

ARCHIVES FOR EVERYONE: COOPERATION ACROSS CITY AGENDA ON BEHALF OF THE CITIZEN

ARCHIVOS PARA TODOS: COOPERACIÓN A TRAVÉS DEL PROGRAMA DE LA CIUDAD EN NOMBRE DEL CIUDADANO

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El servicio de los archivos en la era de la información

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to show how the proactive City archive can maintain and extend its role in the modern city government by participating and leading in programmes of activity across the whole range of activities from education to health and safety and citizenship. London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) uses distinctive solutions, partnership working and enhanced local identity to provide services to its governing institution in innovative and perhaps unusual ways and in this case it has meant a much raised profile and better infrastructure support for London Metropolitan Archives as a key player within the City of London. These opportunities do exist in all cities and need to be taken up in order to ensure the preservation of the archive for all citizens.

Key Words:

Partnership, community, citizenship, archives, London, City

Resumen:

El objetivo de este documento es mostrar cómo el archivo proactivo de la ciudad puede mantener y extender su papel en el gobierno de la ciudad moderna participando y liderando programas de actividades de todo tipo desde educación a salud, seguridad y ciudadanía. Los Archivos Metropolitanos de Londres (LMA) utilizan soluciones distintivas, trabajo conjunto y una mejor identidad local para brindar servicios a su institución gobernante de formas innovadoras y quizás inusuales, y en este caso ha significado un perfil muy elevado y un mejor soporte de infraestructura para los Archivos Metropolitanos de Londres como un elemento clave dentro de la ciudad de Londres. Estas oportunidades existen en todas las ciudades y deben aprovecharse para garantizar la conservación del archivo para todos los ciudadanos.

Palabras clave:

Sociedad, comunidad, ciudadanía, archivos, Londres, ciudad.

The aim of this paper is to show how the proactive City archive can maintain and extend its role in the modern city government by participating and leading in programmes of activity across the whole range of local government activities from education to health and safety and citizenship.

London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) is the largest local authority managed archive in the United Kingdom with over 100 km of contents on shelving in Central London. The archives consist of the magnificent and voluminous City of London Corporation archive dating from 1067 – date; the manuscripts of the Guildhall Library; and the Metropolitan collections of the counties of London, Middlesex and the former Greater London Council. It has been able to reinvent itself as local government structures change but is now mostly centred on one set of premises in Clerkenwell, just outside the ancient city walls. In each year it receives 30,000 onsite visitors, 25,000 distance enquiries and 30 million web page hits.

Although the City of London Corporation governs only the square mile of the financial heart of London (including Guildhall, Bank of England, Stock Exchange, Lloyd's Insurance, St Paul's Cathedral) it runs a number of services on behalf of London and the Nation. London Metropolitan Archives is one of those services, providing archive management for London-wide collections. Because many of the most historic and important institutions of the nation were based in London, the archive covers many archive collections of national institutions whose headquarters were in London and of national importance. Being a City of trade (and Empire) there are also many records of international importance, for example the archive of Standard Chartered Bank has an amazing photographic collection of its trading bases around the world, including early images of Shanghai (which impressed the visiting Shanghai Municipal Archives team when they visited LMA since they were older than any photographs they had).

In addition to the strategic London-wide archive that is London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) there are 32 London boroughs which cover smaller areas of London – each with an average population of 250,000 inhabitants – who keep local archive collections specific to their areas. LMA chairs and hosts The London Archive Partnership which was set up to ensure local archives in London worked together and shared information and expertise. We meet regularly with them and often work alongside them as co-partners on grant funded projects. For instance, we are working alongside the London Borough of Haringey on a community history project called

Vanguard relating to Black Gay and Lesbian communities in North London, a project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (which in the UK awards grants totalling approximately £300 million per annum). We provide management and administrative support to ensure the project is facilitated and completed.

