to think carefully about what their unified objectives will be. This will involve looking jointly at current research advice services, the future of the two organisations' online

Research into the views of our users will form an essential part of the process; in order to ensure that the new organisation meets their needs and expectations as far as is possible. A major stakeholder meeting was held on 5<sup>th</sup> November, hosted by the Royal Historical Society, to which leading figures from the archival, arts, funding and educational worlds were

invited with the aim of encouraging wide discussion of the role of the new organisation. The views and ideas received from this meeting and others will inform the new structure and delivery of services in the National Archives.

There are many issues to address, not least the arrangements for staff relocating from the HMC's current central London site, and modifications to the internal layout of the building at Kew to accommodate transferring functions. As a result it is not possible to provide a definite date for the transfer of the HMC's services to Kew. When a decision is made and fuller details about services and transition arrangements are known, full publicity will be made available to users of both organisations. (*Contact: Louise Atherton, PRO 020 8392 5246 or Dr Chris Kitching, HMC on 020 7242 1198*)

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### **New Archival Legislation**

Our age has the ability to produce more and better information than we have ever had before and, through e-mail, the internet and other modern means, to get it quickly and cheaply to all who need it. New legislation – the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 – shows the importance Government attaches to giving citizens clear and positive rights over information. What an irony, therefore, if much of that information were to get lost or destroyed for lack of proper provision to manage and protect it.

There is a real worry that it might. Vital information, instead of being properly filed, sits randomly on personal computers. Important e-mails are deleted. Electronic storage (CDs, floppy disks, tapes) can fail after as little as 5 or 10 years, the information they hold gone forever.

There is little enough legislation to protect vital records. The best is the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967,

legislation conceived before computers really existed for most of us. The NCA believes – as do others – that the legislation we have will not protect the authenticity and integrity of electronic information, nor permit its proper, long-term preservation. Electronic records need an entirely different management and preservation regime, and present legislation unfortunately does not support this properly. Also the Public Records Acts only cover the records of central Government. What about local Government, higher education or the developing regional administrations? The Health Service? Recently privatised organisations? These are often just as important as central Government records and have significantly less protection.

We could face a real crisis here, and soon, unless we create a proper legislative framework to make us manage and store all our records properly, especially but not only electronic ones. We also need to make sure those responsible are able to take the right steps to ensure that the records we create are still available to the citizen in centuries to come.

Government has started to review this need, and the NCA welcomes that. We also recognise that central Government is making a real effort to ensure that its own electronic records are properly stored and managed, as are some local authorities. But more is needed. The NCA will endorse and support moves to secure a proper, modern legislative framework for the future management and preservation of all important public sector records, nationwide, for our benefit and that of all our descendants.

Specifically, NCA believes we need a new Records and Archives Act to ensure that all significant public sector records are properly managed from their creation to disposal, whether to destruction or to a regional, local or national archive. Those records that are archived need to be

properly protected and preserved for the future. This is true for records in all media, though the most urgent concern at present is for electronic material. NCA also hopes that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will take the necessary steps to ensure that their important records are protected as well. (*Contact: Duncan Simpson on 020 8675 6652*)

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### **Archives Task Force**

Archives provide the bedrock for our understanding of the past, showing us - and future generations - how we came to be what we are as a nation, a community or an individual. They are a window into the experiences that shaped their lives of our forebears. They are a national asset of manuscripts, books, photographs, maps, plans, sound and moving images, and digital records, which constitute the primary record of our past, the very essence of our heritage. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has asked Resource to undertake a close and detailed investigation of UK archives, demonstrating how this unrivalled but often neglected national legacy can be turned more fully to advantage as a rich learning resource accessible to all, a means of reinforcing our sense of local and national community and the nation's personal, corporate and public memory.

