

# COLLECTING BUSINESS ARCHIVES

## CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS AND GUIDANCE NOTES:

### Hunter Gatherers: Collecting Today's Business Archives

Published by Business Archives Council in 2016, these proceeding and guidance notes are based on presentations and discussion at the 2015 Business Archives Council Conference held on 10 November at The Prudential Assurance Company Building, Holborn Bars, London. The following sections highlight aspects and case studies relating to collecting business records for use for archive managers, staff and users.

#### Conference Overview

Speakers and contributors covered three key themes which outlined a wide range of collecting activities, from records transfers to documentation initiatives and surveys, and from digital deposits to purchases. Implications and challenges of different collecting activities, including funding for archives, depositors, historians and other users were debated.

Isobel Hunter, The National Archives gave the Keynote *Shifting Landscapes: The challenges facing business and independent archives and the buying and selling of business archives*. Isobel spoke from her prior experience as archivist at Marks & Spencer where customers donated items together with memories of products. One donor reminisced over the ease of washing underpants made from nylon! Isobel reflected that business archives have 'the power...to take us back into our own lives' and are a growth area: in-house corporate archives are increasingly engaging with wider audiences by making catalogues available online; safeguarding archives of liquidated businesses will always be a challenge; business archives can attract an immense wave of support such as The Minton Archive, a ceramics collection which was put up for sale in March 2015 for which the successful fundraising effort was assisted by local people in Stoke-on-Trent.

The first theme, *Collecting from inside the organisation* was covered by Claire Tunstall and Ruth Loughrey, *The Records Journey in Unilever Archives and Records Management* and Claire Twinn and James Mortlock, HSBC Archives *The Same but Different: Collecting in the Digital World*. The Unilever case study emphasised the importance of securing records through close working records management and archive teams and good working relationships with departments promoted through their 'buddy' scheme, and setting appraisal days to review the bulk released from records management. HSBC emphasised that the many of the same key processes in collecting paper records apply to digital material. In order to manage and preserve both types of records HSBC has developed its Global Digital Archives combining Preservica and Calm. There were a number of challenges, such as the bank's rigorous information security procedures, along the way.

The second theme focused on oral history projects which proved to be very popular with delegates. The speakers argued that oral histories should not be defined as alternative collecting. Dr Rob Perks, Lead Curator of Oral History and Director of National Life Stories, British Library gave an overview highlighting their importance as a source in exploring the ethos and culture of a business revealing personal relationships, hierarchies and power structures and can be in a tool to help prevent corporate amnesia by connecting a business connection with past precedence. Dr Katharine Haydon, National Life Stories spoke about the Barings Bank oral history project and Dr Michele Blagg, Institute of Contemporary History, King's College London spoke about the project *Voices of the London Bullion Market* highlighted the importance of capturing memories before it is too late, the value of the 'Life Story' approach in capturing details from the whole of an interviewee's life and the unique information which can be gained by hearing the sound of the human voice.

The final theme looked to national collecting strategies, starting with M Stephen Salmon, Canadian Business History Association "*... to the amount of \$600*": *A Brief History of Business Records at Library and Archives Canada*. Stephen's presentation, illustrated with images from logging archives, emphasised issues faced by archive repositories in accepting collections, including costs for preservation (stating 'If it's so mouldy that it's walking out the door is it worth it?'), space, staff and other resources. The significance of a firm should be assessed against document quality and likely research value of the records. Cheryl Brown, Ballast Trust and University of Glasgow *From Boom to Bust: documenting Scotland's business history* spoke about the role of Business Archive Council Scotland survey work in promoting of preservation and use of business archives and deposit where necessary.

The final group discussion "*Just say no?*": *The challenges of collecting business archives* was chaired by Isobel Hunter, The National Archives. Debate highlighted the core role of records management in ongoing collections development, the importance of good relations and engagement with the wider community, diversifying collections through oral histories and sustaining resources for collecting including digital preservation tools through advocating the outcomes as well as the needs linking to company objectives.

