ARCHIVES TASK FORCE DISCUSSION PAPER 1

Archives Facts and Statistics

1 Archives: what they are

“Archives are the documents created in the normal course of the life of an institution or individual in order for them to function, and as such provide a historical record.” In terms of users and size, the archives domain is the smallest of the three for which Resource has responsibility. However, the sheer range and diversity of UK archive collections is astonishing.

2 Archives: the size of the domain

Places
- **2,000** Institutions and organizations in the UK hold archives
- **3** national archives (England & Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland)
- **130** local authorities run archive services on over **150** sites/service points
- **30** National museums, galleries and cultural institutions hold archive collections
- **230** government departments and agencies employ archivists or records managers
- **50** Universities and higher education institutions hold archive collections

People
- **2 million** Estimated visits to UK archives annually – visits to local authority archive services have doubled in 10 years, and many more people access services virtually, or experience archives through secondary use
- **300,000** Visits annually to the Public Record Office at Kew and the Family History Centre in central London
- **27,000** Visits annually to the Public Record Office museum and exhibitions
- **5,000** National museums, galleries and cultural institutions hold archive collections
- **450** People employed at the Public Record Office at Kew

Archive holdings
- **167 km** Of shelving at the Public Record Office, Kew
- **30,000m³** Of records looked after by local authority archive services in England and Wales
- **22%** Of the holdings of local authority archives in England and Wales is made up of semi-current records

Finance
- **£40 million** Annual expenditure on local authority archive services in England and Wales
- **£30 million** Annual operating cost of the Public Record Office at Kew
- **£20 million** The amount of Heritage Lottery Funding secured by English archives in 2000-01
- **337%** The rise in local authority archive service income generation between 1991-92 and 2000-01
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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Remit and examples of holdings</th>
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<tr>
<td>National Archives</td>
<td>Public Record Office, National Archives of Scotland, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland</td>
<td>Public records of government departments agencies and bodies; private and semi private collections of public figures and officials; significant map, plan and photograph collections; official printed material; (NAS and PRONI hold some private and business records)</td>
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<td>National institutions</td>
<td>The British Library, The National Sound Archive, The British Film Institute, BBC, House of Commons/Lords</td>
<td>Manuscripts, maps, plans, prints, photographs; printed material, departmental files, oral history collections, digital records, audiovisual archives created or received by the institution</td>
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<td>National Museums &amp; Galleries</td>
<td>National Gallery, Natural History Museum, Imperial War Museum</td>
<td>Manuscripts, maps, plans, prints, photographs, printed material, departmental records, audiovisual archives relating to particular collections</td>
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<td>Central Government departments, agencies and bodies</td>
<td>Foreign &amp; Commonwealth Office, Ordnance Survey, United Kingdom Hydrographic Office</td>
<td>Records created or received in the conduct of official business. e.g. departmental files and digital records, electronic datasets, printed material, maps, plans, photographs</td>
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<td>Local authority archives</td>
<td>London Metropolitan Archives, Gloucestershire County Record Office, Sheffield Archives, West Sussex Record Office</td>
<td>Official, unofficial private and business records relating to a particular geographical location: e.g. local government and related records; public records; ecclesiastical records; legal records (e.g. quarter sessions); estate, family and manorial records, business records (e.g. solicitors, estate and land agents, architects, retailers, publicans records); industrial and manufacturing records; records of voluntary organisations, clubs, societies and charities, antiquarian and manuscript collections</td>
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<td>Higher Education sector</td>
<td>Cambridge University, Durham University, North London University, colleges of further education, schools</td>
<td>Records, archives and manuscripts acquired or donated to the holding institution e.g. private papers, printed material manuscripts, deposited public records, maps, plans, prints, sound recordings, audiovisual archives, digital records</td>
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<td>Audiovisual archives</td>
<td>North West Film Archive, Media Archive of Central England</td>
<td>Moving image and sound archives relating to a particular region or geographical location, posters prints and ephemera</td>
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| Specialist repositories             | - Charities  
- Historic houses  
- Hospitals  
- Medical/scientific organisations  
- Professional bodies/learned institutions  
- Religious institutions | Holdings extremely rich and varied e.g.  
- Canterbury Cathedral Archives: records of Dean and chapter of Canterbury, parish records,  
- Royal College of Surgeons: papers of surgeons & the history of surgery,  
- Oxfordshire Health Archives: NHS records, paintings, prints,  
- History of Advertising Trust: poster, campaign and business records  
- NSPCC: charity records |
| Business archives                   | Company trading and historical records                                  | Holdings extremely rich and varied e.g. Marks & Spencer, Rothschilds, BT, Harrods, Unilever, Barclays Bank, AstraZeneca |

In the latter part of the twentieth century there has been a significant expansion in the amount of material made available to archive collections. In parallel, there has been a continuing increase in the number of people using those collections, fuelled in large measure by the growth of interest in family and local history. In England, there are over one million visits each year to archive collections, and over 75% of those visitors do so for private or personal research. Many are first time visitors. Across the country the use of archival material has never been more popular.

- 82% of archive users believe archives contribute to preserving our culture
- 72% of users believe that archives help towards strengthening family and community identity
- 66% of user feel that archives provide opportunities for learning
- 99% of users find staff friendly and helpful; 98% say that they are knowledgeable
- 50% of visitors to archive services live within 20km of the archive, but another 25% travel from a distance and use other local facilities or stay overnight in the vicinity
- archives attract new users, over 20% have never visited an archive before
- almost half of users are over 60,
- 3% of users are under 24
- Only 0.4% of visitors are under 16
- Only 2% of visitors are of non white ethnicity
- 12.5% of visitors are people with disabilities
- Nearly 70% of users have internet access and are confident using new technology

5 UK archives strengths and weaknesses

Strengths of the archives sector include the quality and variety of holdings, the experience and knowledge of staff, and the valued, personal quality of individual service, and tailored advice. Weaknesses have been identified as poor public access, poor accommodation both for archives and users, inadequate catalogues and finding aids, under-resourced ICT provision, under-resourced conservation and preservation programmes and facilities, virtually no capacity to deal with long-term archival issues of electronic records, concerns over adequacy of training, and under-resourced outreach, education and learning programmes.
6 Archive infrastructure
This diagram shows the main departments, agencies and relationships that shape and influence United Kingdom archives.
Sources for this paper:

*Our shared past: Developing 21st Century Archive Services – Phase Two, Archival Mapping Project Board (Public Record Office), 2001*
*Archives Services Statistics 1999-2000, Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy, 2000*
*Archives Services Statistics, 2001-02, Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy, 2001*
*Surveys of Visitors to British Archives, Public Services Quality Group, 1998, 1999, 2000*
*Unlocking the past, securing the future, The Keeper’s Report 2001-02, Public Record Office, 2002*