London also has many other non-governmental archives. Indeed an estimated two thirds of archivists in the UK are based in London. Such a concentration means there are many different archives offering similar services for their amazing collections. Sometimes they can be based close to each other but not know of each other, so in order to provide a voice for all London archives an organisation was set up known as Archives for London (AFL). It is a limited company registered to LMA's address in Northampton Road London EC1. It campaigns on behalf of all London archives and LMA provides a central London base to hold monthly seminars on weekday evenings (helped down with a glass of wine) and an Annual Conference – this year 2018 was about Women in London: Celebrating 100 years of Campaigning and Change. The existence of these organisations makes for much smoother working relations with other archives and provides an excellent opportunity for networking, collaboration and joint initiatives.

DISTINCTIVE SOLUTIONS

Our core business is local archive management. As Chair of the International Council on Archives Section on Local, Municipal and Territorial Archives (ICA/SLMT) I visit a lot of city and regional archives and am amazed, despite different national, local and linguistic differences, our core tasks are very similar. Identifying archives, taking archives in, cataloguing archives, conserving archives, presenting archives for research and exhibition, digitising archives. We all do it.

Our catalogue entries number 6 million items but we use the same ISAD(G) cataloguing rules as international colleagues some of whom might be working in much smaller or indeed bigger archives. We must stick to our core tasks and continue to make acquisitions and catalogue archives in our care.

However, when opportunities come along we as archivists must be ready to embrace whatever new possibilities and challenges lie ahead. In LMA's case we had previously been part of the Greater London Council services until the council was abolished in 1986. Our strategic local authority had been removed. However, as so often happens, a new regional administration was set up in 2000 known as the Greater London Authority (GLA). We are not formally attached to the authority but we operate records management and archive services (on a paid basis) on behalf of the GLA and its affiliated organisations such as the London Fire Brigade (for which we have a complete set of records dating back to 1866).

Commercial storage has been a significant form of activity (and income) for the London Metropolitan Archives over the last 20 years. Using additional growth space to its maximum capacity LMA has provided excellent secure, safe, high quality commercial storage in conditions similar to the way it stores the records of the City of London's archive collections. At the beginning of running the service it was envisaged that LMA should offer an interim storage facility for those organisations who were not quite ready to hand over their archive collections but nevertheless wanted to store materials outside of their headquarters. In this was LMA hoped that stored records would eventually become archive accessions and indeed this did happen for a number of organisations who appreciated the quality and continuity of service.

However, it soon became clear that in central London, with very high property prices, organisations and institutions were very keen to make use of commercial storage facilities. The archive always maintained a strict customer selection policy to ensure its own conservation standards were not compromised and to ensure storage was of essential archives and modern records rather than ephemera best sorted out in an office clearance rather than transferred to the archive. Our customers have included blue chip businesses, international charities, educational institutes, local government and central government organisations. These organisations recognised the importance of what LMA did as an archive, that its staff were all deeply committed to preserving records to a high standard and therefore felt comfortable about dealing with a trusted major archive rather than a commercial organisation. Storage income now accounts for approximately £250,000 of income per year and is an essential part of LMA budgets.

A further enhancement of the commercial storage model has been the ability of London Metropolitan Archives to provide additional services beyond storage. When the National Army Museum in Chelsea closed for 2 years for a major building project, the Museum wanted to maintain access to its library and archive collections. LMA was able to provide use of its archive study area so that readers from the National Army Museum, which attracted many international scholars, could continue to study in London even though the Museum buildings were closed. This was a formal partnership and LMA received a fee for providing this service. Indeed, it has become a requirement for some funders, even some planning authorities, that access to a collection should be continued throughout major projects and we have stored archives, and provided access to them for a number of organisations. We are currently providing accommodation for the archives and staff of the Royal College of Surgeons of England as part of a 3- year partnership – which has seen their number of readers increase and led to partnership opportunities in exhibitions and events held at LMA which has many medical and hospital records in its own collections.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

In the current financial climate, but also enabled by digital ways of working, LMA finds it essential to work in partnership with many different organisations over a wide range of subject areas which reflects the enormous diversity within its own collections from medieval charters to stock exchange records and modern day contemporary papers of campaigning and community groups. At any one time we could be involved with approximately 50 large projects. In order to keep track of progress and monitor capacity a spreadsheet of external partnerships has been established. The spreadsheet shows the LMA lead person, the project description, the partners, level of funding, level of support from LMA, dates of project and progress.