The archives domain is made up of a great number of sub domains, which have distinct and separate characteristics, including the national archives, local authority archives, specialist repositories and business archives. The world of archives is also much wider than just the cultural dimension. Across the UK, archivists and record managers are playing a key role in the effective and efficient conduct of public and private business through information and knowledge management programmes. The Archives Task Force will consider its approach to analysing this wide and varied picture, set against a context of machinery of Government, legislative,

technological and structural change. The Archives Task Force's will identify key questions concerning perceptions of archives and the role of archivists and records managers, audiences and access, the role of technology, and the kind of infrastructure required to support UK archive and records management development.

Archives are important and relevant, and this is a very ambitious agenda. The Archives Task Force will report to Government and funding agencies to raise the profile of archives and clearly articulate what they can deliver if their potential can be unlocked and harnessed. Archives are a powerful tool to change lives, to transform business, and are often objects of intrinsic beauty. The Archives Task Force will bring to the fore the immense capacity of archives to change lives, and to make a real difference and impact on individuals. There are many examples of this type of use of archives including reminiscence therapy with the elderly, supporting compensation claims for industrial diseases, enabling individuals' search for personal identity, supporting people coming to terms with life-changing experiences, providing evidence in court cases and proceedings. The list is almost endless.

The Archives Task Force will also seek to demonstrate that archives are much more than just pretty manuscripts and boxes of files. It will be a key opportunity to highlight the role that archivists and records managers play in ensuring effective, efficient and accountable business transactions. Good records management saves Government and business money, and plays an essential role in documenting official and business transactions, to ensure accountability.

Archives can be of stunning beauty, and breathtaking in their power to speak out to us across the centuries, and there are astonishing maps, prints, drawings and works of art in UK archives. Who can

forget Domesday Book and illuminated manuscripts, or film footage of the first man on the moon, the 1966 World Cup Final or the fall of the Berlin wall?

The Archives Task Force is an opportunity to develop an imaginative but achievable blueprint for our shared archival heritage, and create the pathways to our archival future, celebrating an immediate and often forgotten window onto people, places and events long past. (*Contact: Justin Frost, Resource on 020 7273 1477*)

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### **Strong bonds or weak ties? Joint Arrangements**

In the 1990s, voluntary joint arrangements were recommended by the (then) Department of National Heritage as a means of retaining viable archive services where existing counties were divided between new local authorities after local Government reorganisation.

The recommendation made clear sense as it retained the economies of scale of services and the unity of collections and avoided the need to build more record offices to reflect new administrative arrangements. It was, however, always recognised that voluntary joint arrangements were potentially unstable and vulnerable to damage through lack of financial commitment by any one of the possible partners. In practice, the experience of many of the joint arrangements has been less than smooth, and for one record office has led to real difficulties.

Including the lead in to local Government reorganisation there have been three major negotiations or renegotiations of the basis of the voluntary joint arrangement in six years in this county. This has inevitably led to policy and service development drift as the service for three out of six years has been not been able to focus on the needs of its users and collections. After having settled an agreed

ten-year stability funding arrangement with effect from 2001/02, this service is now under notice to terminate the joint agreement and is awaiting final decisions as to whether or not it should be broken up or its whole funding base re-examined.

In addition the tying of the budget basis to Retail Price Index (RPI) is likely to create real financial problems for this service in the longer run, as after two years of an RPI of less than 2%, the service is facing a significant financial shortfall if it is to maintain even its current service base. Followed through to 2005/06, it is possible to foresee that the service will be about 16% down on its current buying power.

The uncertainty created by constant fundamental reviews has knocked the service off course from a promising and potentially improving position to a much weaker one. Coupled with potential loss of purchasing power, there is a very real possibility that this service will decline from a successful one into a failing one – just at the time when there may be opportunities and possibilities opened to archive service through other initiatives. (*Contact: Katie Norgrove, NCA on 020 8392 5330 ext. 2187*)

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### **Heritage Lottery Fund – Making a difference but for how long?**

It is nearly eight years since the Lottery started and the five good cause distributors, including the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), began to receive applications. In March, Tessa Jowell, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, announced a review of the lottery to look at how it could be enhanced in the future and how it could be made more responsive to the needs of communities. The NCA provided a detailed consultation response on behalf of its members. The response welcomed the review of the Lottery and stressed the enormous difference that HLF funding has made to the quality of archival services in the UK.