## Content

### 1 Shifting Landscapes

Isobel Hunter, The National Archives (TNA) Keynote *Shifting Landscapes: The challenges facing business and independent archives and the buying and selling of business archives.*

### 2 Collecting from inside the organisation

Claire Tunstall and Ruth Loughrey, *The Records Journey in Unilever Archives and Records Management* and Claire Twinn and James Mortlock, HSBC Archives *The Same but Different: Collecting in the Digital World.*

### 3 Alternative Collecting

Dr Rob Perks, Lead Curator of Oral History and Director of National Life Stories, British Library, *Oral history and business archives: an overview*

Dr Katharine Haydon, National Life Stories, Barings Bank oral history project

Dr Michele Blagg, Institute of Contemporary History, King's College London, *Voices of the London Bullion Market*

### 4 National Strategies

M Stephen Salmon, Canadian Business History Association “... to the amount of \$600”: *A Brief History of Business Records at Library and Archives Canada*

Cheryl Brown, Ballast Trust and University of Glasgow *From Boom to Bust: documenting Scotland’s business history*

### 5 Collecting Challenges: Checklists

Results of group discussion “*Just say no?*”: *The challenges of collecting business archives*

**IMPORTANT NOTE AND THANKS:** these proceedings and guidance notes should not be taken to present the views of any one speaker or individual.

The conference bursary winners took notes during the event which form the following proceeding and guidance, which were edited by Richard Wiltshire (Business Archives Council). The Business Archives Council would like to thank speakers, delegates, exhibitors, venue and host Prudential plc. Special thanks go to the organisers Bryony Leventhall and Owen Munday, and support provided by the bursary winners in note-taking.

# 1 SHIFTING LANDSCAPES

## The challenges facing business and independent archives and the buying and selling of business archives

Based on Keynote Presentation by Isobel Hunter, The National Archives (TNA)

### Introduction

Isobel Hunter, a former archivist at Marks & Spencer (M&S) during a challenging time with challenges internally and structurally. The archive played a key role in the changes because it is important to look back and assess the heritage of an organisation when looking at the future. The archive contains evidence of brand values and good employment practices such as fair trade, and is used to inspire new products.

A TV documentary about M&S made use of the archive and showed how important business is to us as a nation. The archive shows how the lives of women have been revolutionised through labour saving products such as the first frozen foods. Many items are donated by customers who also send in memories of buying and using products, including one person's memory of the ease of washing underpants made from nylon. Isobel remarked that the business archive has 'the power...to take us back into our own lives'.

For more information <https://marksintime.marksandspencer.com/home>

### The National Archives

- At The National Archives (TNA) there is a new plan called 'Archives Inspire.'
- The archival sector is one of TNAs four core audiences. There is an analogy describing TNA as a Swiss Army Knife, small but lots of sections inside.
- TNA comes under a Government department of Media, Culture and Sport. In the last quarter statistics show that TNA interacted with 400 archives, 250 people attended training events and there were 100 advisory cases to grant awarding bodies.
- Currently the archives sector is undergoing a challenging period of change. These changes include; moving and shifting partnerships, changing target audiences and what is collected, and digitisation which includes digital catalogues and digital preservation.

For more information <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

### Range of Business archives

- County record archives own 75% of records. Local authorities have reduced budgets and so this is challenging many deposited business archives.
- In Manchester Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) funding was secured by nine businesses that joined forces in a joint cataloguing project, showing the value of joint partnerships in fundraising.

- The Minton Archive, an important ceramics collection was put up for sale in March 2015 and it attracted an immense wave of support including local people in Stoke. It was preserved by the Art Fund and is now being catalogued by the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service. This recognises that the archive has a significant place in the lives of the local community.