Some projects are very specific aligned to an anniversary date, e.g. Project 950 was about the 950th anniversary of the oldest document, a charter from King William to the City of London in 1067; whereas others may be spread over a long period of time, for instance our recent project Layers of London which provides digital linkages of photographs, maps and documents relating to geo-tagged sites in London. This project does have a time-limited funding allocation but will continue for years to come.

Over the past year LMA has provided training partnerships through Skills for the Future in partnership with the National Archives, enabling people from non-traditional educational backgrounds access to the world of archive work. In a similar vein, LMA was able to provide internships for 2 students from the Chinese Ming-Ai Institute providing a cultural introduction to archive management in the UK. This was not just a one-way process as LMA benefited from insights, challenges and questions about the way it conducted its archive management and engagement with new audiences.

It would be impossible to go through every partnership in this paper but highlights include working with London Screen Archives (where LMA already stores films from 17 London boroughs and numerous other London institutions) to provide greater access to archive film collections. As well as providing regular screenings of archive films at LMA, and a monthly film club for archive film enthusiasts, the LMA has taken over responsibility for a Kino Van which enables us to attend local events, fairs, gatherings – taking archive film out to the community, particularly in the outer London suburbs. At one such event recently, held at Alexandra Palace in North London, 750 people viewed archive films out of the Kino Van on one Saturday afternoon. In November 2018 the Kino Van is attending the Lord Mayor's Show, one of London's greatest pageants, sited next to St Paul's Cathedral in the heart of the City.

Working with communities to preserve archives has many challenges. LMA has worked very hard to build up trust in a number of different communities, notably the Afro-Caribbean community through the Huntley Archive; and also the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Community through its Speak Out Oral History project. Speak Out started by scoping out the true extent of documentation of the LGBT community in the archives by targeting particular collections and identifying relevant search terms. This unlocked series of records where traditional technical language of the courts obscured the meaning of words and revealed more information about the extent and patterns of activity within the community. To illustrate what life was like before the legalisation of homosexuality a group of volunteers from within the LGBT community was trained in collecting oral histories and the stories told relate to the colourful and sometimes tragic lives and times of Londoners (and many from outside the capital drawn to London) which would otherwise be unheard. These recordings are available digitally for visitors to LMA to listen to in the Mediatheque (and some excerpts are available online). This has become a feature of Heritage Lottery Funded projects to enable the output from community projects to be stored in appropriate archive repositories with ongoing provision of technical facilities. Currently we have started discussions on oral history projects with Kosovan and Roma communities in London. This has been an extension of our work with volunteers who provide additional services to the archives (in 2017-18 this amounted to over 4000 hours of volunteering at LMA).

Linking back to the Caribbean community, a successful oral history project was undertaken under a Black Women in the Arts programme to record the lives and stories of Retired Caribbean Nurses, many of whom left home behind to come to London and the UK to play an important part in the National Health Service, one of the largest free universal health systems in the world.

ENHANCED LOCAL IDENTITY

LMA is clear in that The City of London runs the archive on behalf of London and the Nation. There are many definitions of London which could be the square mile of the City, the whole area covered by the London Orbital Motorway the M25, or the Metropolitan Police District to name a few.

At a recent awayday for the extended LMA management team the questions under consideration was: what is a Londoner? And how does LMA connect with Londoners? Seen in the context of the City of London's strategic business plan it might have appeared that LMA did not immediately fit in very well. However in closer examination it was found that although the word archive rarely appeared what we did across a range of services fitted in very closely with key City business aims.

The conclusions about engagement were to raise awareness of how the citizen might already be in the archives (for example through school attendance records or marriage records), that the archives were for all citizens, that citizens should be encouraged to add to the archive and that schoolchildren should be encouraged to understand that archives were not remote but integral to the record of everyday life. Something that has gained importance recently has been the concept of ‘intangible’ history relating to particular moods for instance ‘swinging sixties’ or ‘punk revolution’ or perhaps even smells like ‘the Great Stink’ of the mid Nineteenth Century which ultimately led to better sanitation and health improvements. The collection of ephemeral posters or leaflets of punk concerts probably wouldn’t meet the usual acquisition test but is an important record of a fast-moving time of change in music and clothing tastes. This approach was important at the London 2012 Olympics where we deliberately encouraged staff and their contacts to collect ‘ephemeral’ material around a great sporting and cultural event – which is far more evocative of the occasion than administrative papers about the management of the games. Overall it was felt that there should be the chance for every citizen to feel part of the archives, be part of the story and tell the world about London from all angles.

