Listening to the Past,  
Speaking to the Future  
The report of the Archives Task Force  

Annex E: Towards a better understanding of non-users  

R W Sabin and L Samuels
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Towards a better understanding of non-users

Introduction

This qualitative research was conducted for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) at archives in London and Manchester in May 2003 by Sabin-Samuels Associates. Four groups of non-users, C1C2 social class were held together with one user group. The focus of the study was to understand more about non-users and why they fail to use archives. The work was intended to help identify potential solutions to the creation of wider public access and a more supportive public environment for archive services.

The report that follows was first presented in slide format in June 2003 (see Appendices).

The report, which broadly follows the sequence of the discussions held in the qualitative research groups, highlights how negatively archives are perceived, and by contrast how surprised and delighted non-users can be when shown the possibilities of the archive in an imaginative light.

We hope this report will contribute to archivists’ work in broadening the reach and appeal of these invaluable resources. We have made some suggestions based on this small-scale research as to how a segmentation of potential users could work, and the implications of this for communications planning.

Research Objectives

The overall objective of the research was to understand better what holds people back from using archives. Areas of coverage of the research were:

- Unprompted awareness and knowledge of archives (what are they, where can you find them, who would use them and for what purpose)
- Exploration of what respondents understand specifically from the term ‘archives’
- Spontaneous perceptions of archives, specifically role, worth and relevance
- Respondents level of interest in history/the past (at a national and local level) and their attitudes towards it/perceived heritage worth
- Usage of museums and libraries
- Pursuit of hobbies/interests involving research/study, exploring behaviour feelings and motivations in this context
- Attitudes to learning and web-based information in particular
- Perceptions of online archives access
- Comprehension of the term ‘records management’
- Perceptions and views of ‘saving and storing our present for future generations’.
- Identification of barriers to usage, (could include image perceptions, communication barriers, lifestyle considerations)
- Reactions to archive materials and concepts, examining their level of interest and any changes in attitudes regarding the importance of archives.
- Assessment of interest and importance attached to record management
- Investigation of likelihood to become users as a result of exposure to materials/information given in the sessions, identifying key motivating factors.
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Perceived value of archives. Do people acknowledge an ‘existence value’ for archives? Or do they see them as irrelevant to modern life / their lives. Exploration of the concept of ‘relevance’ of this national collection to the nation at large and to the respondents as individuals. Views on the potential that archives have to offer the general public. What would need to change so that the public would value them as a valuable community resource?

Methodology

Five extended focus groups were held split between two archives locations in Manchester and London. The sessions were in three parts, and the areas outlined in the objectives covered in depth. Approximately one hour was allowed to explore the respondents existing views, 20 minutes for the archivist to demonstrate archives and 40 minutes to explore post reactions. Other stimulus materials in the form of concept statements and sort cards were used to motivate and direct discussion.

Sample

Non-Users of Archives - 4 x 2hour groups

The groups were structured as follows:
Group 1: Males 25-45 years
Group 2: Females 25-45 years
Group 4: Mixed genders 45-65 years
At least half the respondents in each group were computer literate.
At least 2 respondents in each of groups 1-4 were of ethnic origin.

Users of Archives –1 x 2hour group

This group of users provided feedback on the positive experiences of using archives and enabled us to compare this with non-users reactions.
Group 5: Archives users comprised of recent visitors with a positive experience and at least 4 respondents who had used on-line services.
Summary and Recommendations

The research set out to help answer the question: *Why don’t people use archives?* Also, to identify potential solutions that would help create wider public access and a more supportive public environment. There were two further underlying questions to the study: *Do people value archives?* and *What would motivate people to use archives?*

We found that the respondents in the groups we held were generally apathetic towards archives. They had no awareness of any promotion of the service and were unaware of the locations of the archives. Archives were literally out of sight and out of mind. Having arrived at the archives for the research, people commented on the unwelcoming aspect of the buildings and on the back street locations. Alongside these impressions, respondents’ preconceptions were of an official, old and dusty bureaucratic service that would not be user friendly. They lacked confidence that they would be able to navigate their way through the information available if required to do so. Some had tried to use family history web sites to pursue their interests, but this had often ended in disappointment as they found the number of sites and navigation generally too confusing.

During the research, archivists showed a selection of the collections to the groups. There was a very positive reaction to this, in many cases transforming respondents’ ideas about what was in the archive and its relevance to them. There was a great reward in coming across a fascinating document or simply one’s own surname in a register.

People did value the archive. They thought that it was important that an accurate record was kept of their local area and its history. A few, those with a real interest in history, saw this in the context of a bigger picture, this being the role of the archive service in a democratic society. All saw the educational value of the archive, particularly in helping children understand and value the history of their area.

In the report we have made some suggestions as to how archivists could segment their potential user base. Such a segmentation would be a start in formulating an action and communication plan for archives and this would include the following.