For more information <http://www.artfund.org/news/2015/04/01/minton-archive-saved-for-the-nation>

- Universities tend to collect records supporting research interests of departments.
  - Are there gaps in university archives and can transfer knowledge partnerships be built, potentially partnering universities with business archives?
  - Universities can be involved in politics over collecting, for example student campaigners at Warwick University have argued against housing the British Petroleum (BP) archive. It could be viewed that by rejecting the archive the university would be complicit in keeping information away from the public.
  - Politics and changing research interests present key challenges for universities and may influence collecting decisions.
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- Community-collected archives are often formed when industries close down and local people and other stakeholders come together to collect documents, memories and artefacts. The Bata shoe industry opened in East Tilbury in the 1930s. Sixty years later it closed and regeneration money was used to build the Bata Reminiscence and Resource centre, now known as the Bata Heritage Centre. Ex-employees are often best placed to describe the experiences of using machines and technology.

For more information <http://www.bataheritagecentre.org.uk/>

### **Current trends**

- Sustainability is a key issue for archives to consider when funding runs out.
- Corporate archives have begun to engage with a wider audience by making catalogues available online, Unilever plc is one example of a company doing this.
- Finding homes for liquidated businesses with larger records will always be a challenge, also where records have been donated by friends' groups and funded by trusts which can no longer continue.

## **2 COLLECTING FROM INSIDE THE ORGANISATION**

Based on presentations by Claire Tunstall and Ruth Loughrey, Unilever Archives and Records Management; Claire Twinn and James Mortlock, HSBC Archives, and subsequent Micro Panel.

### **Case studies**

#### **1 The Records Journey in Unilever Archives and Records Management** (Claire Tunstall and Ruth Loughrey, Unilever Archives and Records Management)

##### **Unilever History**

- Low cost soap, hygiene to millions
- Inspiring purpose – advertising cleanliness
- A global company
- Products used by 2 billion people + daily
- Archive service founded 1984
- Contemporary art collection added in 2007
- Preserve, conserve and maintain corporate memory
- Compliance, promote, educate, support business
- 1499 enquiries 2014 - 62% of which internal
- Many new accessions in 2014 with 797 new boxes
- Promotional events, tours hosted for external and internal guests.

##### **Records management: Create -> Use -> Store -> Review -> Dispose or Archive**

- European standard retention schedule
- Business requirements checked pre-disposal
- More of a Service: look for opportunities for collaboration, Business partnering and providing dedicated support
- Facilitating a gateway to proactively engage with the business - Unilever Records Management staff can then advise clients on retention matters and encourage transfer of records

##### **Projects**

- Head Office construction 2005 led to a major records project
- All projects are assigned a Records Manager or an Archivist
- Ensures records held on sites are managed properly, transferred as required

##### **Buddy programme**

Good working relationships are very important. Within Unilever, a buddy programme is in place with mentoring which encourages development of key stakeholders in the wider business. More departments are to be integrated

##### **Retention -> Review -> ACD (Archive, Check, Destroy) -> Appraisal -> Box List**

- Check: when records have reached their retention limit they are move to confidential holding area for review
- In 2015 ACD reduced the appraisal boxes by 51%
- Streamlined the transfer to Archives
- All professional staff are involved in appraisal following review stage

- Records generated through 75% of business
- Appraisal days where all professional staff attend
- Productive!
- Last year, 3500 boxes appraised

Box listed Records Management entries can be utilised in the development of archive catalogues covering large series incoming from appraisal. It was agreed that spreadsheets allow migration to descriptive software and that tabbed *Word* lists arranged in columns can be exported to tabular databases or spreadsheets such as *Access* or *Excel*.