SERVICES ACROSS THE CITY AGENDA

So how does LMA put all this thinking into practice. In some senses it has been ongoing for some time but like most things in local government it needs to be re-stated. For our parent organisation and funder LMA provides archives management for all City Departments. The City of London Corporation for which I work has a proud 800 year old tradition of continuity and stable government for the historic City. Some of its departments trace their origins to Office holders which started in the Middle Ages, for example the Town Clerk (now known as the Chief Executive) has been Keeper of the Records since 1462. Previous City Surveyors have included the eminent Seventeenth Century scientist Robert Hooke (whose diaries we have) and Horace Jones (architect of Tower Bridge). There is a great attachment to their historical records and some City Solicitors consider Seventeenth century ledgers to be semi-current records. A famous case from 1994 involved the City’s Seventeenth Century archives being presented as evidence in court where the case of Crown v the City ended in a victory for the City over the Crown estates over the ownership of the ancient site of Smithfield (an important historical and political site and now the location for the main wholesale meat market). Archives of City departments do matter!

The City Records Management Service has become a key way to ensure the foundation of a continuing City Archive for the future. In 2005 the City authorities were planning to reconfigure their London headquarters at the Guildhall and several different options were put to them for the solution to the change in administrative

requirements from a building which had not changed much since the 1950s (albeit one designed by a very famous architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott) It was clear that for the modern city to look and act as if it belonged in the Twenty First Century it needed to operate from premises that reflected its desire to do business with the modern financial City its stakeholders and residents.

One of the options tabled was for Modern Records Management to be implemented as never before by reducing onsite storage and desk capacity at Guildhall. A Records Management survey was commissioned which was undertaken by LMA at the same time as a future space allocation survey was done by the building consultants predicting future office space needs. The resulting strand in the overall Guildhall Improvement Project was labelled EP2, Enabling Project 2, Archives and Records Management. Again it was the relatively small City archive service, LMA (with 100 staff), which was providing the enabling for the larger organisation (with 3000 staff) to reach its greater objectives through the improvement of its public service.

The existing building at London Metropolitan Archives could not accommodate the estimated additional storage for 10 km of Records Management boxes from City of London departments. A business case had to be made to demonstrate that future plans for LMA would be able to accommodate the Records Management requirement and in return the LMA would receive new shelving and any surplus capacity it could engineer within the site. A bold plan to reconfigure the ground floor of the LMA's Clerkenwell site resulted in an additional 17 km of space being found by a process of resetting shelf direction and extending the height of the shelves to 4.5m. This capacity was found within the existing building envelope through close consultation of engineers, shelf planners and City archivists. It does help if you learn to speak the language of buildings experts as there is a resulting grater understanding and respect between professions.

In addition to the physical requirements of storage there was the accompanying need to provide a retrieval service to the existing administrative organisation. New service level agreements were established with departments which meant that small quantities of files could be recalled twice a day with a four hour service, which were sent over in a dedicated Records Management van with fully trained staff, knowledgeable in document handling. An alternative option was given for larger quantities to be viewed at LMA in the public Archive Study Area (or if confidential in a pre-booked closed room). Today 4000 files are transported back to City departments every year.

Operating as The City of London Records Management Service (CRMS for short) the service became a popular and much-trusted part of everyday life for the departments of the City. This enabled LMA to raise its profile and suddenly it was

being consulted on all manner of internal policies and strategic planning in a way that was not possible when it was just an archive service. An important part of that was taking a lead in Health and Safety matters and becoming the most energy efficient building in the City's operational estate. Chief Officers of the City recognised the quality and efficiency of the service and became more open to talking about their records and how best to store them for the future. For the first time a lot of the City's modern records were properly boxed and packaged which in itself was a huge step forward for preservation (and *inter alia* for future disaster recovery and emergency planning).