- Review the presence of the archive service on the net. Consider improved navigation and help within and between relevant sites.
- Raise the profile of the service through local PR, exhibitions and other means. Demonstrate that the service is delivering a valuable contribution to schools.
- Improve the public face of the service. Consider city centre locations for key services and offer more interpretation of the archive for the general public.
- Improve the coordination between the archive service and other cultural services such as museums and libraries. Target activities on particular areas or communities.
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Qualitative Findings

Initial Reactions and Preconceptions

People comprehend in general terms both archives and records management. They understand the basis of the archive service to be the storage of unique documents, and of an historical record of an area. However, archives lack an effective public presence. They are seen as inaccessible, both geographically and psychologically.

“People don’t know where they are, had never heard of the place before today.”
(This and all subsequent quotations are taken verbatim from the group discussions. The PowerPoint presentation at Appendix 1 contains additional quotations.)

The archive is viewed as somewhere that is used for official business, and that one would need an appointment to visit it. Our respondents thought the main users would be professionals such as solicitors, historians, authors or councilors. Personal users would probably be ‘on a mission’ probably related to family history or a legal matter. Overall our respondents did not feel the archive was for them.

“It wouldn’t have occurred to me to come here and I’ve been trying to do my family tree.”

Their comprehension of records management is restricted to the functions of storage and preservation. When asked about the processes involved in choosing what to keep, they recognize the importance of the role and they trust historians to perform the task. There may be a need for some involvement of local expertise, for example of local history groups with some special knowledge, but not necessarily of the public. Respondents expressed a note of caution: it might not be essential to keep absolutely everything in its original form, for example ‘miles of council minutes’.

“Organising the archives into a form that’s usable and keeping them in good condition”.

Negative Perceptions

People’s preconceptions of archives are negative. There was a general feeling of apathy in the groups towards archives. This feeling was reinforced by people’s lack of awareness of the public presence of archives (that is, where they are and what they offer) and then was consolidated by the inconvenient locations and unwelcoming buildings.

“Do you have to make an appointment or be a member?”

“It seems to be tucked out of the way. It’s not somewhere you walk along and …see a welcoming building.”

Respondents described archives as official, old, dusty, not user friendly, remote and locked away. They also feared being overwhelmed by, or lost in, information should they wish to use the archive. They had a lack of confidence that they could navigate their way through the information to get what they wanted.
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

“Wouldn’t know where to start.” “It’s knowing what to do and how to go about it.”
“You think you have to be an academic to use them.”

Users also held negative views. Their complaints centered on navigation difficulties, time involved and costs of acquiring document copies, and they also reflected the same set of perceptions of the archives’ public face as the non-users.

“The whole system is annoying, it’s all over the place.”

Museums and galleries inevitably have a much better public image, and their more central locations are where people would expect to find archives too. Nevertheless, following more discussion, users and non-users saw the services as complementary and as having equal importance, though they did not see evidence of the institutions working together. Archives they considered to be unique in that they represented the complete picture of a local area in all its detail. Museums in contrast were thought to display themed exhibits selected by others and untouchable in glass cases.

“A museum can be artefacts from anywhere but this is about us, about ordinary people, about Londoners.”
“Museums and libraries are more accessible but not more important.” “There are links, they are a family, you need them both.”

Why archives matter

[Diagram showing the reasons why archives matter: Accurate record, Personal identity, Learning potential, Community identity]
The archive’s prime value is seen to be a place where a straight-forward record of the past, untouched by politicians, journalists or others, is kept. In the groups, the importance of archives was weighted towards personal and local issues. Personal identity and community history and heritage were highly relevant. Most people do value archives intrinsically for the role they play in preserving the totality of the public memory. They expect them to be there (should they ever need use of them in the future), but they are not in the public consciousness.

“*It’s our history told through the eyes of people who lived and worked in Manchester.*”
“*There’s something about old pictures and diaries which put you in touch with humanity.*”

Whilst the example of the loss of records seen on TV coverage of the Iraq war caused most to endorse the archives’ wider role and importance, the saliency of this broader role in democratic society was much higher to those with a real interest in history than to others. Overall, the relevance of archives to people’s lives today varied. At one extreme the most enthusiastic group saw the role of archives as essential; at the other extreme, those less interested in history (who tended to be among the younger men interviewed) saw the archives’ role as purely functional - as an aid to resolving particular personal or legal issues.

All agreed that archives should have an active role in education. The older generation was more conscious of the potential loss of local identity and culture. There was a high level of interest in passing on family and local history to children, and this combined with the feeling that children were under-informed about these topics. Parents of younger children also endorsed the view that children should be exposed to the types of material to be found in the archive. Overall, people would like to see a more pro-active approach towards schools (we have noted that this is one potential basis of the communication of the work of archives).

Some groups saw the opportunity for life-long learning, particularly in exploring community history and in involving communities in researching, collecting and displaying their own history and heritage.

**Connecting with archives.**

Mid way through the group discussions, respondents were shown a selection of material from the archive. The material was explained by an archivist and people were free to handle the items and to discuss them and the work of the archive with the archivist. Examples of web access to archives were also shown and discussed.

There was a tremendous fascination with the archive examples shown. “*Nothing can compare with looking at the real thing*”. People’s expectations of the archive, what it held and its availability were exceeded. For most, the potential of the archive for them now appeared to be much greater.