## **2 The Same but Different: Collecting in the Digital World: What we did, how we changed it, what we do now, and where we go next**

(Claire Twinn and James Mortlock, HSBC Archives)

### **What did we do?**

- Had started to receive born digital records in a variety of formats received in a number of ways – email, external hard drive, transfer drive, floppy disc
- Started a digital archives repository on a secure team shared drive, simply as a number of folders, but this had issues: unsecure and limited transfer and storage, no preservation functionality, hidden metadata, difficult to access (not directly linked to catalogue entries)

### **The initial steps towards something better**

- 5 years ago drew up specifications for a system rolled out in January 2015
- Unified system to handle both existing physical records and digital surrogates, but also the increasing amounts of born digital records that we were collecting. Although at the time we had no place to securely store for long term preservation
- Evaluated our existing processes with a business analyst who advised on how to better adapt for our digital requirements – merging our existing archival practices with efficient business procedures

### **The system**

- Two systems working together
- 4 instances of Calm (one per regional archive) on one server
- 1 instance of Preservica, with a single tenant for all four regional archives
- Calm is used for collection management and to maintain structural and descriptive information on all the holdings, both physical and digital
- Preservica manages the ingest, storage and preservation of digital content and holds technical metadata about the digital content it stores. Preservica also holds a copy of the structural and descriptive metadata for all holdings (digital and physical) and provides a single point of access for federated searching across all the regional data
- Many aspects of the system comply with the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) model
- Hosted in UK
- Currently only accessible to archives team members
- Tiered security system based on staff roles and geographic location.

## **Collecting**

- In the digital environment identifying records for the archives largely happens in the same way as the paper world: using and building existing relationships within the business and establishing new ones
- Working closely with Records Management – linking with their business champions and using similar terminology
- Development of tools and guidance for the business on what it is we want to collect
- There are challenges in transferring large amounts of digital records to the archives – the method of transfer and Information Security Risk (ISR) restrictions
- The introduction of the Global Digital Archives (GDA) has led to a review of processes and procedures

## **IT security**

- The bank has understandably highly restrictive policies surrounding IT security
- Affected system build in terms of ingest, storage, management and access of digital records
- Affected method of transfer
- Interest from Legal, Compliance and ISR teams leading to review of all archival processes

## **Ingest process**

- Following the receipt of a digital object the Archivist creates a SIP (Submission Information Package) and starts the ingest workflow
- Digital objects are characterised and validated during the ingest process. For characterisation Preservica uses The National Archives (TNA)'s PRONOM registry of formats which helps data migration: visit <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/PRONOM/>
- Transfer agreement compliance check to confirm file formats against Information Security Risk list.
- Catalogue skeletal record automatically created in Calm populating specific fields with metadata gathered during the ingest process

## **Future enhancements**

- Opening access outside Global Archives team – first to HSBC staff and then to researchers
- Improvement to metadata editing functionality within the digital repository
- In-system appraisal and accessioning
- Integration with Sharepoint and other EDRM systems
- Improving the capture of complex digital objects and transactional data e.g. databases
- Development of more sophisticated workflows to aid capture of records such as websites.

### 3 ORAL HISTORIES - ALTERNATIVE COLLECTING?

#### 1 Oral history and business archives: an overview

Based on talk by Dr Rob Perks, Lead Curator of Oral History and Director of National Life Stories, British Library

The theme of oral histories was included in *Managing Business Archives*, edited by Alison Turton published in 1991 in a chapter entitled 'Supplementing the Collection'. Oral History was something "to be considered after the essential work of the archive is well in hand" - an old fashioned view of oral history within the business archives sector.

There have been significant changes in how oral history is viewed in the last 20 years. Changing attitudes and feelings have been led by the work of pioneers in the business archives world including John Lewis Partnership, Boots Archive, HSBC Archive, Sainsbury's Archive, Reuters and Royal Bank of Scotland.

- Despite this, oral history is still not seen as an essential part of business archive collections and is therefore not embedded within practices. It is still seen as an 'alternative' or supplementary way of collecting.
- The British oral history movement has radical origins as it encouraged/discouraged oral historians to engage with corporate business culture.
- Oral History Association – "there is a great deal that oral history can bring to the study of corporate history."

