



Business Archives Council Newsletter

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The editor of this newsletter is Ben White. The next issue will appear in Autumn 2018. Prospective copy should be sent to Ben White, email: benjamin.white@bankofengland.co.uk

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Chair's blog

In my best blogging tradition I've been thinking about this piece while on a train. And a long journey at that – Dundee to London. In fact it has been a relatively quiet time on the BAC front over the last few months and, Dundee aside, I haven't had much opportunity to get out and about. So you'll be pleased to read that this blog is going to be short.

One thing that I must mention however is this year's BAC Conference. Over the course of the last 12 months or so I have been discussing with various people the idea of a conference with a more international emphasis. Various strands have at long last come together, and you may already have seen the 'save the date' story on our website and via Twitter, plus there's one in this newsletter. So I'm delighted to say that our conference will be held in association with the International Council on Archives' Section for Business Archives (SBA) on the 14/15 November 2018 at The National Archives in Kew. The theme is going to be a critical one for us all - 'trust'. Lorna Williams and Alex Bieri, my counterpart at the SBA, have done in great job in making this happen and an organising committee is busy developing what I know will be a stimulating programme. It will be fantastic to be able to welcome business archivists from outside the UK to London in November, and of course I hope that as many BAC members as possible will be able to attend all or some of the event. Further details of the programme and booking will be available soon.

[illegible]

A great example of the power of business archives, not to mention something which has considerably brightened-up my time spent each day waiting for a Northern Line train!

Mike Anson
BAC Chair

Save the date! The BAC conference: 14 and 15 November 2018

The BAC is delighted to announce that the annual conference will this year be a joint two-day event with the International Council on Archives Section for Business Archives (ICA SBA).

Welcoming the news, Mike Anson, Chair of the BAC said: 'We have been discussing the possibility of a collaboration between the BAC and SBA for some time and I'm delighted that this is now going ahead. I am looking forward to meeting business archivists from around the world in London in November.'

Alexander Bieri, Chair of SBA said: 'The Section on Business Archives of the International Council on Archives has profited for many decades from the strong support of its members from the United Kingdom; our colleagues in Britain have pioneered the international collaboration amongst business archives. It makes us particularly happy that we now have the opportunity to join forces with the Business Archives Council for exploiting the theme "trust" which is at the core of all successful business archives.'

The conference will be held at The National Archives in Kew on the **14 and 15 November** and will be on the critical theme of 'Trust'.

More details will be added over the next few months so keep an eye out on the BAC website www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activitiesobjectives/conference/

Announcing a special one-off cataloguing grant: *The John Armstrong Award for Transport Archives*

The Business Archives Council (BAC) is delighted to announce the launch of a special, one-off cataloguing grant, *The John Armstrong Award for Transport Archives*.

The grant for £4,000 is jointly funded by a bequest from the late John Armstrong and the BAC, and is for the cataloguing of transport-related business archives.

The aims of *The John Armstrong Award for Transport Archives*, in funding the cataloguing of a transport-related business collection in either the private or public sector, are to:

- Provide financial support for institutions/businesses that manage transport-related business archives

- Provide access to collections that have not yet been prioritised but have potential academic or socio-historical value
- Create opportunities for archivists or para-professionals/volunteers to gain experience in listing transport-related business collections
- Make more transport-related business collections accessible

We envisage that the £4,000 grant will be used over the equivalent of a SIX-week period to fund an archive intern or temporary staff member (under professional supervision) to catalogue a discrete collection of transport-related business records. This work should produce either a detailed catalogue of a small collection or a top-level catalogue of a more substantial collection. The recipient of the Award should provide the BAC with an article for its newsletter, and the catalogue should be made available on The National Archives' (TNA) *Discovery* database.

Applications are welcome from all types of organisation, whether public or private sector, such as a business, local record office, university, museum, charity, specialised repository, and that hold business archives related to transport, for example papers of: rail, automobile, maritime or aeronautical companies, etc. Applicants who have previously applied to the BAC's two existing grants are welcome to apply.