“If you are handling a 16th century records book, you’re not just taking in the information, you are stimulating a whole lot of different senses.”
“*I’d like to know what else they cover.*” “*I’d like to look at the history of our street.*”

The availability of relevant web sites was welcomed though there remained a number of concerns about ease of use, navigation, and the quality of what is delivered. Although some had tried to use archive services over the internet from home or their library, many had been confused by the number of different web sites available, and did not know where to look for their own requirements.
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Their expectations were high when first trying to use such services, but their experience had discouraged them from going further.

Overall, there was a transformation in attitude among all groups towards the work of the archive, the strongest reactions being among older participants, and the weakest reactions among younger men. All found interest in records containing their own family names or in records relating to local areas they knew well.

The rewards of using archives for personal use could be high, involving deep emotional feelings of ‘connectedness’ and some achievement (for example, in finding the key document or an ancestor’s name).

Examples of adjectives respondents used about archives changed from uninviting, overwhelming and dull to welcoming, stimulating, emotional and potentially rewarding.

“…it’s been a massive eye opener.” “Fascinating, very interesting, mind blowing really.” “I needed something to get me here, we know now and I think it’s wonderful.”

What needs to change?

Respondents were asked what they would change to make the archive more attractive to people like themselves. Their replies centered on improvements in communication, location, also on the buildings’ interior environment. The location of the two archives used for the research was compared unfavourably by respondents to the more attractive locations of museums and other public buildings. Such institutions were to be taken seriously because they were in the centre of things.

The groups were especially appreciative of the archivists who had spent time with them, and this impression served to underline the need to communicate more generally a friendly and welcoming aspect to a service that is perceived as bureaucratic and forbidding.

“Make the building more inviting. The people are lovely but it’s the building and where it is.”
Customer segments and potential solutions

A possible segmentation is proposed based on potential users' intrinsic motivations. Such segmentation could be useful in deciding how to promote the actual use of archives.

- **Advocates**
  - High interest.
  - See the big picture

- **Personal questers**
  - High potential. Have tried some services

- **Latent supporters**
  - Need to be shown what's available
  - 50+ and educational interest

- **Outsiders**
  - Self-excluded – too busy or too many alternative pursuits
  - Uninvolved – archives failing to be relevant

- **The indifferent**
  - No intrinsic interest.

We identified 5 potential segments. In the model our assumption is that people can be persuaded to move up the segmentation ladder and thus become heavier or more frequent users of archives.

**The indifferent** are definite non-users who do not value archives at all (this group was excluded from the research).

**Outsiders** comprise people who do not see archives as being for them. They give archives qualified support but they are uninvolved. Included in this category are younger men and those for whom the archive is failing to deliver relevant content (e.g. an ethnic community) but who could be persuaded to become users in the future.

In this research, people with a propensity to become users tended to be those who expressed an interest in, and placed a value on, historical knowledge.

**The latent supporters** represent the greatest untapped potential. The category comprises people driven by family or history interests or by educational motives. They may have tried already to explore some areas of interest and been put off by not knowing how to progress. Older people are well represented here: they have an interest in their own and their ancestors' pasts and have the time to delve into it. Younger parents strongly value the archives' potential for schools and formal education as a way to get the young to appreciate their local history.
Personal questors are those who have tried out archive services, probably to start researching their family tree. They could have visited the archive or used an archive web site. They need some encouragement to go further.

Advocates not only have high potential, but also recognise the big picture. They understand the role of the archive in its wider national and historical context. They are regular users for leisure, or for a more formal purpose (e.g. adopted children tracing their natural parents) or for professional reasons.

Increasing archive use and appreciation

The use of a segmentation such as the one presented can help direct effort to removing barriers to use for some groups and to creating motivational strategies for others. In general terms, to achieve the objectives of (a) greater appreciation of the archive service and (b) more usage, there are two basic strategies available. For those groups toward the top right of the chart, better service and reasons to be more involved should be provided; for all, and in particular those toward the bottom left of the chart, easily understood and assimilated generic communication should be provided.

To use an archive a person must have time and interest together with information search and handling skills. It was not obvious to our respondents that they might need some skill to make best use of the archive. The fact that some were failing to continue with their researches because they could not use easily either the web sites or the on-site services, seems to indicate a need for better or more obvious user support.

For other potential users with limited time available, more packaged presentation and interpretation of archive resources might encourage a deeper appreciation of what’s available. The uninvolved outsiders might be engaged by specific projects sponsored by the archive service. Our research did not uncover how people are recommended to use the archive (e.g. via adult learning) or other patterns of use such as the period of time over which a person could reasonably be expected to use archive services. More understanding of user behaviour would help direct the marketing effort.

Raising the profile

People have quite a narrow view of what is in the archive, how they could use the archive and what the rewards of doing so might be. All our respondents saw the requirement for better and higher profile publicity:

“If they want people to come here it’s got to be publicised.”

From this research, there emerged four key aspects to raising the profile of archive services. First, more use of PR – case studies communicating both practical aspects of archive use and the emotional rewards available. Since the educational value of archives was widely recognised, practical initiatives targeted at schools, should provoke a positive response and raise the saliency of archives to all. Targeted PR could be used to reach groups such as students and academics, teachers in adult education and other influencers, and professionals. First-time user events would complement a PR campaign providing people with the opportunity to sample what’s available. Such events could
be linked to outreach initiatives – for example, allowing people to discover the history of a particular street or area.