#### Oral history:

- gives detail not captured in documents, for example, relationships, hierarchies and power structures.
- allows 'hidden voices', for example women, ethnic minorities or junior staff, to be revealed. To achieve this any oral histories need to include a broad range of interviewees (wide range of ages, roles, nationalities and gender).
- gives us an important insight into 'myth' and the way that organisations create myths and stories, for example, Starbucks who have created a history for themselves.
- is a good way of exploring the ethos of a business.
- allows greater understanding of employee's work/life balance. By understanding the corporate culture of an organisation through the construction of a narrative it is possible to see how work life can interplay with home/personal life. Oral histories are not just straightforward memories, they are constructed narratives.

#### What can oral history do for businesses?

Kransdorff's *Corporate Amnesia* recommended as a great starting point for business archivists thinking about oral history and a useful text to gain support from management.

- It is a tool for capturing organisational memory and knowledge before it walks out the door (Kransdorff)
- It can change outlook of management and have an impact on corporate cohesion by restating goals and company ethos.
- Provide a sense of recognition for individual employees.
- Can be used as a change management tool, for example in seminars, to manage change during periods of uncertainty, for example, oral histories were used during the restructuring of the Post Office to restate company ethos amongst staff.
- Oral history interviews are a great way of passing on personal knowledge.
- A great tool for developing a brand – oral histories can be used to demonstrate trust of an organisation as well as its history and longevity.

**Challenges of oral histories - the process is not easy, cheap or straightforward:**

- Practical challenges of organising the interviews around busy diaries of participants. Also convincing participant that the interviews will be worthwhile.
- Need to negotiate with senior managers about who is going to be approached for interview, how and when. The Oral History Society provides best practice for tips on negotiating control of the project - visit <http://www.ohs.org.uk/>
- It is important to interview a wide sample of people during an oral history project, but this can present challenges in itself.
- Deciding who will carry out the interviews - external interviewers may yield better results but this may be more difficult to coordinate and will have an attached cost.
- It is important to tackle the issues of self-censorship, commercial sensitivity and the 'corporate line'. Closure periods or restrictions can be offered to interviewees to encourage honesty during the interview.

**2 Case study: An Oral History of Barings** – Dr Katharine Haydon, former Project Interviewer, National Life Stories

- The Baring Archive oral history project serves as a good example of how oral history can be seen as a recognised way of collecting.
- Katharine Haydon became involved in project in 2009 and gained an awareness of the diverse Baring Archive collection, which charts the history of the business from 1762. The collection contains ephemera and artefacts as well as ledgers and documents.
- The Baring Archive were aware of other oral history projects, in particular, 'City Lives', a project undertaken by National Life Stories at the British Library and carried out in the 1990s which produced a collection of 140 interviews of those working in organisations across the square mile of the City of London.
- Recognising the value of oral history as a way of enhancing and developing existing collections.
- Trustees of the Baring Archive commissioned 30 interviews in which people would tell their stories about the development of the merchant bank in the early half of the twentieth century.

