



## Business Archives Council Newsletter

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## Chair's blog

Once again I'm writing this blog on a train - we're currently crawling through Milton Keynes Central.

Since my Summer blog, I've attended conferences in Paris, Glasgow and Manchester. Paris was the venue for a European Association of Banking and Financial History conference which had an archives strand on the first day and a history strand on the second. The archives theme was the appraisal of digital records and there were some lively debates, particularly on whether everything should be kept.

Next up Glasgow for the annual get-together of the Association of Business Historians (ABH). For the last few years, the ABH has held a preconference workshop where PhD students present papers and receive practical advice on topics such as submitting papers to journals and how to use business archives. The day is named in honour of noted Scottish business historian

Professor Tony Slaven. As we were in Glasgow, Tony was able to attend in person, and appropriately the workshop was held in the University of Glasgow Archives which is well-known for its extensive business collections. Clare, Kiara and Cheryl from the Archives organised a 'show and tell' for both the Slaven Workshop and the conference.



*University of Glasgow Archive 'show and tell' –  
Love those Perspex boxes!  
(Image courtesy of Mike Anson)*

I also managed to take some time out in order to visit Dawn Sinclair at the HarperCollins Archive, in nearby Bishopbriggs. Dawn has been very busy supplying material from the Archive for the company's 200th anniversary this year.

Whilst talking of Glasgow University Archives, it's hard not to think of Lesley Richmond. Lesley has been honoured with an Archives and Records Association (ARA) Lifetime Achievement Award. Of course, Lesley has made a huge contribution to business archives over the years. Indeed, there has also been recognition for another Glasgow stalwart, Michael Moss who received a Lifetime Achievement Award, this one from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Archives and History. Our congratulations go to both Lesley and Michael.

Finally, I was up in Manchester for a day at the ARA Conference. Aside from the important matter of dancing at the Gala Dinner, I was presenting another one of my *#12MonthChallenge* sessions.

I asked people how they were going to set the agenda over the coming year – as you can see, some of this was live-tweeted!



*Delegates at ARA Conference show their #12MonthChallenge  
(Live-tweeted selfie courtesy of Mike Anson)*

Don't forget to book for our Annual Conference and BAC Wadsworth Prize reception in November. The theme is [Change the Record](#), and we will look at how the creation and use of business records is changing and the challenges that this presents. By the time you read this, the full programme will be available. Linking neatly back to an earlier part of the blog, the venue is HarperCollins (London not Bishopbriggs!) and we will of course be hearing from Dawn. Look forward to meeting you all then.

**Mike Anson**  
BAC Chair

## **The 2017 BAC Business History Bursary award: the advancement of research into British business and the synthetics revolution**

If you mention synthetics to Baby Boomers, they are likely to turn up their noses in recollection of double-knit polyester from the 1970s and 1980s. Similarly, most cotton devotees from Gen X won't admit that they're wearing spandex undergarments or that they run marathons in sports clothes that are made from some type of high-tech, breathable man-made fibre. Academic researchers and museum curators who are familiar with the history of these materials will recognize the names of the famous fibre makers of the post-war era: E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, the Celanese Fibre Marketing Company, and Rohm and Haas in the United States, and Courtaulds, the Calico Printers Association, and the Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) in the UK. Many

excellent books have been written about managerial strategy and corporate science in these firms, but little is known about the cultural dimensions of the synthetics era.

I will use the 2017 Bursary for Business History Research to advance research on a new book about synthetics in interior design and fashion since World War II. An interdisciplinary work, *The Synthetics Revolution*, will consider the rise and triumph of synthetics within the context of marketing history, fashion studies, and consumer culture. Drawing on in-depth research in corporate archives, popular magazines, newspapers, trade journals, and museum collections, my book will explore how large fibre companies invested millions to promote the new miracle materials to textile mills, retailers, and consumers, thereby launching the synthetics age that is still with us today.



*Dickins & Jones Champagne Fashion Show, 1979 (Image courtesy of The University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, House of Fraser collection)*

The post-war triumph of synthetics in apparel and interior decoration drew sustenance from major developments in mass advertising and the new field of motivational research that sought to uncover the psychological ‘reasons why’ consumers preferred certain types of goods. The synthetics revolution also owed much to the maturation of the ready-to-wear industry, the growth of high-street chains or multiples like Marks and Spencer and C&A Modes in the UK, and the rise of designer brands in North America and Europe. Although architects and interior designers initially shunned synthetics, the fibre companies’ extensive marketing campaigns and technical assistance programs convinced these users that the new materials were appropriate for homes, hotels, airplanes, and offices. This aspect of the synthetics revolution—the stories of how nylon, polyester, acrylic, and spandex were marketed, integrated into product design, and sold on main street and high street—are largely missing from traditional business and technological histories with their focus on corporate strategy, chemist-inventors, and the importance of research and development.