Second, reconsideration of the role and co-ordination of the various web services, along with better navigational and general user help. Since web sites are likely to be the primary point of entry and use for the mass market, such a review seems vital. Publicity for appropriate web sites should accompany any initiative, so that people know where to look in the first place. Attention should be given to the growing use of the internet by older people who are also a key group for archive service expansion.

Third, more inter-agency co-operation among museums, libraries and archives. The sister institutions could do more to raise awareness, mount exhibitions, and promote interaction with community groups. A contact strategy is needed that allows people to select how they would like to interact with archive services and to follow a clear path from initial interest through general browsing to working on specific projects.

Finally, the improvement of the public face of archives. Front line services – those providing family and community history – might be separated from the data warehouse. Such separation would allow consideration of a city centre family and community history centre, operating cross-sector and offering interpretation and a window on archive collections through exhibitions and community outreach. The whole could be complemented by a help-line service.

The following schematic summarise how archive services, building on supportive publicity, could manage varying communication and action programs to reach a wider audience.
Further investigations

It could be useful to carry out further investigation of user motivations and of patterns of archive use, so as to establish user segmentation, and to configure services more precisely. The identification of those materials the public has found most interesting and most useful could lead to these items receiving greater promotion and to them being made more accessible.

More understanding is required of why and at what point users cease to use archive services in order that barriers can be identified and removed.

Family history has a wide audience and an investigation of further PR and broadcast opportunities would be worthwhile.

An assessment of the available evidence on community outreach and some further experimentation would help establish strategies to reach communities that are under-represented both in archive use and in archive content.
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Appendices

1 PowerPoint presentation
2 Archives Non-Users Focus Groups Discussion Guide
3 Concept Statements used a stimulus
4 Individual sort cards
5 Research Venue Details
6 Recruitment Screener
Appendix 1: PowerPoint Presentation

Slide 1

Archives
Towards a better understanding of why people are not archive users
A Qualitative Research Report
11 June 2003
Prepared for: re:source
Prepared by: Sabin-Samuels

Slide 2

Focus of the study

• To better understand non-users and why they fail to use archives.
• To identify potential solutions to create wider public access and a more supportive public environment.

Underlying questions:
• Do people value archives?
• What would motivate them to use?
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Slide 3

Methodology

5 extended focus groups:
4 non-users
+ 1 user group

Part 1: Existing views
Part 2: Archivist session
Part 3: Post reactions

Slide 4

Sample

4 groups of Non-users, C1C2 social class:

1. Females aged 25-45 years.
3. M/F museums/libraries users aged 45-65 years.
4. M/F aged 45-65 years.

Plus 1 x User group (including at least 4 on-line users).

Fieldwork: 20-22 May 2003
London Metropolitan Archives
Manchester County Record Office
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Slide 5

WHY DON'T PEOPLE USE ARCHIVES?

Slide 6

Inaccessibility is a big problem

- Viewed mainly for official business
- By appointment only
- Used mainly by historians, solicitors, councillors, authors, 'personal mission'.
- People comprehend the ‘basics’ but they do not feel it's for them.

"It wouldn’t have occurred to me to come here and I’ve been trying to do my family tree."
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Slide 7

Comprehension of archives

All records of one thing and another

A place where you have all your historical facts

Time capsules

Data on the population

A database, there are things there you can’t find anywhere else

Slide 8

‘Records management’

• “Organising the archives into a form that’s usable and keeping them in good condition”.
• Process of selection overlooked.
• Trust historians to perform this task.
• Recognise the importance of the role and feel the need to have input from local expertise, but not necessarily the public.
• Some items not worthwhile preserving originals e.g. ‘miles of council minutes’.
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Lack of public presence

- General feeling of apathy
- No awareness of any promotion
- Unaware of archives locations
- Public face is offputting:
  - Unwelcoming buildings
  - Back street locations

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Lack of public presence

- People don’t know where they are, had never heard of the place before today.
- People need to know about it and it not be shut away.
- Do you have to make an appointment or be a member?
- It seems to be tucked out of the way. It’s not somewhere you walk along and all of a sudden see a welcoming building.
Uninviting imagery

- official
- locked away
- not user friendly
- remote
- dusty
- old

ARCHIVES

Negative perceptions

- Perception that they would be overwhelmed by information.
  “You think you have to be an academic to use them.”
- Lack of confidence they could navigate the information.
  “Wouldn’t know where to start.”
  “It’s knowing what to do and how to go about it.”
Users' views

• Negative views also held by users.
• Strong criticism of the system: *the whole system is annoying, it's all over the place*
• Complaints centered on navigation difficulties, time involved and costs.
• Feel buildings should be more enticing/modernised.
• And awareness/accessibility improved to broaden appeal

Relationship with Museums/Libraries

• The public face of libraries and museums is significantly better than archives.
• Better buildings, locations, greater motivation to visit.
• Archives considered to be unique in that they represent the complete picture of a local area, in all it's detail.
• Museums in contrast were thought to display 'themed exhibits', 'in glass cases'.
Relationship with Museums/Libraries

A museum can be artefacts from anywhere but this is about us, about ordinary people, about Londoners.

