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Business Archives Council
Newsletter

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The editor of this newsletter is Ben White. The next issue will appear in Autumn 2019. Prospective copy should be sent to Ben White, email: benjamin.white@bankofengland.co.uk

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Chair's blog

Welcome to the Summer Blog which, for once, is not being written on a train! The last few months have been relatively quiet but I can report on some of the events that I have attended.

First up, a two-day event on business archives and business history in Reading, organised by Peter Miskell of the Henley Business School, University of Reading. Peter brought together an excellent cast of speakers made up of those managing business archives and those using them. There are definitely advantages for both sides if we can gain a better understanding of what we do and how we do it. For instance, I think that when it comes to access to business archives some users still view us in the old-fashioned way, as gatekeepers. Whereas, most business archivists who I know want to make available as much as possible, albeit within the constraints of each individual company. Explaining these constraints can help users to understand that our default isn't 'no', and if it is, then there are good reasons. I saw plenty of conversations and business cards being exchanged so hopefully this will result in some fruitful collaborations in the future. One unexpected excitement for me was being taken to the Royal Berkshire Hospital in an ambulance on the Thursday night… That's another story, but don't worry I'm fine!

I also spoke at a workshop on the records of the voluntary sector which was organised by Georgina Brewis at the British Academy. I have long felt that there are many similarities between this sector and ours: the types of records; the main purpose of the organisation is not as a

memory institution; the archive is often managed by a sole-archivist and with limited resources; internal 'business' use of the archive is important. Some of these points were explored during the day, along with debates on how to treat sensitive personal records which, of course, loom large for charities and voluntary organisations. Coverage was also given to community archives. All in all, a thought-provoking day. This time I didn't end up in hospital (!) but it was nice to meet a couple of former Bank of England Archive colleagues who are now involved with the archives of specific charities.

Next, I was in the suburbs (well, not literally) at the conference of our friends at the British Records Association. The conference, titled *Living on the Edge: Records of Suburbia*, covered many aspects of the fascinating history and records of the suburbs. There was a strong element on business archives, not least because our very own BAC Trustee Sara Kinsey (Head of Historical Archives at Nationwide) spoke about building societies (as a result I now know what the phrase 'permanent building society' means). Some of the other topics, such as the Hampstead Garden Suburb, and the interior design of interwar housing, also featured business records. However, my top fact from the day was that the West Midlands bus number 11 runs on the longest urban route in Europe! It's a 27 mile circle in case you were wondering…

I must mention a ceremony held high above Canary Wharf (Level 40 to be precise) in March, which saw HSBC receive its Accredited Archive Service award. It was an excellent event, fully-supported by the business, with Ian Stuart (CEO, HSBC UK Bank plc) receiving the award from Valerie Johnson (Director of Research at The National Archives, not to mention a BAC Trustee). And the guest-list was something of a 'who's who' in our sector. Congratulations to Tina Staples and her team for joining the band of business archives which have accredited status.

The HSBC Accredited Archive Service award presentation party, including: Ian Stuart (CEO, HSBC UK Bank plc), Valerie Johnson (Director of Research, The National Archives) and Tina Staples (Global Head of Archives, HSBC Holdings plc)
(Courtesy Mike Anson)

Finally, a note for your diaries: this year's BAC Conference will be held on Wednesday 20 November 2019 at the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). We're still working on the programme, but look out for further details soon!

Mike Anson
BAC Chair

‘The best books, he perceived, are those that tell you what you know already’: BT, Advocacy and Archives

George Orwell’s novel *1984* came up in discussions at the 2018 BAC conference – it is always useful for a thought-provoking quote. You may not think that a bleakly dystopian novel about totalitarianism would be the starting point for an article about advocacy and archives, but bear with me…

I was reminded of the quote because the topic of advocacy is very well covered in our sector. Advertising our collections is something we all have to do. As business archivists, we all have the job of inventing, repurposing and borrowing ideas that will publicise our collections. It’s difficult to write anything new on the topic. But often what I value reading in articles, learning about at training courses, or discovering when networking, are ideas and experiences that are familiar but different, with a reassuring element of being told ‘what you know already’. So here are just a few examples of some things we did at BT Archives last year to highlight our collections.