With the change in focus brought about by a 16% reduction in budgets in 2011 the City was looking to rethink the way it provided certain services. One such service was emergency planning and disaster recovery. Since the 1980s the City had paid a retainer to a major international business firm to host a disaster recovery suite in a different part of London in case there was a major disaster either at, or in the vicinity of, the City's administrative headquarters. The concept had remained the same, basically a provision of a suite of personal computers on desks with provision for desktop printing and basic recovery services to maintain an administrative presence through a temporary crisis period.

Approaches were made to LMA (and other organisations run by the City) to see if there were any possible alternative locations where a similar service could be provided. The rows of 48 computers in the LMA's main reference area, the Information Area, was very appealing to the emergency planners. Equally the large flexible Archive Study Area provided excellent space for the use of laptops for another 50 members of an essential Business Continuity Team. This has since been massively enhanced by improved wifi across the whole building including strongrooms. Together with multiple meeting room spaces LMA could offer enough facilities for the parent organisation to get itself back on its feet after a disaster affecting its main headquarters.

The idea was fine in theory, but would it work in practice? A number of test events were held to ensure key staff had familiarity with the LMA building's public areas. It was demonstrated that the Information Technology specialists could operate the main City network of essential activities from the same terminals as the existing ones used by the archives to provide access to its catalogue and digitised collections, used on a daily basis by onsite visitors to LMA. This meant that a disaster recovery centre could be established at LMA within a matter of hours, enabling the City to continue with its everyday business of administering the City of London and supporting its residents and businesses. By contrast onsite public access to the archives would need to be temporarily suspended but archive staff would continue to work

on cataloguing, digitisation and conservation as usual in the non-public areas of LMA but would be on hand to assist City departments if necessary.

Within the City of London there is a structure for managing Business Continuity and Emergency Planning. Its importance is recognised in the fact that it is based within the Chief Executive's own department. The City of London Contingency Planning Team works alongside the Police to provide joint training to make the City more resilient in the face of disasters and disruptions. A number of familiarisation sessions have been held for leading members of City departments which have again raised the profile of the archive service. Departments can store specialist equipment or resources as would be required in the event of an emergency. This same principle has been extended by the Police who now use the LMA car park to store one of their disaster response vehicles which would be taken to the scene of a Major Incident and is kitted out ready for instant use.

As you might expect LMA looks after the archives of the City of London Magistrates Court (local administration of justice) and the City of London Coroner's Court (for enquiries into deaths and finds of treasure). But it also holds substantial (in size and date range) quantities of court records from all over London. Because of the limitations on space in court buildings, and trust built up over years of service, the LMA holds more recent court records than many other English archives. For some Coroner's courts the records come to archives as quickly as 18 months after creation. The archive provides a back up service to the local courts when they urgently need answers to enquiries for ongoing trials, as well as liaising with Coroners Courts over access to sensitive case papers for example of relatives of the deceased. This work has become even more important since the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force earlier in 2018. This has forced us to realign some of our policies regarding access to records and we have already been in contact with the UK's Information Commissioner on a number of issues, to ensure we are following the right guidelines within the new law.

A growth in public enquiries, for instance into Historic Child Sex Abuse, has meant a critical role for the LMA to ensure appropriate access is granted. Occasionally inquiries can request closed records for assessment of cases and this has happened with the biggest inquiry to date the Independent Inquiry into Child Sex Abuse. The LMA has responded with additional training for staff in data protection legislation (on top of mandatory online training for all local government officers). For the past 20 years or so the LMA has benefited from a trained social worker on the staff to counsel and assist access for researchers who wish to gain information from the 160,000 children's case files held in the archives. The recent inquiries have extended to other series of records such as records of residential homes and schools, for which

LMA has fast-tracked cataloguing to ensure access is appropriately administered. This is work which has added to the sensitive nature and complexity of LMA public service work but it has given opportunity for the profile of the current civic role LMA plays because all those involved are citizens, voters and community stakeholders. This essential vital activity also enabled us to gain more resources for the service from its Priorities Investment Pot where officers can bid for additional funding to meet urgent current needs for their service.