In a museum it's a particular showcase of what has been chosen to be shown to you. Here you are coming to look for something that is very personal to you.

To be able to look at the different pages like that is fascinating, in a museum it couldn't be handled and you'd only see one page.

You can touch these things, in a museum they're all under glass.

Museums and libraries are more accessible but not more important. They're all equally important.

There are links, they are a family, you need them both, you need the objects and the paper work.

DO PEOPLE VALUE ARCHIVES?
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

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Why archives matter

- It's essential, it would be a terrible shame if it was lost, well more than a shame because it is preservation of truth and our history which is so important.
- It matters very much it is taking history forward for your children.
- There's something about old pictures and diaries which put you in touch with humanity.
- It's our history told through the eyes of people who lived and worked in Manchester.

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Why archives matter

- Accurate record
- Personal identity
- Learning potential
- Community identity
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Slide 19

**Personal and local issues predominate**

- ‘Rights of the individual’/personal identity uses seen as a key role of archives.
- Recording and preserving local heritage strongly valued.
- Important for children to understand what life was like for their ancestors.
- Most people do value archives intrinsically, and expect them to be there (should they ever need use of them in the future), but they need to be brought more into the public consciousness.

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**The big picture**

- Democratic value salient only to those with a real interest in history.
- Most people endorse this in matters of extreme loss eg Iraqi burning of records.
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Learning potential

- High interest and motivation toward passing on local & family history to children
- Strong support for proactive programmes for schools
- Life-long learning /community involvement opportunities

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CONNECTING WITH ARCHIVES
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Slide 23

Connecting with Archives

• Tremendous fascination in the archive examples shown. “Nothing can compare with looking at the real thing”
• Found much more stimulating and engaging than they would have imagined.
• Connecting with ancestors/community history evoked emotional responses.
• Acted as a catalyst to arouse further interest.

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Connecting with Archives

Fascination of how different things are from one century to the next.

Marvelous social history of London, my level.

A knowledgeable and very welcoming woman, you’d feel confident if you had a young lady like that to help you.

If you are handling a 16th century record book, you’re not just taking in the information, you are stimulating a whole lot of different senses.

There’s probably something there for all of us, I’d like to know what else they cover.

I’d like to look at the history of our street.
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Archives On-Line

- Huge potential to build usage via the web.
- Evidence suggests that people still don’t know where to look.
- Search engines give them too many confusing addresses.
- Expectations are high compared with what is delivered.

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Archives On-line

Didn't know that this kind of thing was available online.
It wouldn't occur to me to have gone and looked for it on a website.
I had a look at ancestry.com but it looks a bit too heavy for me.
I would use that after seeing that it whets your appetite.
I needed some good sites to have a look, now I will be able to do that.
Change in Attitudes to Archives

Pre
- uninviting
- intimidating
- overwhelming
- officious
- dull
- remote

Post
- welcoming
- user-friendly
- my level
- open for all
- fascinating
- stimulating
- emotional
- potentially rewarding
- educational (for all)
- unique resource

Change in Attitudes

- Rewards of using archives can be high.
- Deep emotional feelings of 'connectedness' and sense of discovery.
  
  "It just shows you what's on your doorstep, it's been a massive eye opener."
  "Fascinating, very interesting, mind-blowing really."
  "I needed something to get me here, we know now and I think it's wonderful."
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

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What would need to change?

- Advertising, let people know
- To be re-housed somewhere like Salford Quays where people like to go.
- Make the building more inviting. The people are lovely but it's the building and where it is.
- Make people aware that they are welcome
- Need something that entices you in
- Involve schools

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TARGET AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Slide 31

Advocates
High interest.
See the big picture

Personal questers
High potential. Have tried
some services

Latent supporters
Need to be shown what’s available
50+ and educational interest

Outsiders
Self-excluded – too busy or too
many alternative pursuits
Uninvolved – archives failing to be relevant

The indifferent
No intrinsic interest.

Slide 32

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Slide 33

- **Advocates**
  - High interest.
  - See the big picture

- **Personal questers**
  - High potential.
  - Have tried some services

- **Latent supporters**
  - Need to be shown what’s available
  - 50+ and educational interest

- **Outsiders**
  - Self-excluded – too busy or too many alternative attractions
  - Uninvolved – archives failing to be relevant

- **The indifferent**
  - No intrinsic interest.
  - Will never change

- **Provide better service & reasons to be more involved**

Slide 34

**Raising the profile - communication**

- Need to communicate how the archive is contributing pro-actively to society.
- Make people aware what they can gain from it.
- There’s a big role for PR and ‘taster’ events.
- Importance of school education etc. and of telling people you’re doing this.
- Need to use local targeted promotion and events aimed at key community groups.
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Slide 35

Raising the profile

- If they want people to come here it's got to be publicised.
- They advertise everything on television, but they never tell you about places like this.
- There could be a documentary to highlight it and get people interested.
- The things that we have seen here today could create a fantastic amount of interest among people who think they have no interest.
- Open days to the public could get people in.