Heritage Open Days* and *Open House

A national festival of history and culture, *Heritage Open Days* supports the running of heritage events over two long weekends in September. By chance, I met one of the organisers at a history event and she suggested that we might want to get involved. We created a programme including a self-guided tour of materials in our searchroom (with handy map provided), a short presentation and a half-hour film showing.

Visitors at Open House weekend at BT Tower in 2018
(Courtesy BT Heritage & Archives)

What was remarkable was that by having a platform like *Heritage Open Days*, we didn’t really need to do any publicity for our event at all. We advertised it via our intranet to an internal audience, and that combined with the *Heritage Open Days* site, meant that we were fully booked within days. Feedback was captured afterwards, to help with future event planning, but also to provide quotes that we can use for advocacy. *Open House* weekend allows free entry to some of London’s best buildings. We were involved at the BT Tower when, by ballot, the public could come in to take in the view from the 34th floor. We created a heritage display including the first visitors’ book and an early menu from the ‘Top of the Tower’ restaurant (which you might be surprised to learn was run by Butlin’s).

Press coverage

Two of our press stories of 2018 came from ‘discoveries’ of a sort.

One of our academic researchers, Professor Sarah Jackson, who is writing a monograph about the telephone and literature, was looking through a file on the subject of phone tapping, when she discovered a section about Sylvia Pankhurst. The file had been catalogued to a high level, but not in detail, so these papers weren't know about. Pankhurst had written to the Post Office about a legal case where a husband had monitored his wife's calls. It's an interesting story, and one which also highlights wider issues of surveillance of Pankhurst herself by MI5:

https://ahrc.ukri.org/newsevents/news/letters-discovered-in-bt-archive-reveal-sylvia-pankhursts-wiretapping-fears/ AHRC created a press release and the story was picked up by various channels.

It's a good example of the multiple benefits of having academic researchers – not only does their research demonstrate the value of an archive, it can also lead to a deeper understanding of a collection and an enhanced level of detail in catalogue entries, along with wider publicity.

Another story came from a new donation. I received a call from an ex-Engineer for BT, who had found records above an Exchange building at Bournemouth. Amongst these was a file about two telephone engineers who had become stranded on the Channel Islands for the duration of the Second World War, and 'did these sound of interest?' The file reads like a drama – events unfold through the correspondence, reports and telegrams. At one point the RAF staged a clandestine rescue mission, and the pilot involved then wrote a letter to one of the stranded men's wives to explain and apologise that he hadn't managed to bring her husband back.

Guernsey radio station, c.1945 (Ref.: TCB 417/E 13536)
(Courtesy BT Heritage & Archives)

I'd been put in touch with the editor of a site called *Museum Crush* by someone I'd met at a training course, so I was able to publish an article there, which then attracted interest from the BBC and ITV. museumcrush.org/the-story-of-two-post-office-men-trapped-on-the-channel-islands-during-wwii

News for BT people

Sometimes, and ideally, we're able to use the mechanisms already available to us via our own organisation to find value from the raw material that we can provide. For example, at BT, we try to make the most of internal articles and coverage. Currently there is a *Throwback Thursday* feature – an idea from our Internal Communications team. While we provide content, it's also useful that a lot of digitised material is available online, so it's possible for the Comms team find images quickly if there is a particularly tight deadline: www.digitalarchives.bt.com/Calmview

We prepare yearly event calendars to inform stories – special anniversaries or 'on this day'. And we pitch story ideas when interesting topics come up.