The John Armstrong Award for Transport Archives will open for applications on **Monday 2 July 2018** and the deadline for applications is **Friday 5 October 2018 at 4pm**. More information, including guidelines and application form, will appear on the BAC website soon

www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activitiesobjectives/cattransport/

Any questions about this grant should be addressed to Ben White, Administrator of *The John Armstrong Award for Transport Archives*.

Email: benjamin.white@bankofengland.co.uk

Tel: 020 3461 4810

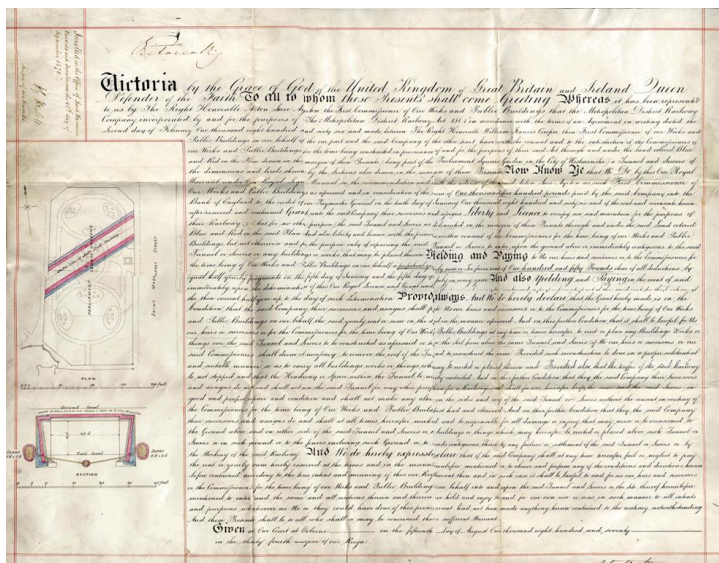
Transport for London (TfL) archive catalogue: a journey to improving access

The holdings of Transport for London's (TfL) corporate archives date from 1563 through to the present day, and cover paper and digital formats. The catalogue was made available online in 2014 and today contains over 160,000 entries. It is a complex beast, as TfL is a complex organisation. But the catalogue's complexity results in it being hard to navigate for users. The Archives team have begun work to reappraise the classification scheme so that the catalogue can be of greater use to all potential users and areas of the collections can be intellectually amalgamated, raising their profile and findability.

There are two key issues with the existing catalogue. Firstly, its origins are in a series system approach, used to bypass the problem of an ever evolving and changing organisational hierarchy. But this series system morphed into an accessions-based system where each series represented a discrete accession.

Secondly, due to this accessions-based system, much of the collection is neither intellectually nor physically arranged to reflect the actual purpose or original creator of the record – it has just been catalogued according to which business area happened to box it up.

For a casual researcher or a user looking for something very specific there is perhaps not a problem as their word searching will still find the item (assuming it has been catalogued with the appropriate detail). But for a user looking for a broader subject, a hit-list of seemingly random reference numbers and record details is presented – and it can be overwhelming. And for users interested in particular projects or meetings, they are unable to simply start at a relevant collection level, expand the tree and navigate through – they have to jump around the structure.



Records such as this royal warrant that bears the signature of Queen Victoria and gives permission to the Metropolitan District Railway to dig under Parliament Square will be more accessible through the new classification scheme (TfL Archive reference: LT000565/044)

As Archivists, we are uncomfortable with this situation and feel we should be able to offer a better online experience. But the task is huge. Since 1933, the organisation has undergone six fundamental statutory changes accompanied by a seemingly endless stream of organisational transformations. And even prior to 1933 there were many changes as the transport network went from individual providers to various conglomerates and partnerships across different transport modes. It felt 'right' and traditional to somehow reflect all these changes in a new catalogue structure but we knew how enormous the task would be. And would it result in anything more helpful? Only our users could tell us.