To explore this hidden cultural story, I will conduct research in two major archival collections in the UK. The first collection, The House of Fraser collection in The University of Glasgow Archives & Special Collections, holds excellent runs of consumer-oriented promotional materials that



demonstrate the transition from natural to man-made fibres. Promotional pamphlets and other ephemera illustrate how British high-street retailers promoted new materials like polyester alongside conventional textiles made from cotton, linen, and wool. The Archive also contains countless photographs of store interiors and window displays, which I will study for special promotions of synthetics from the 1960s through the 1990s. The House of Fraser Archive is important to my research because it contains materials from stores all around the country, from northern Scotland to the English Channel, thereby providing a national snapshot of the UK.

The second collection, the records of the British Clothing Industry Association (BCIA) at the Modern Records Centre at The University of Warwick, holds the records of numerous trade associations in the British fashion, clothing, and fibre industries, ranging from the papers of the Apparel Manufacturers Association of the World War II era to the British Man-Made Fibres Federation of the post-war years. These materials provide an insiders' view of the promotional activities by the British fibre manufacturers. For example, they shed light on high-profile exhibitions and fashion shows for retail buyers that were held at Celanese House in the heart of London's wholesale fashion district around Regent Street during the 1960s and 1970s. Overall, the BCIA collection will be useful for the insight it provides into the strategic thinking of major players within in the fashion-industrial complex.

I am grateful to the BAC for awarding me the £1,000 bursary to advance my research in Glasgow and Warwick. I hope that my book will shed new light on the synthetic age, providing insight into the role of business enterprise on the everyday experiences of British consumers of the twentieth century.

***Regina Lee Blaszczyk***

Professor of Business History, University of Leeds

## ***Change the Record: The BAC Annual Conference 2017***

Business archives contain the records of enduring value of a business. But how are those records changing? How are archivists responding to those changes? Do the changes make capturing and using records more difficult or just difficult in a new way? The BAC's annual conference will look at how shifts in the technology landscape have impacted records creation and use. Our speakers will examine these issues with views from both a theoretical standpoint, and from the practitioner on the frontline. It's time to change the record, so come along and see how!

The opening presentation from Simon Demissie and Arike Oke of The Wellcome Trust will give an overview of how the records their organisation receives have changed, how this impacts on how they manage them and what this means for the archives profession as a whole. A panel session on the changing nature of records will follow with Elizabeth Lomas of UCL and Mary Rutherford and Chris Campbell from GSK. The subjects will include the change in format of specific record types and the impact of ERP on records management; this session is bound to spark conversation.

The afternoon will focus on the use of archives with a look at how the history of Harper Collins has been utilised during its anniversary year with a presentation from Dawn Sinclair. Following this, a

number of case studies on the different ways archives are being used will be presented in a second panel session. Presenters include Margaret Procter on a collaborative PhD between the University of Liverpool and Barclays, Alix Green from Essex University and Judy Faraday from The John Lewis Partnership on rethinking archivist-academic engagement, and Ryland Thomas from the Bank of England.

There will be plenty of opportunity for discussion throughout the day.

The conference will be held on Tuesday 21 November at Harper Collins, The News Building situated close to London Bridge, which offers spectacular views of the City.

The AGM will be held at 09.30 with registration from 09.00. The conference itself will begin at 10.30, will registration from 10.00. The day will finish at 17.00.

The conference will be followed by the Wadsworth prize for Business History.

Booking is available through Eventbrite:

[www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-archives-council-agm-conference-2017-tickets-36211086334](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-archives-council-agm-conference-2017-tickets-36211086334)

## **Lesley Richmond receives Distinguished Service Award**

We were delighted that Lesley Richmond was presented with the Archives and Records Association's *Distinguished Service Award* at a ceremony in Glasgow at the end of September. Lesley's contribution to business archives has been enormous. She was the first archivist employed by Racal-Chubb in the 1980s and then spent 30 years at Glasgow University Archives, becoming its Director in 2001. Glasgow University is of course well known for its large holdings of business records. Lesley has also had a long involvement with the Business Archives Council Scotland (BACS) and she was the BACS representative on the BAC in the 1980s and 1990s. Her association with the BAC has also been significant: Lesley was manager of our Company Archives Survey from 1980 to 1984 and the publication of her book (with Bridget Stockford) *Company archives: a survey of the records of 1000 of the first registered companies in England and Wales* in 1986 was a huge milestone for business archives. She also contributed to surveys of the brewing and pharmaceutical industries. We offer our congratulations to Lesley on this well-deserved recognition.

## **British Records Association (BRA) Annual Conference 2017**

This year's BRA Conference will be on the theme *Shops and shopping in the archives: a nation of record keepers?*, and will take place on Thursday 30 November at 70 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, London, EC1M 6EJ.

Speakers include: Alan Crosby, Judy Faraday, Phil Lyon, Peter Scott, Richard Wiltshire, Jon Stobart, Shelley Tickell and Laura Ugolini, who will cover different aspects of shoppers and shopping from the eighteenth century up to the present day, and consider the variety of sources

used in their research. There will also be discussion sessions of archivists and historians on the preservation – or lack of it – of records from the High Street and major department stores.