That support is currently running at £20m and any reduction of that figure could seriously affect our ability to provide innovative services to new and old users alike.

Indeed, HLF continues to be a key funder of many archival projects that, without external funding, would otherwise not be undertaken. Here's just a flavour of them:

With the introduction of the Your Heritage programme, many archives are taking up this opportunity to obtain grants of up to £50,000 to help them increase access and understanding to many unknown areas of their archives, usually through cataloguing and retro conversion projects. The scheme has been popular with its streamlined application process and decisions on grants within 3 months.

**The Royal Northern College of Music** houses the archive of the former Royal Manchester College of Music and the Northern School of Music amongst the collection are the student registers, professors attendance books and council minutes and one of the largest collection of Sir Charles Halle correspondence. The grant of £50,000 will help to fund the appointment of an archivist for 18 months to sort and catalogue the collection and purchase specialist archival software to allow the archives to be properly managed in the future. Access to the catalogues will be greatly improved with Internet access on the College's website and microfilming of the most popular student registers.

**Birmingham Archdiocesan Archives** has been successful in securing a grant of £43,000 to employ their first qualified archivist for 2 years to sort and catalogue their early twentieth century papers for the first time. The project will complete the archives programme of works, which to date has focused on providing appropriate housing for the archive. This project will improve access to the wealth of information of local, regional and national

interest and which represents an important part of the English Catholic community's history.

#### **Bath and North East Somerset**

**Libraries** local history collection consists of around 50,000 items including books, pamphlets, photographs and negatives all of which have been donated or purchased over the past 150 years and reflect the many aspects of the cities history from its Roman origins to Georgian city as well as the surrounding areas coalmining history and world heritage site status. With a grant of £50,000 the 2 year project will retro convert the existing paper catalogues into electronic form to improve access to the collections and make it available on the Internet.

**Canterbury Cathedral Archives** holds one of the most important ecclesiastical archives in the country, dating back to the Anglo-Saxon period. The records cover the life of the cathedral and its personnel, the administration of its estates throughout southeast England and the administration of the province of Canterbury when there was no archbishop. The grant of just under £50,000 will fund the appointment of an archivist for 2 years to catalogue one of the jewels in the collection, the ancient charters. Access to the collection will be increased by translation of the documents written in abbreviated medieval Latin and by making the catalogues available on the Internet for use in local, family, community, landscape and business history.

As well as this kind of revenue funding there is still a great need for larger scale capital investment. Preservation of our archival heritage is largely achieved with the provision of storage accommodation meeting archival British Standards and this is often only feasible with the support of large external grants. The process for these grants can take up to 2 years, but the benefits for the archives, the users and the service can bring enormous

improvements and advancements.

**East Riding of Yorkshire Council** was successful in securing £3,919,000 towards the creation of their landmark building the Treasure House. This new history and cultural centre will house the most significant parts of east Riding and Yorkshire Council's heritage collections, including the archives, and will offer optimum conservation conditions and provide 21<sup>st</sup> century access and ICT facilities. In particular conservation storage will now be to archival standard BS5454 and will bring together a collection currently stored in split locations, will double the search room facilities for the users and bring together primary, secondary and ICT, archival, museum and gallery material under one roof.

**The Borthwick Institute** will soon be starting a major capital redevelopment programme with the help of a £4,415,000 grant. The project will bring the strong rooms up to archival standards BS5454 and offer space for an additional 25 years of accruals. The current searchroom facilities will be tripled and will eliminate the current situation of 2-4 week waiting lists to access many of the archives and new ICT equipment will offer electronic access to the collections for the first time. *(Contact: Alison Berwick, NCA on 020 8392 5347)*

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### Access to Archives

A2A (Access to Archives) is the English strand in the UK National Archives Network: its database at [www.a2a.pro.gov.uk](http://www.a2a.pro.gov.uk) already contains the electronic equivalent of over 400,000 catalogue pages describing archives held across England in national, local and specialist repositories dating from the 900s to the present day. The A2A programme will make a further 300,000 catalogue pages available on the web by March 2004.