- The project was carried out in partnership with the British Library (BL) in order that the Baring Archive could benefit from the experience of BL staff and the recordings would be stored at BL and the Baring Archive
- The product of each interview was a sound recording and a transcript.
- Majority of interviews were carried out at recording studios at BL and are all deposited at BL as part of the national collection. Copyright of the recordings is held jointly by BL and the Baring Archive. Details of recordings and information about access to the interviews can be found in the catalogue of BL.
- Most challenging aspect of the project was the participant selection. Interviews needed to reflect all levels and a variety of roles and functions within the business hierarchy.
- The object was to get the widest possible range of perspective and to capture a variety of voices across time, age, sex and background in order to provide multiple and contrasting viewpoints.
- The project did not seek volunteers, rather targeted individuals for interview. A 'matrix' was used to track time periods and information covered by collected material. The matrix was a useful tool for monitoring the material gathered and for identifying and plugging gaps with the appropriate interviewee.
- 'Life story' interviews aim to capture a picture of the whole of interviewee's life rather than just one aspect of it. Interviews were conducted with the widest possible audience in mind.
- There were no fixed questions for the interviews, instead a list of topics which could be explored including background, childhood, home life, education and leisure. The idea was that by the time the interviewee starting talking about their work life, their narrative would be set in the context of their own history.
- Although the 'life story' approach meant that topics discussed at beginning of interviews were not directly relevant to Barings, the approach worked well for Barings, as it would for other businesses. Life story interviews progress chronologically and people tend to discuss important moments that impacted on them, for example, the introduction of new technologies.
- Oral history as a way of enhancing archival records which may appear 'dry' or 'inaccessible' by allowing us to learn about the more intangible elements of business, for example, how client relationships were managed or transactions undertaken.
- Historians would not consider a written document a primary source without knowing who produced it, when and why. The same information is needed for oral history recordings.
- One of the great advantages oral histories have over written documents is 'orality' – information that can be picked up just by hearing the human voice.
- Interviews averaged 12.5hrs each, which is testament to how detailed they are.
- Over 320 hours of material gathered during the project. Clips available on Baring Archive website visit:  
[http://www.baringarchive.org.uk/features\\_exhibitions/extracts\\_from\\_an\\_oral\\_history\\_of\\_barings/](http://www.baringarchive.org.uk/features_exhibitions/extracts_from_an_oral_history_of_barings/)
- The oral history project enriched the Baring Archive collection as well as adding new material to it.

### **3 Case Study: Voices of the London Bullion Market** – Dr Michele Blagg, Visiting Research Associate, Institute of Contemporary History, King’s College London

- Michele Blagg, independent researcher for Voices of the London Bullion Market (LBM) project.
- LBM is around 200 years old. London has stood at centre of global bullion market throughout that time.
- LBM cleared £23.2bn of gold daily (2014) – the size and volume of the market is huge.
- LBM Association is a trade association set up in 1987.
- The client base of LBM is global and includes traders, refiners, users and fabricators, as well as those providing storage and carriage facilities and services.
- 25th Anniversary of LBM Association was celebrated in 2013 with a Gala Dinner for 325 members at Mansion House, City of London.
- LBM Association ran an interview with the first chairman who shared issues faced by the association during its development and history.
- Michele spent 4 years at Rothschild Archive researching the London gold market through the Royal Mint Refinery, which was operated by Rothschild. Image of a group of staff found during research sparked interest in oral history, she thought: “I wish I could talk to that set of people”.
- Silver Anniversary of LBM Association – CEO interested in investing in corporate history. Michele showed to the Board a photograph of a retirement meal depicting individuals who had since died. This clinched the deal for getting the funds for the oral history project. The fact that the individuals were remembered by current management spurred the project on – there was a feeling that voices needed to be captured while they still could be. Individuals to be interviewed sat on executive boards across the city so by carrying out the interviews a selection of corporate memories would be documented.
- ‘Vale of secrecy’ around bullion market. Because the market involves physical movement of gold, it cannot be spoken about freely. It was important to consider this when drawing up plans for the LBM oral history project.
- First part of project involved extensive preliminary and contextual research of individuals selected for interview proved to be extremely worthwhile when interview process started.
- ‘Life approach’ was taken for the interviews, questions started with education and first jobs before leading into career paths.
- At a certain point in the interviews, she saw the interviewees physically relaxing. It is then that Michele knew a connection had been made with them and felt confident about asking the most important questions.
- Momentum of project was slow to start with. 120 members of LBM Association were targeted. Older generations came forward first. The project was hindered by City regulations which did not allow members still working in the sector to take part.

#### **Outcomes:**

- More than 40 recordings in a variety of locations (including in a hotel lobby which affected the sound quality!)

- Donations of photographs and newsletters resulted from the project, which has seen the creation of an archive in itself (there was no previous archive collection). It is planned that once listed, the collection will be deposited at London Metropolitan Archives and made available for researchers to use from 2018. LBM Association will retain copyright.
- Popular topics covered in the interviews include the nature of trading, technological advances, demise of the refining industry in the UK, the internationalisation of markets, global mobility and increased competition.
- The LBM is a small market. Views and experiences of individuals from around the City, and how they affected LBM, were very interesting.
- Throughout 2014, the Daily Gold and Silver Fix ended, but the past has now been preserved on those fixes and people are free to talk about them.
- Michele's overriding memory of the project is laughter – at the shared memories and at the stories told throughout.

