BAC Conference 2015

Notes from group discussion: "Just say no?": The challenges of collecting business archives

In the final session of the Business Archives Council Conference 2015, delegates split into groups and were asked to choose and discuss a key challenge to collecting business archives. These are the notes that the different groups produced during those discussions.

Group 1: Ensuring diverse and representative collections #1

Solutions:

• A matrix needs to be created by a diverse group
• Understand what is in the collection and collaborate to share knowledge
• Recognise value of ‘unofficial voice’/personal material
• Take a flexible approach to collecting
• Outreach – identify champions
• Oral Histories – identify gaps and other points of view

Help needed:

• Money
• People – internal, external, stakeholders and communities
• Chance to share experiences and learn from others

Group 2: Ensuring diverse and representative collections #2

Solutions:

• Use oral history
• Include critical voices
• Link to company’s diversity policy
• Embed the archives in new projects
• Get close to records management
• Address diverse audiences

Group 3: Ensuring diverse and representative collections #3

Solutions:

• Contacts at different levels
• Oral history – audio and video
• Diversity in the profession
• Challenge the appraisal policy, question why you are keeping or not
• Diversify formats
• Understand the business
• Opening up the archive – de-professionalization

Help needed:

• Resources
• Training
• We don’t like giving up our control to others/opening up

**Group 4: Ensuring diverse and representative collections #4**

**Solutions:**

• Business partners
• Prioritising collection
• Understanding what records are governed by regulatory standards
• Building trust in the organisation

Help needed:

• How to get archivists can actively helping departments in their records and collaboration with records management

**Group 5: Records from across the organisation #1**

**Solutions:**

• Building relationships
• Communication
• Education
• Approved policy, official mandate

Help needed:

• Case studies – examples of policies (especially for lone workers)
• Networking opportunities

**Group 6: Records from across the organisation #2**

**Solutions:**

• High level statement of policy
• Local champions
• Management structure and location
• Highlight the risks and benefits
• Inclusion in inboarding/induction

**Group 7: Records from across the organisation #3**

**Solutions:**

• Champions
• Records management feed into archive
• Open days and sessions within the organisation to advocate benefits
• Staff magazine call out
• Oral history
• Black bin days
• Inductions
• Campaigns on particular areas – World War 1
• Family papers
• Keeping it on our agenda
• Target key people who are retiring

**Group 8: Enforcing records management**

**Solutions:**

• Electronic Records Management – talk to data/IT department
• Archives and records management together in the same department
• Build into corporate culture to deal with devolution – compulsory courses
• Use legal and regulatory stick

**Group 9: Getting space and infrastructure**

**Solutions:**

• Ask for help from higher up in the organisation
• Take advantage of changes in the organisation
• Know your requirements and be flexible in solving them
• Advocate your outcomes not just your needs
• Use management speak such as ‘risk’ – get on a risk register
• Advocate the value of your collection
• Use external standard for reference
• Show the external value of the collection
• Be involved in disposal and records management processes
• Use case studies to understand your situation and gather ideas of how you will tackle the challenge

Help needed:

• Advocacy and external support from bodies such as the BAC, BACS and TNA