A2A is a strand in the growing National Archives Network in the United Kingdom, together with sister projects in Scotland and Wales, and in British universities and colleges. The scheme for this network was first set out in Archives On Line: The Establishment of a United Kingdom Archival Network (NCA, 1998) and it has developed according to the proposals made in the subsequent report British Archives: The Way Forward (NCA, 2000). The NCA is now leading on taking forward the feasibility of the joining up these existing strands of the National Archival Network, into the Linking Arms initiative (which will be featured in the next Briefing).

In the meantime the A2A database continues to be added to and the last update took place at the beginning of October. The database now contains over 3.9 million catalogue entries from 197 archives repositories across England and is supporting over 100,000 searches and 200,000 catalogue views each month.

We are pleased to announce that the Heritage Lottery has already made 4 grants towards more A2A projects to help achieve the March 2004 target of an additional 300,000 catalogue pages to this indispensable resource.

**Cosmic Rays and the Solid State** will be delivered by a consortium led by the National Cataloguing Unit for the Archives of Contemporary Scientists (NCUACS) at the University of Bath; it will provide 'born digital' finding aids to the personal papers - all previously uncatalogued - of 6 leading 20th-century Bristol physicists for the A2A database.

**Antients and Moderns** is based at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London; it will add over 15,000 catalogue pages describing archives of the United Grand Lodge of England (relating to English freemasonry from 1750 to 1820) to A2A, through both retro conversion and new cataloguing work.

**More than Meets the Eye** will be delivered by Greater Manchester County Record Office, and will provide access to the Documentary Photography Archive, which is held at Greater Manchester County Record Office and relates to life in the North West of England. The project will contribute over 10,000 catalogue pages to the A2A database by retro conversion, and will also provide an online virtual gallery, using selected photographs from and giving context for the Documentary Photography Archive, linked to the A2A website.

**The Seven Ages of Man** is a West Midlands regional consortium project. It will add 30,000 retro converted catalogue pages to the A2A database - catalogue pages which relate to parish, ecclesiastical, court and school records held in repositories across the region, including local Government record offices, the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick, and the archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham at St Chad's Cathedral.

14 other bids are currently with HLF awaiting a decision and a final 5 bids are being completed for submission by the end of November 2002. In total 23 bids will be submitted to HLF by regional consortia, user groups, or by single institutions, which will make up the 300,000 pages by March 2004. (*Contact Alison Berwick on 020 8392 5347*)

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### **The users view – the Civil Registration Scheme**

The NCA is watching with interest the current Review of Civil Registration being carried forward by the Office for National Statistics. The NCA wholly endorses the need to cut down opportunities for fraudulent use of civil registration data and to protect the privacy of the individual, and can understand why such access to such information may need to be restricted

once it is made available online. The NCA would also broadly welcome the prospect of the civil registration records being designated as public records, which is not the case at present. Public record status should in principle afford the records better management and a greater degree of protection.

However the NCA also has some major concerns about the process. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) seems to wish to pass original records of Civil Registration, the registers currently created and held by the local registrars, to County Record Offices, without any transfer of funds for their storage or upkeep, even though many of them are in very poor condition. The NCA would like to see the transfer take place, but only with the appropriate funding.

Access to some of the data in copies of these registers, for example the marriage registers of Anglican churches, which have previously been freely available in local record offices, may be restricted in their hard copy form. This is not only bad legal practice and likely to enrage the powerful family history lobby; it may lead to practical problems. Copies of these registers have in many cases been made quite legally for customers outside the UK jurisdiction, and it will be quite impossible to prevent the further dissemination of this material in future, whether via the Internet or otherwise.