#### **4 Discussion and conclusion**

Oral history has to be embedded into a repository's work if it is to be a primary function. By getting buy-in for projects, resources follow. The most important aspect is not to consider oral history as a detached resource. Make the case that the voices will be lost forever if action is not taken. Many people can connect readily with oral history, it is often quite compelling to think that stories may be lost.

As archivists, should we be creating our own history? Or should we be recording it? Is it our job to undertake oral history? Can we use oral history interviews conducted by someone else, so we can just look after them? They are different models of carrying out oral history projects which means staff of a repository do not need to carry it out themselves. There are good examples of in-house projects, e.g., Bank of England, but also good examples of external ones, e.g., Barings and the British Library. Another option is to utilise Collaborative Doctoral Awards run by research councils – embeds PhD student for 3 years within an organisation to generate interviews for an archive. Also funding for community archives and projects should be considered as an option.

Oral history is an excellent way to advocate a repository's service by bringing not only active staff but also retired members of staff or researchers. For example, Boots Archive worked with students of Nottingham University to conduct interviews of former employees. The stories were a powerful way of engaging both parties. Within the company recordings are recognised as having both historical and commercial value.

## 4 NATIONAL STRATEGIES

### 1 “... to the amount of \$600”: A Brief History of Business Records at Library and Archives Canada

Based on presentation by M Stephen Salmon, Canadian Business History Association

- Salmon is the former Business Archivist, 1989-2012, at the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) (visit <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/Pages/home.aspx>)
- The 1872 Canadian Privy Council ordered that the pay for a part time clerk responsible for collecting archival records be set at £120 (\$600). Douglas Brymner became the first dominion archivist.
- 1888 first business records acquired – a colonization company.
- 1905 acquisition from first significant company began with the copying of the Hudson Bay Company records, eventually 2700 reels of microfilm.

The acquisition of Canadian business records by LAC can be divided into four phases:

- |                                    |               |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| • 1: Beginning – 1905 to 1947      | 50m acquired  |
| • 2: Modern – 1948 to 1972         | 560m acquired |
| • 3: Specialisation – 1973 to 1989 | 925m acquired |
| • 4: Austerity – 1982 to 2012      | 900m acquired |
- 
- The records of government owned businesses were acquired by the Government Archives Division not by the Business Archives program.
  - Not all acquisition projects were successful, such as the looting of Baring Archive in 1926. (Copies were later made for Barings.)
  - 1973 saw the appointment of the first full time business archivist. This was also the first year that donors of cultural property (including archives) could receive a tax receipt for the value of their records.
  - There was mixed success in collecting, much depended on knowing who to contact to gain access to the collections. Over this time various collections were acquired including the Molson Archive (brewers) and the records of major business associations.
  - Space restraints constricted collecting for 3 years.
  - From the early 1990s new acquisitions were strictly vetted by management and subject to change in policy – it is important that staff dealing with acquisitions communicate information and awareness of potential records offered and have a role in decision-making.
  - Strategy now began to focus on old firms of national significance which were going out of business – national significant business was defined as a major firm in a specific sector that operated in more than one province. In practice this meant monitoring companies that were either in difficulties or subject to a major restructuring.

- Good connections were essential to putting the strategy into practice, 900m were collected.

### **Selection criteria:**

- “If it’s so mouldy that it’s walking out the door is it worth it?”
- Cost not only for preservation but for space and processing costs.
- Firm significance versus document quality, consider potential use beyond the history of a specific firm or sector.
- It proved difficult to select ‘most significant’ fonds at a national level.