USE OF LMA SERVICES

Like all local government archive services LMA does run a core service for onsite visitors who consult the archives in detail for research. However, over the past 20 years the nature of that research has changed. A commercial contract with Ancestry enabled LMA to digitise a large proportion of our family history sources (over 70,000 registers containing the names of 70 million Londoners) which means that instead of 70 % of LMA users being genealogists, that is now only 40% with a massive increase in use by academics and professional people who use the archives as part of their paid employment. These can be engineers involved with upgrading the City's sewers and infrastructure (using original Nineteenth century plans by Brunel and Bazalgette); or architects wishing to refurbish or refashion buildings using detailed original plans drawn up for fire safety purposes by the London County Council but providing a ready template for future development or reconstruction.

The neighbourhood in which we are based in London is called Clerkenwell, an area known for its industries such as clockmaking, jewellery and printing. LMA itself is based in a former print factory and the area has continued an association with the media, mostly digital and creative industry. A growing number of researchers are using historical images in the archives as their inspiration for products, design and advertising. This can lead to interesting diversions in the use of archives. Photographs on our COLLAGE website of pictorial London were used by designers for the makers of Harry Potter movies to depict Diagon Alley, a cobblestoned wizarding street in the middle of a London shopping area. Historical images of public houses were selected by Heineken for a collection of beer mats for commercial use in licensed premises. Perhaps most bizarrely, and lucratively, LMA holds the rights to film footage of Bob Marley and the Wailers which is often requested and used (for a substantial fee) by film and documentary makers. Bob Marley did some work which was filmed by the former Inner London Education Authority whose archives we own.

Perhaps London of all cities is the ultimate 'International City' having more in common with other world cities like New York rather than regions of the United Kingdom. We talk about London as a melting pot of different peoples, cultures and identity. As well as the population changing, so is the way community history

is recorded. There may not be many paper records of some migrating communities; but these are still citizens, voters, taxpayers. City archives, as well as keeping the official records of local administration, and making them available equally and fairly to all citizens, have a duty to capture the stories of these communities in order to serve the needs of all citizens.

In the ICA Section on Local Municipal and Territorial Archives (ICA/SLMT) there have been discussions concerning how City archives can achieve as wide a coverage of community history. Sometimes this means supporting public initiatives within communities and taking the 'archive' presence out to the community. Sometimes it means working alongside communities to achieve their aims. Other times it may mean providing a home for oral history or publications relating to the life of the community. In order to achieve this some entrenched thinking about what constitutes an 'archive' need to be revisited. If international cities are to thrive there needs to be common identity but also recognition of other identities, something the ALA/ICA Conference on Interculturalism at Mexico City 2017 highlighted very well.

For SLMT this had spurred us on to produce a special edition of COMMA (the journal of ICA) on World Cities. The brief for articles was that the authors should address what it means to be a City or Regional archive in the Twenty First Century. How do archives represent all the communities who live in their City boundaries? This will hopefully bring out many examples of initiatives by City Archives and their approaches to how to address these issues. The aim is to publish the COMMA special edition in 2019/20.

City archives can play a crucial role in providing linkages between the community and the official archives. There are several examples from within the working lives of SLMT Committee members: the Cape Verde music project in Rotterdam, the outreach work with Arab communities in Haifa and the Huntley archives in London to name but a few.

In the spirit of the ICA Universal Declaration on Archives, adopted in Oslo 2010, we need to continue to recognise 'the diversity of archives in recording every area of human activity' and undertake to work together in order that 'archives are made accessible to everyone' and 'archives are used to contribute to the promotion of responsible citizenship'.

So at LMA and within SLMT our aim is to provide equal access to archives working across all City Agenda whether in the records of planning departments, housing developments or children's and community groups.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that it is possible for archive services to provide services to its governing institution in innovative and perhaps unusual ways. The opportunity was seized and has meant a much raised profile and better infrastructure support for London Metropolitan Archives as a key player within the City of London. These opportunities do exist in all cities and need to be taken up in order to ensure the preservation of the archive for all citizens.