Slide 36

Raising the profile - the net

- Need to consider the role of the web as the prime entry vehicle.
- Routing/signposting/configuration of help services are critical.
- The different web sites should be coordinated so that the individual no matter where they enter the local or national system can be routed according to their needs.
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Slide 37

**Raising the profile - libraries and museums**

There's huge scope for co-operation in
- raising awareness
- exhibition style events of archive material
- interactions with the community and community groups
- user navigation

Slide 38

**Improve the public face**

- Simplify the entry offer (one-stop shop)
- Location should be town centre/cultural quarter.
- Offer interpretation and a window on the collections through exhibitions, community outreach etc.
- Offer a help-line.
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Slide 39

Supportive environment
- Popular TV history
- PR other good case studies

Raise saliency
- Visible contribution to schools
- Local exhibitions and events

Raise awareness
- Advertise and improve web services
- Helpline

Raise usage
- Community projects
- Public face
- Targeted groups

Raise awareness
- Advertise and improve web services
- Helpline

Slide 40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication objectives</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Dependencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mass Awareness
raise saliency improve imagery awareness of and use of web as primary access | PR mass appeal initiatives & case studies
PR + advertise use of key web sites
Local exhibitions and events
Helpline number | Improve co-ordination and design of web access
Link web access to improved customer service
Mix of national and local funding |
| Targeted Marketing
Raise usage Widen access | Public Face: eg town centre ‘family history centre’, Single point of contact.
Community projects
Schools | X-sectoral delivery
Local delivery consistent with a national framework |
Further Investigation

- Establish segmentation and prioritisation of potential user groups.
- Discover what characteristics/motivations/conditions might stimulate use.
- Assess evidence on/experiment with community outreach, schools projects and other targeted marketing.
- Investigate the patterns of use and make easily accessible what is really interesting/useful to the general public.
- PR/broadcast opportunities re. family history.
- Why/at what point people stop using due to costs, information overload, etc. on both the web and in actual visits.
Appendix 2: Archives Non-Users Focus Groups, Discussion Guide

Introduction

We are an independent market research company who have been asked to find out about specific hobbies and interests, and your views on various information resources available to you – some of which you may not be familiar with. We are interested in finding out how much you know about some of these things so it doesn’t matter if it’s very little. There are no right and wrong answers, it’s your opinion that matters.

- Explain why research carried out in group discussions.
- Ask for first names of each respondent.

Unprompted Awareness

- Before you came here today, did any of you know this building and what was available to the public here? Probe for awareness and knowledge and any familiarity with the term archives.
- Tell me what you think you would find here? What would you expect?
- What is your understanding of ARCHIVES –SHOW CARD? What are they?
- What do they consist of?
- Where else would you expect to find archives? Probe: awareness of range of archive services
- Who do you think uses them?
- What do you think they are used for?
- What do you think are the main reasons why more people don’t use them?

Spontaneous perceptions

- What images come to mind when you think of archives. Positives and Negatives
- What role do you think archives perform? ……for individuals, community and society
- Is that something you think is worthwhile?
- Does that role have relevance in society today?
- Is it important to us/you as individual(s)?

Interests

- Would you say that you are interested in history – either at a national or local level?
- Do you ever go to museums? When was the last time you went? Where did you go?
- Did you think the visit was worthwhile?
- Do you value the work that museums do in terms of storing and exhibiting the past?
- Tell me about your hobbies/interests?
- Do you think any of these have any educational value?
- Do you ever spend any of your leisure time researching any of these?
- What kind of things do you do? Why do you think you do it?
- Apart from the straight information/content, what else do you get out of it?
- Do you ever use libraries? Either in pursuit of your interest or for other purposes.
- For what kind of things: novels, reference, audiovisual etc
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Do you value the services libraries provide? How are archives viewed in the context of museums and libraries – in terms of the services they provide (to the public and to the nation at large)? Why do you think archives fail to attract widespread interest as an element of the UK heritage? How important do you think it is to preserve our heritage in this way?

**IT usage**

Do you ever use the internet? What are the main things you use it for? Anything else? Probe.
Do you ever use the internet in connection with the hobbies you’ve mentioned? What is your view of it? What do you feel about using the web for reference purposes? Have you ever used online archives? Were you aware of access to archives online? Is anyone familiar with online archives and what’s available? What would you expect to find on an archive website? Would that be something that would interest you?
SHOW WEB PAGES– to explain what is available on online archives
How does that compare to the impression you had before? Who do you think would be most interested in using this site? Is there anything there that you think you might be interested in using?

**Records management**

SHOW NAME BOARD RECORDS MANAGEMENT for spontaneous comments
What do you understand by the term 'records management'? What associations come to mind, What do think is meant by it in the context of archives?

SHOW PROMPT: reverse explanation of RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Do you think the public should be involved in appraisal – who should decide what’s important to keep?

**Role of Archives**

SHOW CONCEPT Reverse explanation of ARCHIVES

SHOW CONCEPT: ARCHIVES TELL THE STORY OF OUR PAST.
Is ‘saving and storing our present for future generations’ something that you consider worthwhile? How do you view it in the context of the kind of work museums do? What do think are the practical uses of archives? What do you think holds people back from using them?

SHOW CONCEPT: ARCHIVES HELP US TO KNOW WHO WE ARE
Do you agree/disagree with that statement?
SHOW CONCEPT: **ADOPTION**
Are there any other practical uses of archives that you can think of?

