

WHY KEEP ARCHIVES?

Without a recorded heritage knowledge of our communities, families and individuals - as well as our cities, towns and buildings and the land they are built upon - would be much poorer. Our archival heritage is unrivalled in quality and depth anywhere in the world and reflects in detail the lives of countless of our ancestors from every walk of life. Similarly, without the structured archiving of business and administrative records, access to vital information would be lost and the efficiency of businesses and organisations would be undermined. As such, our archives are widely valued and used by people both from within the United Kingdom and from overseas.

North West Archives cover a wide range of collections, most of which are owned by public bodies and are made available to all members of the public, free of charge. Most archive services exist to allow anyone to see, touch, study or simply view the archives in their care. Archive collections include the records of our

"Several years ago we operated a successful partnership with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers who engage unemployed people. The scheme involved a certain amount of archaeological work supported by research undertaken in the Search Room ... many participants were able to progress to full time employment after a particular project terminated as obviously sound work resulted in a good reference."

"The use of archives goes way beyond the purely academic and educational. Our archives are used by parents looking at coroners' records (following the baby organs scandal), people with convictions wanting visas for the USA (court records), adopted people tracing parents, gay men looking for partners they fear have died of AIDS ... so the use of archives goes far beyond the history side to current needs, sometimes very distressing, personal or controversial."

great institutions, people, businesses and record important events. The documents cover not only important events in the region, but also across the world, recording how people from the region worked and travelled the globe. Archive Services have worked to ensure that the knowledge held in these unrivalled resources are available for all and will continue to manage these collections to ensure their survival for future generations.

WHERE ARE ARCHIVES IN THE NORTH WEST?

Archive services in the North West are amongst the most diverse and accessible in the UK. Local authorities are the largest group of archive services, comprising services in museums, libraries and the larger stand alone services such as Cumbria, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Offices. National museum services also manage archive collections, for example Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester and Maritime Archives at the National Museums, Liverpool.

The region is the home to a number of nationally and internationally important business archive services, for example Barclays Bank, Unilever, National Gas Archive and the Alliance and Leicester. North West Archives are also held in academic institutions, for example The Archives and Special Collections at Liverpool University and John Rylands University Library Manchester. Archives on specialist media are managed by the North West Film Archive and the North West Sound Archive. An increasing number of communities are now establishing their own archives to celebrate and record their past.

WHAT ROLE CAN THEY PLAY IN THE REGION?

Archive Services exist not only to store history but to ensure its preservation and to make archives available to the public. Archive services are also regular providers of learning opportunities, particularly informal, independent learning. The most common reason for using an archive service is to research aspects of personal identity, seeking details of family history, proof of educational qualifications or reuniting families. Organisations also use archives and records management to ensure business efficiency and accountability.

Archives have a fundamental role to play in the development of strategies for lifelong learning. The key function of libraries and archives is not just as a service place, but an active partner offering access, professional guidance and training to global resources in a local setting."

LIDA letter to the European Ministers of Culture and Education

"We have co-operated with an amateur research group largely consisting of senior citizens. They meet every Thursday in the Search Room and undertake research projects using both our archives and sources held by private individuals. To date they have: successfully published various books and pamphlets; taught their group to read 'secretary hand'; are assisting as the 'volunteer element' in our HLF project; provided a community 'spy network' for records in jeopardy which we would seek to be deposited; acted as ambassadors to the service."

Individual archive services, assisted by NWMLAC are seeking to strengthen and develop the role archives can play in the region. To work in partnership with NWMLAC in this work please contact Archive Development Officer, NWMLAC.

"These archives provide the bedrock for our understanding of the past. They show 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 the lives of our forebears. They are a hidden 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. Archives can be breathtaking in their power to speak out to us across the centuries."

Dame Stella Rimington, member of the Archives Task Force

72% of archive users believe that archives strengthen family and community identity

79% believe that archives provide a stimulating learning environment

30% believe that their skills and confidence have been increased by using archives

Figures from the Survey of Visitors to British Archives 2001

This year has seen a 2.4% increase in visits to archive services nationally.

144,284 visits have been made to archive services in the north west.

This is the highest number of visits in any region outside London, with a ratio compared to population of 1:48, which is well above the national average.

In the last 10 years visitor numbers to North West archive services have increased by over 250%.

North West local authority archive services have the highest number of non traditional opening hours (i.e. outside 9-5 Monday-Friday) outside London.

77,340 enquiries are made annually to NW local authority archive services. Over 24,080 of these are made by email, which is the highest in the country, more than double its nearest rival region.

Figures from Archive Services Statistics 2002-03 Estimates CIPFA. Local Authority services only.

This leaflet has been produced for the North West Archives Festival, (part of Archive Awareness Month, 2002) a celebration of the work of archive services in the region, which aims to explain the role of archives and attract new users to services.



For more information on archives in the North West visit:

www.northwestarchives.org.uk
www.nwmlac.org.uk



or contact North West Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, Griffin Lodge, Cavendish Place, Blackburn, BB2 2PN. Tel (01254) 670211

NW Regional Archive Council

For Your Civil Rights

Archives

for you

for ever

For Your Business

For Your Recovery

For Your Knowledge Management

For Your Freedom

For Your Business Efficiency

For Your entertainment

For Your Culture

For Your School Work

For Your Community

For OUR Future

For Your Life

For Your Amusement

For Your Accountability

For Your Legacy

For Your Learning

For Your Identity

For Your Heritage

For Your Enjoyment