Back to 1984

And what better way to end than with a photo of a giant phone, and a neat circle back to 1984, when this image was taken for the *Serving the Nation* exhibition at the Guildhall, publicising telephone services. Something to bear in mind for our current advocacy plans…

Serving the Nation exhibition, 1984 (Ref.: TCC 474/HF 64B)
(Courtesy BT Heritage & Archives)

Anne Archer
Heritage Collections Manager, BT Archives

Reminder: The 2019 ARA conference, 28-30 August - Leeds

The organisers of the Archives & Records Association UK & Ireland (ARA) 2019 annual conference have announced the names of the first two keynote speakers. They are: **Dr Ros Lynch**, Copyright and IP Enforcement Director at the Intellectual Property Office (IPO), and, **J. Willgoose Esq.**, the driving force behind innovative art-rock band *Public Service Broadcasting*.

For full details of this year's programme, venue, how to register to attend all three days, or just one or two, and much more, visit http://conference.archives.org.uk/. In addition, you can also follow ARA conference developments on Twitter: **#ARA2019** and **@ARAConf**, and on Instagram **@araconference**

The 2019 Social History Society's Book Prize winner

The winner of the Social History Society book prize for 2019 is Professor Hannah Barker for *Family and Business during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

Professor Barker's book examines the lives and business activities of independent tradesmen and women, who were central to the economic and social transformation of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For more information, please go to: http://socialhistory.org.uk/2019/06/03/book-prize-winners-2019/

The 2018 Business Archive Council Cataloguing Grant is now available

The final report by the winner of the 2018 Business Archive Council Cataloguing Grant, the Clevedon Pier and Heritage Trust, is now available to read on the BAC website, here: www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activitiesobjectives/catgrant/2018_catgrant

TWA Heritage Digitisation Grant: increased award amounts for 2019

Following strong interest and some excellent applications from archives and other memory institutions over the last three years, the TWA Digitisation Grant has relaunched in 2019. TownsWeb Archiving are very pleased to be increasing the fund this year, with the winner receiving **up to £6,000**, second place **up to £3,000**, and shortlisted applicants **up to £500** of match funding, to support them in digitising their holdings.

The TWA Digitisation Grant opens on **19 June 2019** and welcomes applications from the following UK institutions:

- Public, private & charity Archives
- Business/corporate Archives
- Public & private Libraries
- Museums
- Galleries

The deadline for applications is **28 July 2019** with announcements of winners at the ARA annual conference on 28 August 2019.

Find out how to apply and for more details please go to: www.townswebarchiving.com/twa-digitisation-grant

BT joins the Digital Preservation Coalition

Preserving the history of BT and its predecessors, BT Heritage & Archives is the custodian of the Group's corporate memory – both physical and digital. The Archive, which is recognised by UNESCO and Arts Council England as being of international importance, showcases Britain's role in the development of telecommunications and the impact of the technology on society. Part of the digital collection includes digitised material available online - an extraordinary array of documents, images, plans, photographs and correspondence. There are also key digital records created by the company more recently that will enter the collection. These records chart innovations from the company's recent past to today, such as the launch of the 5G network this year.

'As we prepare to celebrate BT's 175th anniversary in 2021, we are keen to ensure the ongoing legacy of BT as the world's first communications provider and celebrate the innovation and technology that has kept the company at the forefront of communications since it was founded in 1846', explains Heritage Collections Manager, Anne Archer. 'We look forward to benefitting from the expertise of the DPC's members and team, as well as learning from the external perspectives and experiences of an impartial support network.'

Executive Director of the DPC, William Kilbride, was delighted to welcome BT to the Coalition saying: 'With BT joining the Coalition, we welcome not just a new organisation but a new sector to the DPC. We recognise that digital preservation is a universal challenge to organisations and individuals around the world, and we know that working together means we can share approaches and expertise. I look forward to working with BT on this shared challenge enormously, and hope to learn a great deal from the new perspective they bring.'

The not-for-profit DPC is an international advocate for digital preservation, helping members around the world to deliver resilient long-term access to digital content and services through community engagement, targeted advocacy work, training and workforce development, capacity building, good practice and standards, and through good management and governance. Its vision is a secure digital legacy.

Click for more information about:
BT Heritage & Archives
How to Join the DPC

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