More details will be posted soon and a full programme and registration will be available via the BRA's web site [www.britishrecordsassociation.org.uk/events/conference-2017/](http://www.britishrecordsassociation.org.uk/events/conference-2017/)

## Announcing the winners of the BAC's cataloguing grants 2017

The BAC is delighted to announce the winners of the two cataloguing grants for 2017.

The original cataloguing grant for business archives was awarded to the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust for the archive of Lucas Industries, a Birmingham-based manufacturer of motor and aerospace components. The grant will be used to improve descriptions of approximately 2,900 items relating to the social and industrial aspects of the company.



*Lucas Poster from circa 1910 advertising the Silver King, a cycle oil lamp  
(Image courtesy of the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust)*



The cataloguing grant for business archives related to the arts was awarded to Falmouth University for the cataloguing of the Kneehigh Theatre Archive. The collection that the grant will fund includes photographs, scripts, design records and promotional materials relating to two key productions in the Kneehigh Archive – *Tregeagle* and *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*.



*Kneehigh production of A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings at Hayle in Cornwall, 2005  
(Image courtesy Steve Tanner/Kneehigh/Wildworks)*

Both organisations were awarded £3,000, and their respective collections will be catalogued by April 2018.



*Sarah C Jane of Falmouth University, joint winners of the BAC Arts cataloguing grant, being presented with the university's cataloguing grant cheque of £3,000 by Anne Archer, co-judge of the BAC Arts grant (Image courtesy Karen Sampson)*

For more information about the winners and the grants please see the BAC website at [www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activitiesobjectives/catgrant/](http://www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activitiesobjectives/catgrant/)

## **The Museums Association Conference & Exhibition 2017**

The Museums Association Conference & Exhibition, which is taking place in Manchester between the 16-18 November, is the largest event of its kind in Europe for museums and heritage



professionals. It will provide opportunity to meet over 1,500 senior staff, discuss the latest issues, discover new practice and meet the world's leading suppliers and consultants.

This year's event is packed with content - including three fantastic themes on Audiences, Collections and Workforce. Delegates will have the opportunity to debate and discuss big ideas with colleagues from around the UK and internationally. Keynote speakers include Lemn Sissay, writer and broadcaster, Francesca Martinez, comedian and writer, Jeremy Deller, Turner Prize-winning artist and Jenny Waldman, director, 14-18 NOW.

There are a host of other sessions, practical workshops and training - all developed to facilitate fresh thinking. The social events give you the opportunity to see The Whitworth Art Gallery, Museum of Science and Industry and network at People's History Museum.

Conference is a vital forum for debate, exchange and networking – join the Museums Association for the biggest event of its kind in Europe and help shape the future of museums. For more information and to book your place, go to: [www.museumsassociation.org/conference](http://www.museumsassociation.org/conference)

## **John Armstrong article in the *London Journal***

Members might like to know that the *London Journal* recently published an article by John (with David Williams) on the London steamship fleet. John's abstract introduces the article:

'In the new technology of the steamship, London was by far the most dominant port in the UK. The Thames was where the steamship was more visible, and more visible in all its forms, than in any other location. Using a parliamentary return of 1851 this article analyses the characteristics and the ownership of the London steam fleet. Owners ranged from giants like General Steam Navigation Company and Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company to humble owners of single small vessels and steamship services embraced river ferries, tugboats and coastal, continental and oceanic routes. All contributed to change dramatically the nature of the capital's commerce and city transport.'

Direct, online access to the article is via a paywall, but it can be read freely at Guildhall Library or London Metropolitan Archives and in many university libraries and reference libraries.

The link to the article is: [here](#)

## **John Entwisle**

We are very sorry to report the death of John Entwisle in July 2017 at the age of 65. John was Corporate Historian at Reuters, where he was manager of the archives from 1985 to 2017 and representative of the company (now Thomson Reuters) as corporate members of the Business Archives Council (BAC) throughout that time. After being introduced to business archives at BP, he had joined Reuters as its first professional archivist in 1985. Initially he was based in the Reuters headquarters in Fleet Street – designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens – and he was always proud of that

distinctive building. Latterly the company has been based in the very different environment of Canary Wharf and John oversaw the relocation of the archives to nearby Poplar in the early 2000s.

The history and archives of Reuters have a distinctive place in business archives and in John they found a great champion and interpreter. His commitment and expertise were widely recognised and at Reuters he gave a generous welcome and encouragement to researchers and to Reuters' colleagues from around the world. He also played a key role in the preparation of Donald Read's study of the company, *The Power of News – The History of Reuters (1992)*. John remained a loyal supporter of the BAC for over 30 years. Members will remember him from his regular attendance at our conferences, general meetings and other events, where he will be greatly missed.

**Edwin Green**

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