In advance of the publication of the White Paper which will lay out the proposed way forward for digitizing the historic civil registration records, the indexes to these are already being made available at [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk), a subsidiary of myfamily.com, on its subscription-based website, with the support of ONS. The contractual basis of this arrangement is unclear. It would seem potentially to cut across the interests of the archival community, which has not been consulted, and above all of its end-users, who strongly favour free access to indexes

online with pay per view downloads of images, rather than subscription-based access to family history resources. (Contact: Katie Norgrove, NCA on 020 7392 5330 ext. 2187)

So what do users really think about this? NCA asked the Federation of Family History Societies, which represents 180,000 family historians, for its view. This is what they told us:

The Federation welcomes the proposals for the older records to be made open to researchers, without the need to buy expensive certified copies. The transfer of historic registers to Record Offices is to be welcomed, so that they can be preserved in suitable archival conditions, and made available for public inspection. We also welcome changes to the way in which information from the more recent registers will eventually be made available, without the need for expensive certified copies. This will be a great improvement on the situation that has existed since 1837, whereby information from the registers could only be given in the form of a certified copy of the entry. The availability of low-cost uncertified paper copies will be a great improvement on the current situation.

The Government plans to computerise the more recent records, but not the older ones, although it would support any not-for-profit organisation that wanted to invest in enabling electronic access to these records, and the Federation and its member societies would hope to be involved in any such project. Our members have extensive experience of indexing, and would have a great deal to contribute, building on our central role in the 1881 Census Index, the National Burial Index and other projects. Some member societies are already working to this end, in partnership with local registration services.

We have, however, considerable reservations about other proposals

contained in the White Paper, namely the restrictions on the information that will be released from more recent registrations, namely occupations, addresses and cause of death. The Government proposes to make the distinction between the “historic” records and those relating to the “active population” by placing restrictions on the release of information from certificates relating to persons born less than 100 years ago. We strongly advocate that the cut-off period should be 75, not 100 years, as we and many others suggested in our response to *Registration: Modernising a vital service*.

Since the White Paper is part of the consultation process involved in making legislative changes using the Regulatory Reform Act 2001, many of the proposals are described in principle, rather than in detail. Our detailed examination of the document shows that there are anomalies in the proposed arrangements as described, and some potential practical problems. Many proposals which are practical in terms of current and future registrations would be difficult to put into practice in the context of the historic records. Since our membership has extensive experience of using these historic records, and some of us have detailed knowledge of their origin and structure, we would be very happy to provide the Registration Review Implementation team with help and advice in this area. (Contact: Richard Ratcliffe, FFHS by email [archives.liaison@ffhs.org.uk](mailto:archives.liaison@ffhs.org.uk))

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### **Opinion Piece - Archives as Commodities?**

Iconic collections of records are increasingly at risk through a combination of increased pressure on owners of such material and a greater awareness of the financial value of such assets. It may also be argued that another factor at play is the willingness to overlook actual or implied obligations and public interest arguments.

These trends are exemplified by the problems Cornwall Record Office has recently run into with an iconic industrial history archive. The archive was that of Thomas Wilson, agent to the pioneering Birmingham engineers, Boulton & Watt in Cornwall. It deals with the commercial, intellectual property, technical and marketing business of the partnership as it developed and sold the steam powered pumping equipment which changed the world of underground mining and land drainage forever. Deposited in the Record Office by the Royal Polytechnic Society in 1964 on a very unclear basis, it was deposited more formally in 1969. Limited warning was given in 2000 that the sale of the collection was under consideration but no meaningful discussion took place by which the Record Office might have been identified as a preferred bidder. Instead the archive was withdrawn in 2002 and offered back for sale for £600,000 – equivalent to £200 per sheet of paper.

The difficulties were caused in large measure by the re-invention of the Royal Polytechnic Society as an arts body at the expense of its traditional learned society rôle. The values which seem to have informed the Society's willingness, over almost 40 years, to make the archive available via the Record Office to the research community as a whole do not appear to have survived this transition. An inference that might be drawn is that bodies whose charitable aims or articles of association do not explicitly list the maintenance of archive collections may turn out to be poor long-term bailees of the archival heritage of the nation.