SHOW CONCEPT: **PRACTICAL USES**

---

*Reactions to Archive Materials (Demonstration by Archivist)*

Are these things something that interests you?  
What aspects do you find interesting?  
Is it the kind of thing you expected to find here? In what way is it different?  
Do these items in any way alter your impression of archives? How?  
How important do you think it is that these kind of items are stored and preserved for future generations. Would it bother you if they were destroyed?

SHOW CONCEPT: **REALISE VALUE ONCE IT’S BEEN TAKEN AWAY**
Examine reactions to statement.

---

*Importance of Archives*

SHOW CARD again **WHY DO ARCHIVES MATTER?**

- Now having had some discussion on the role archives play, what are your views on this?  *Discuss for local and national collections.*  
- Have your views changed? In what way?

SHOW CONCEPT: **ONE OF THE NATIONS UNTAPPED TREASURES.**

- Probe for views.  
- Why do you think archives have not caught the public imagination in the same ways as other parts of our cultural heritage?

SHOW CONCEPT: **KEY PART TO PLAY ALONGSIDE MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES..........**

- Do you agree/disagree with that statement. How strongly?

SHOW CONCEPT: **ARCHIVES CAN UNLOCK A WORLD OF INFO & LEARNING**

- What are your views about that?

SHOW CONCEPT: **ARCHIVES ARE A UNIQUE RESOURCE TO INSPIRE**

- Do you agree/disagree with that statement? Explore.  
- As a result of what you’ve seen today do you think you would be interested in using archive services?  
- What would motivate you to use archives?  
- Who else would be interested in using them?  
- What do you think holds people back from using them?

---

*Going on-line*
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

• If you were interested in using archives do you think you would access online or visit an archive personally? Why did you say that?
• If you used an on-line archive, do you think that might encourage you to visit an actual archive?
• Who do you think would be most interested in using? Explain reasons why?
• Do you think libraries could help you more in knowing/understanding more about what’s available and how to search for it?
• How confident would you feel about using an archive? What kind of help would you get ideally (from the archivists/librarians/etc)?

Community Access

• Explore concept of taking archives out into the community.
SHOW CONCEPT OF REMINSCENT THERAPY/ talks by archivists on local history carried out in a local library or village hall. Examine views/ level of interest.
SHOW CONCEPT: DO MORE TO INFORM WHAT’S AVAILABLE

Summarising:

• Can we list all the positives about archives
• And all the negatives?
• How relevant are they to you? In what way?
• Does the national collection of archives have relevance to today’s society?
• Do you think people value the service archives provide?
• What potential do you feel that archives have to offer the general public? …individuals…the community…the nation at large?
• What would need to change so that people had a better impression of archives?
• What would need to happen so that they appealed to new audiences?
• Do you think archives need to demonstrate their worth? In what way?
Appendix 3: Concept statements used as stimulus in discussion groups

Archives

Archives are the records generated by families, individuals, businesses or institutions in the course of their daily activities, which have been preserved for their historical value. They are manuscripts, books, photographs, maps, plans, sound and moving images and digital records.

Records management

Records management is the process by which records are selected for preservation, kept, maintained, and made available for public access.

Why do archives matter?

Archives tell the story of our past, showing us, and future generations, how we came to be what we are as a nation, a community or an individual.

Archives help us to know who we are.

Tracing family history/roots is the most common single purpose why people visit archives.

In the London Met Archive, there are 160,000 adoption case files. The files are fundamental to a person understanding their identity.

The practical uses of archives are unlimited: mineworkers pursuing compensation claims for industrial injuries; individuals contesting boundary disputes / rights of way; detection of crime

You only realise the value once it’s been taken away

One of the nation’s untapped treasures

Archives have a key part to play alongside museums and libraries to enrich the lives of a wide variety of users.

Archives can unlock a world of information and learning.

Archives are a unique resource to inspire, inform and enjoy.

Archives are an important part of our democracy providing a complete and accurate account of our society

Taking archives into the community could be a way to reach new users e.g. reminiscence with the elderly.

Archives need to do more to inform people of what’s available.

I don’t have time to visit the archive, but I might browse on-line.
Appendix 4: Individual sort cards

worthwhile
emotional
sense of discovery
fascinating
unique
stimulating
educational
dull
too time consuming
not for me
complicated
irrelevant
uninteresting
inconvenient
unimportant
rewarding
## Appendix 5: Research Venue Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE AND TIME</th>
<th>VENUE</th>
<th>SPECTRUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ALL GROUPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All respondents to be C1C2 (equal spread please).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At least 4 respondents to be familiar with computers and using the internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUPS 1+2+4+5: ‘Non-users’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None to have ever visited ANY National or Borough/Public or County archive/record office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>None to have ever used on-line services of an archive catalogue such as PROCAT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All to express interest in at least one of the following: genealogy, family history, tracing personal identity, local history, history of a house, land use &amp; access rights, military history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All to claim that they are willing to spend some of their leisure time on researching their hobby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At least 2 respondents to be of ethnic origin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>GROUP 3: ‘Users’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All to have visited archive/record office within the last year and claim that their visit was worthwhile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>At least 4 respondents to have used on-line archive/record services and found it worthwhile.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CLIENT:** Lynda Samuels  
**PROJECT:** Archives  
**DATE:** 16.05.03  
**MODERATOR:** Lynda Samuels  
**JOB NUMBER:** 5790  
**PREPARED BY:** Ania Zankowska