## **2 From Boom to Bust: documenting Scotland’s business history**

Based on presentation by Cheryl Brown, Ballast Trust and University of Glasgow

- Business Archive Council Scotland (BACS) is an independent archive body which provides consultancy, hosts a conference and saves the archives of failing companies.
- They are reactionary – responding to decline in businesses. Glasgow University has the centre for business history and the Scottish Business Archive.
- Change away from reactionary – Over 6000 surveys have been carried out, started to document proactively.
- They carry out thematic surveys e.g. Museum collections that are not managed by a qualified archivist.
- They are targeting family businesses and long established businesses however it is difficult to separate work and social records.

### **National strategy aims:**

- Raise awareness of archive’s value
- Access
- Engage with live businesses themselves about their heritage
- Raise standards
- The strategy compliments work being done in England and Wales
- Case studies of businesses such as Lloyds, Tennent’s and Standard Life demonstrate to organisations and donors how archives can be used and how funds can be used.
- Media, anniversaries, oral history, social media, internal strategy are crucial to advocate business heritage. They are used to increase collecting and accessing records.
- Encourages care for businesses. If they fail, the BACS contact will open up communication for salvaging records.
- Collection at Glasgow: Inspirations for researchers such as Standard Templeton collection and the United Turkey Red Company
- These collections are reused by custodians as various products e.g. scarves reproduced by the university to sell providing a revenue stream as custodians and second use of the collection
- Crisis management is a large focus of the work BACS does.

- Advocacy and outreach: Meet the Archivist, training days and partnerships with businesses and other cultural bodies.
- Advisory: Advises on collection and disposals, encourage care during activity and think of the future.

Visit: BACS website, <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/archives/bacs>

## **5 COLLECTING CHALLENGES: CHECK LISTS**

In the final session “*Just say no?*” delegates split into groups and were asked to discuss key challenges to collecting business archives. The following checklists of solutions were identified through group discussion for staff of repositories to consider.

### **1 Ensuring diverse and representative collections**

- Understand what is already held and collaborate to share knowledge and fit with collecting policies elsewhere
- A collecting matrix needs to be created by a diverse group of staff, users and other stakeholders. Link collecting to a company’s diversity policy.
- Challenge the appraisal policy, question why what is being kept
- Take a flexible approach to collecting
- Diversify the type of formats
- Address diverse audiences
- Prioritise collection work and embed activities into new wider projects
- Understand the business and build trust
- Outreach – identify champions and business partners with contacts at different levels
- Get close to records management
- Understanding what records are governed by regulatory standards
- Recognise of the value of the ‘unofficial voice’ and personal material. Use Oral Histories (audio and visual) to identify gaps and all points of view including critical voices
- Opening up the archive to non-professionals – ‘de-professionalisation’. Encourage diversity in the profession

### **2 Records from across the organisation**

- Build relationships with local champions using the management structure
- Increase communication – for example staff magazine call out
- Education – Inductions, open days and sessions to advocate benefits
- High level approved policy, official mandate

- Highlight the risks and benefits
- Support records management and regular feed of series into the archive
- Campaigns on particular areas – World War One
- Oral history and beyond – for example family papers
- Target key people who are retiring

### **3 Enforcing records management**

- Use legal and regulatory sticks to support records management
- 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

### **4 Getting space and infrastructure**

- 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 internal and external value of the collection
- Refer to external standards
- Be involved in disposal and records management processes
- Use case studies to understand the situation and gather ideas on how to tackle the challenge

**5 Help needed from the archive sector.** The following was seen as most important areas of assistance:

- Advocacy and external support from BAC, BACS and TNA (visit [www.managingbusinessarchives.co.uk](http://www.managingbusinessarchives.co.uk))
- Training and opportunities to share experiences. Case studies and examples of policies can be especially useful for lone workers as evidence and support.

- Resources including money for grants
- People: sense of community and stakeholders

**END**

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**IMPORTANT NOTE:** these guidance notes should not be taken to present the views of any one speaker or individual.