What is particularly sad is that the records reflect the high point of Cornwall's industrial heritage. Cornwall is on the verge of submitting a bid to UNESCO for World Heritage Status for its mining archaeology. The documents are a key part of the background to the mining heritage and constitute a major part of its context. There is a real worry about the maintenance of archives in the public

sector and thus available for public access. The response to the threat to Boulton & Watt also suggests that there is a presumption in certain quarters that the 'traditional' archives of landed families and their estates are more deserving of support than industrial and scientific papers.

There may be a further factor at play, which is the general 'commoditisation' of archives and particularly those of the industrial archaeology sector. The author cannot confidently identify the causes or symptoms but they appear to include,

- General increase in awareness of archives financial value
- The increasing number of precedents set for sale and purchase of archives
- Increased financial pressure on owners who hitherto have felt able to exercise a generous rôle of keeping their documents in public repositories
- High levels of business failure in the old industrial and extractive industries with no obvious protection for their archives
- E-Bay type online auctions.

The Boulton & Watt experience in Cornwall has confirmed the author's fears that a number of trends have converged to create a real, though not as yet measured, threat to the integrity of the huge archival resource which has been accumulated over the last 50 years or so in local authority and other repositories, through hard work, partnership and unselfish goodwill. (*Contact: Paul Brough, Cornwall Record Office on 01872 323125*)

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### **The 1901 Census on-line**

The PRO reports that the 1901 Census Online website has been back online since August 2002 at [www.census.pro.gov.uk](http://www.census.pro.gov.uk). There has been no major publicity campaign. User reaction has generally been very favourable. Work is continuing to enhance the services

offered and the next major development will be a placename search facility. The PRO is also offering non-exclusive Licenced Internet Associateships from the end of October, building on the existing scheme of licences to publish images of public records in electronic or microform formats which are granted to companies and organisations. These new Associateship arrangements will set up more formal associations between the PRO and such organisations which share its public service values, including direct links from the PRO's website. (Contact: Dr Elizabeth Hallam-Smith, PRO on 020 8392 5245)

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### **Making Connections: Birmingham's Black International History**

The *Making Connections* project is funded by a grant from HLF to Birmingham City Archives in partnership with *Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures*, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery and the University of Birmingham.

*Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures* was set up in 2000 to develop a strategy and framework for building permanent historical and cultural records of black peoples' lives and experiences in Birmingham. The aims are to ensure that the histories, cultures and contribution of black people are permanently represented in the city's archive, museum and library collections, have a place in the school curriculum, and that the memories, stories and knowledge held within the city's diverse communities are found, shared and valued. Participants in the work of the group are drawn from the city's archive, museums, libraries and equalities services; from schools, higher education and the arts sector; and from community organisations.

***Making Connections: Birmingham Black International History*** comprises of a series of activities which focus on the international heritage dimension to Birmingham's social and cultural history -

and interpret its distinctive nature as a multicultural, multilingual, multifaith community of communities. The main focus of the project is a publication, ***Making Connections***, which celebrates the contribution that black people have made to the city's history through a range of articles on the black presence in Birmingham from the eighteenth century to present day. The publication also acts as a guide to the historical and cultural collections which can be found in Birmingham City Archives, Central Library and the Museum and Art Gallery and is richly illustrated with images of documents, artefacts, photographs and works of art from these collections.

***Making Connections*** also explores stories presently being told in the city through the paintings of Barbara Walker, the photography of Ravi Deepres, Vanley Burke and George Hallett, and the poetry of Roi Kwabena, Nefarine and Dilwara Begum. The book has been distributed free to every school, community library and community museum in Birmingham and remaining copies will be sold to fund a series of youth black history projects during the coming year.

To compliment the publication an exhibition, ***Some Common Bond***, will tour schools and community venues until Dec 2003. The exhibition is based on the collections of Birmingham City Archives and describes the role that individuals and groups from Birmingham have played in international social and political movements. It features Joseph Sturge and the Anti-Slavery Society, "The Female Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves", Avtar Singh Jouhl and the Indian Workers Association, Henry Gunter and the Afro-Caribbean Organisation and the Birmingham Anti-Apartheid Movement.