---

**8 RESPONDENTS PER GROUP**

**DURATION OF ALL GROUPS: 2 HOURS**

**GROUPS 1-3: Respondents’ incentives to be delivered to the moderator on the day of research**

**GROUPS 4-5: Respondents’ incentives to be provided by the recruiter**

**DATE**

**TIME**

**VENUE**

**SPECTRUM**
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Research Venue Details - 2
CLIENT : Lynda Samuels
PROJECT : Archives
DATE : 16.05.03

Recruitment by: The Bridge Research
MODERATOR : Lynda Samuels
JOB NUMBER : 5790
PREPARED BY : Ania Zankowska

DATE AND TIME

Tuesday 20 May at 11.00am, 2.00pm and 6.15pm

VENUE
London Metropolitan Archives
40 Northampton Road
London EC1R OHB
Tel: 020 73323820

SPECTRUM
GROUP 1: ‘Female non-users’
All to be women aged 25-45 years.

GROUP 2: ‘Mixed non-users’
All respondents to be aged 45-65 and split equally between men and women.
All to go to museums/libraries.

GROUP 3: ‘Users’
All to have visited archive/record office within the last year and claim that their visit was worthwhile.
At least 4 respondents to have used on-line archive/record services and found it worthwhile.

Recruited by:
Marilyn Sarris
Tel:020 8508 1614
Gill Swain
Tel:01872223807

Thursday 22 May at 2.00pm and 6.00pm

VENUE
The Greater Manchester County Record Office
56 Marshall Street
New Cross
Manchester M4 5FU
Tel: 0161 832 5284

SPECTRUM
GROUP 4: ‘Mixed non-users’
All respondents to be aged 45-65 and split equally between men and women.

GROUP 5: ‘Male non-users’
All to be men aged 25-45 years.

Recruited by:
Monica Wilkinson
Tel: 0161 633 8069
## Appendix 6: Screener

### Question 1 (Q1)
**Here’s a list of interests and hobbies that some people have. Which if any of these are you interested in?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Astronomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting a particular item</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptology/history of peoples or tribes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genealogy/family history/tracing personal identity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local history/history of a house/land use &amp; access rights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military history</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents Association/Neighbourhood association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 2 (Q2)
**Which if any of the following do you currently ACTIVELY pursue?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Astronomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting a particular item</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptology/history of peoples or tribes</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Military history</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents Association/Neighbourhood association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 3 (Q3)
**Are you prepared to spend any of your leisure time researching any of your hobbies?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 4 (Q4)
**Which if any of the following...?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Have you ever visited?</th>
<th>Have you visited within the last year?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museums</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The National Archives/Public Record Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another archive or county record office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your local or central library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 5 (Q5)
**Of those places you've just mentioned, would you say your last visit was worthwhile?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museums</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Library</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your local or central library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 6 (Q6)
**If you use the internet, which if any of these services have you ever used?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter associated with a special interest website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site for putting your photos online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online services of an archive catalogue eg PROCAT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue on a Record Office/Archive website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deals on holiday/travel company websites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 7 (Q7)
**Of those services you've just mentioned, which did you find worthwhile last time you visited?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter associated with a special interest website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site for putting your photos online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online services of an archive catalogue eg PROCAT</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue on a Record Office/Archive website</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deals on holiday/travel company websites</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 8 (Q8)
**Are you prepared to spend any of your leisure time researching any of your hobbies?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 9 (Q9)
**Have you ever attended a market research discussion?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 10 (Q10)
**Have you attended a market research discussion in the last 6 months?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 11 (Q11)
**Are you...........**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 12 (Q12)
**What is your age?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 13 (Q13)
**Are you working**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full/part time</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Housewife</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 14 (Q14)
**In detail, what is the occupation of the chief breadwinner in your household?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 15 (Q15)
**Which if any of these industries do you or any of your family or close friends work in?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertising/marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT, internet or services associated with internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library/public record office/archive office</td>
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<tr>
<td>TV/press/journalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Towards a better understanding of archives non-users

Q6  Are you familiar with using a computer and the internet?  
Yes ☐  No ☐  Market research ☐  None of these ☐

Q16  What is your NAME?

Q17  What is your ethnic origin?

Q18  What is your POSTCODE?

Q19  What is your PHONE NO?

PLEASE SIGN BELOW AFTER READING THE FOLLOWING POINTS:
I confirm that the above answers are truthful and correct. I give permission for the research discussion to be audio and/or video recorded and for the tapes to be used ONLY by the research company and the company commissioning the research. The tapes are to be used solely for the purposes of research. I confirm that I have received £ as a gift in acknowledgement of my help with this project.

Signature: Date:

The Bridge Research, 10 Bishops Bridge Road, London W2 6AA, Tel: 020 7258 4317, Fax: 020 7258 4585
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