

John Porter, Trainee Archivist, Faber Archive

A day working in the Faber Archive begins at 9:30 in the morning and my first task is to open up the office and check my email inbox. This gives me an opportunity to respond to any urgent internal Faber notices or external research enquiries. I always make an effort to answer, or at least acknowledge all emails received in the morning. Any correspondence with external researchers is always immediately printed off and added to a set of chronologically ordered binders, with the details of the correspondence logged on to a spreadsheet. This helps us keep a helpful record of all the Archive's enquiries and individual researchers.

Once I've checked and forwarded on any emails addressed to my boss and checked the Archive's pigeon hole in the post room (we don't tend to receive many letters, most correspondence is via email), I make a quick check-list of the tasks I aim to complete by the end of the day. Of course, any unexpected emails, phone calls or visits from other members of staff can certainly upset any set agendas! If any of the enquiries received in the morning are especially urgent I tend to give these priority and work on them first.

External enquiries can be very varied but predominantly centre on information regarding Faber authors and titles. The bulk of the Archive's information on authors and titles are actually held in editorial files offsite and underground at the Eisenhower Centre, Goodge Street and specific files can be located via an index card sequence. The underground vault houses a treasure trove of literary records, including such literary luminaries as T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden and Ted Hughes. The correspondence between authors and editors is fascinating, providing an illuminating insight into the very creation of some of the greatest literary works ever published.

A day in the Faber Archive can, therefore, often include a trip to Goodge Street, transferring files back in order to research specific enquiries. On other days, my day will be almost entirely centred in the Archive, especially if I have a pre-arranged visit from a researcher. Due to limited space, researchers tend to work in my office, sharing the table I work from. Such visits are always interesting and rewarding, a researcher's work on a specific subject can help me understand and learn more about Faber's publishing history, and, ultimately, more about the Archive itself.

A day without enquiries or researchers usually involves me indexing, labelling and boxing up unsorted editorial files. As part of a working company, the Archive always has a steady flow of new files, first editions and publicity photographs filtering down from the floors above, meaning that the history of the company is perpetually being created, conserved and, hopefully, made easily accessible for others in the future.

Working to maintain the memory of the working life of a great British publishing house and helping to purvey its rich history to all, sets an exciting and varied day to day challenge. Every day brings a new challenge, and as a young and aspiring archivist, an exciting opportunity to gain new archival skills and invaluable experience.