Our Corporate Archivist set about developing a classification scheme that could encompass and reflect all the changes....and then stood back and realised how horribly complicated it looked! Then, a scheme based on functions was developed to mirror and develop that which we have for our digital records. That looked huge, but navigable and somewhat comprehensible. We then put it to our users.

We chose four sets of users: transport enthusiasts who were regular users, academics looking at our organisational history, first time remote enquirers, and selected colleagues from across the business. They were asked how they expected

a catalogue to work (like Google of course). What barriers they had found to using our catalogue, what they liked about the catalogue in its current state, how they expected records to be grouped, and how many hit-list results they would on average plough through before giving up? Some of them were also shown the two potential new classification schemes.

In all instances the functional scheme was the most liked. Apprehension was expressed about some of the terminology (corporate language that nobody really knows the meaning of, was one remark), and of course it was evidenced that subjectivity when searching will remain a problem, but overall there was a comfort in for example the idea that all Annual Reports would be in one place or that all records created by the publicity department would be under one heading.

So the decision has been made. The journey ahead will be long and no doubt arduous. We have been draft-mapping all existing series into the new classification and with 100 to go this has taken us 33 hours. We will then need to address each function individually to make sure its subdivisions are robust and really drill down into the detail of the existing series that we propose to move into it. Our challenges through all of the work will be to avoid leaving gaping holes in what is available to search online, to not create live duplicate catalogue entries, and to not lose any catalogue entries in the virtual ether!

But the potential rewards far outweigh the risks and the work involved. At present, nobody uses our collections to look at trade union relationship history, to look at occupational health in one of the largest workforces in London, or to chart property ownership. So, if we can make such 'sets' of records more visible to allow a quick perusal, then surely we should – and so we intend to.

Tamara Thornhill

Corporate Archivist, Transport for London

A new mobile-friendly look for the *Managing Business Archives* website

The *Managing Business Archives* website has had a refresh to make the content easier to read on mobile devices.

Click [here](#) to take a look.

Discover with The National Archives' *Discovery & Manage Your Collections*

Discovery is the UK's national collections portal for archives. Over the past 18 months, The National Archives (TNA) has developed flexible tools that allow archives a straightforward way to contribute catalogue data to *Discovery*, edit it and export content for use on other platforms. *Manage Your Collections* (MYC) allows

archives control over their collections information enabling the publication of open, searchable, interoperable and machine-readable descriptions.

MYC offers something to archives of any size and capability. Larger archives with existing online catalogues can use MYC as another platform to increase visibility to their collections, whilst smaller archives that do not have the resource to procure a content management system or a way to publish collections information online can use MYC as their complete cataloguing solution. The intention is to lower the bar to entry for small repositories so that any archive, whatever their digital capacity, has the ability to publish (and even more importantly maintain) item level collections data online.

Uploading to *Discovery* using MYC is done via TNA's custom ISAD(G) compliant Excel template. Once collections are online, data can be managed in and exported from *Discovery* with TNA's in-browser editing functionality. Realising that catalogue descriptions already exist in a variety of formats, TNA are currently working on new mapper functionality that will allow archives the ability to upload their own spreadsheets of catalogue data and map their metadata fields to *Discovery's*, enabling, TNA hopes, another low-bar, user-friendly approach to getting catalogue descriptions into *Discovery*.

Read about the latest developments to MYC in TNA's blog:

blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/blog/manage-collections-new-version-now-live/

Or contact TNA directly for more information, including how to create your MYC account:

manageyourcollections@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Sporting Heritage: supporting access to funding

Sporting Heritage is pleased to announce that, with the support of Art Fund, it is able to offer organisations and community groups the opportunity to access funding as part of its annual celebration of sporting heritage, *National Sporting Heritage Day 2018* (which will be held on 30 September this year).

This funding initiative will support increased engagement with local sporting heritage collections which tell the stories of sporting activities, heroes, and endeavours.

The deadline for applications is 29 June 2018. For more information please visit the Sporting Heritage website here: www.sportingheritage.org.uk/content/news/national-sporting-heritage-day/community-grants

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