***Making Connections*** was launched on 9 October to an audience of over 140 representatives from community groups, the education sector and others interested in black history in the city. The launch

included presentations by HLF trustee Dr Mike Phillips, Professor Catherine Hall, and teachers currently producing multicultural history materials on the ***Using History to Build Community*** project, in which the City Archives is also a partner and which is funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. (*Contact Siân Roberts, Birmingham City Archives, on 0121 464 3362*)

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### **Hidden Treasures – Moving Image and Sound Archives**

are the most pervasive and accessible means of transporting information, entertainment and art to people today. Film is the most important new art form and information media of the last 100 years; and probably the most readily understandable of all archive materials.

How well do we ensure that they are collected, preserved and made available in the UK?

This was the question asked at the Hidden Treasures conference held at the British Library on October 7<sup>th</sup>. Organised by the Film Archive Forum, The British Library National Sound Archive and the NCA with the support of the British Film Institute, HLF, Resource and the British Universities Film and Video Council, the conference marked the beginning of a process which will result in the development of a national strategy for film and sound archives for the first time in the UK.

The first purpose of the conference was to raise awareness of the importance of moving images and sound as archival materials and to give examples of the kind of innovative work that the materials make possible. The second purpose of the conference was to look at the current provision for film and sound archives in the public sector in the UK and hear from funders and stakeholders about their attitude towards them and their plans for a strategic approach to the sector.

What became clear during the day was that though these materials are very highly valued as part of the national archival record, and though there are some superb examples of best practice with the materials in a variety of fields, the provision is haphazard and the funding levels very low.

Though a developing network of national and regional archives exists for moving image, low levels of core support from principal funders leave the archives dependent for their very existence on a fragile basket of funding.

The Film Council announced that support through the new regional screen agencies for the 8 English regional archives had virtually doubled in the past year. Even so, the highest core support offered to any of the 8 from a single agency is £45,000. For a public archive service to cover a whole region this compares badly with the level of support received by a county archive service.

If archives are the “Cinderella” service of the Museums Archives and Libraries sector then the audiovisual archives are the “Cinderella element” of the archives service. The sound archive sector is even less developed having little or no proper public provision in most regions.

Stakeholders – Resource, the BFI and the HLF – all welcomed the planned development of a national strategy for the sector, recognising that there is considerable opportunity to deliver major public benefit which would derive from such a move.

The strategy development begins now for publication in June 2003 – lets hope it marks a turning point for moving image and sound archives in the UK. (*Contact: James Patterson, The Media Archive for Central England on 0115 846 6448*)

## Inspiring Learning

“Inspiring Learning for All” has been developed by Resource as a best practice framework for enhancing access and learning opportunities within the archives, museums and libraries sector. The initiative is currently in its piloting phase and the Somerset Archive and Record Service (SARS) has been chosen as the only local Government record office to pilot the framework.

SARS was keen to be involved so that it could develop its learning and access aspirations in a focused way, using the structure that the framework provides to achieve this. We were also keen to contribute to the development of the framework.

For the purposes of the pilot SARS is concentrating on one of the four main sections of the framework, “Creating accessible and Inspiring Learning Environments”. We are auditing our existing facilities and practice against the targets set out in this section, and identifying the specific areas of the service which need improvement. Auditing against the framework has also helped us to identify areas where we are already doing well.

Specific work is being done to explain Inspiring Learning to staff, users, and stakeholders, prior to analysing their responses to a questionnaire about the service. Inspiring Learning has developed a series of self-assessment questionnaires that can be used in a variety of ways to gain a greater understanding of what the service does well, and what areas need further development. SARS is also carrying out analysis of existing survey data to identify specific learning and access needs.

The piloting of the Inspiring Learning Framework is already yielding information that will allow us to shape new service initiatives and assist with long-term

planning. Participation in the pilot is providing the springboard for further development of access to Somerset’s rich archival heritage. (*Contact: Janet Tall, SARS on 01823 278805*)