Funding: opportunities and expectations

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the Archives Task Force might approach funding issues in the archives domain. This is the first draft of what is – in January 2003 – a very speculative paper written to invite debate at the Task Force’s meeting on January 30th. It is expected that it will evolve during the lifetime of the Task Force and will come back to the Task Force each time it meets.

Funding will always be central to any consideration about the future of the archives domain in the UK. Even the most limited objectives involving any desire to make archives more accessible, to release the learning and social benefits of archives and secure the importance of records management will necessitate making resources available. And although there are always ways of using existing resources more efficiently it is likely that even a modest improvement in the utilisation of this resource for the benefit of society will require some additional investment.

It is obviously premature to be able to suggest precisely what the Task Force should recommend. To some extent what it recommends (and any cost attached to it) will determine – or at least suggest - where funding will be sought. But in general terms we may assume that at least some of the Task Force’s recommendations will have resource demands attached. The Task Force should identify potential funding streams for those recommendations.

The usual way of doing things is to make the recommendations, assess the cost and then either present the bill to the obvious funder or seek one or more funders. This paper is based on one important assumption – that there is no single obvious funder for the Task Force recommendations (whatever they may be) – and one innovation, the identification of potential funders for archives per se, in advance of the Task Force’s particular recommendations.

The Current Funding Landscape

Table 1 gives indicative expenditure in archives and records management for a variety of institutions and bodies (figures are estimated and relate to most recent year available). This is by no means comprehensive but gives an idea of the current investment in the domain.

The current funding landscape is a challenge for the archives domain. The brutal truth is that most organisations – public, commercial or private – are not likely to put either archives or records management as a high priority for spending. Even organisations which recognise the contribution that good records management can make to organisational and business efficiency are generally seeking to minimise costs (regarded as overheads) in this area. Archives are in an even weaker position. The need for their existence is often questioned and again minimalising expenditure often seems to be a higher priority than investing to maximise their benefits or provide a good service to users.
Table 1: indications of current expenditure in the archives and records management domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Government</td>
<td>£30m</td>
<td>Annual running cost of the Public Record Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£1m</td>
<td>Annual running cost of Historical Manuscripts Commission</td>
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<td></td>
<td>£200-250m</td>
<td>Annual cost of records management across Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>£26m</td>
<td>Annual budget of Resource (£1m on archives project work)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional agencies</td>
<td>£8m</td>
<td>Annual allocation by Resource for cross-domain work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Lottery Fund</td>
<td>£100m</td>
<td>HLF approved “Documentary Heritage” projects 1994-2002 (“archives” as defined by the ATF probably account for 50% of this)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>£40m</td>
<td>Annual spend by local authorities in England and Wales on local authority archive services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>£10m</td>
<td>New Opportunities Fund “NOF Digi” content creation strand of People’s Network programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£1¼m</td>
<td>Annual running cost of the National Preservation Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£15m</td>
<td>Annual running cost of the British Film Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£1½m</td>
<td>Annual running costs of English regional film and sound archives</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£1¼m</td>
<td>Annual running cost of the National Sound Archive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£40m</td>
<td>Rough estimate of annual higher education sector spend on archive and record management activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£ 522m</strong></td>
<td></td>
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This Task Force is aware that there is a desperate need to raise the profile of archives (in particular) and better communicate to decision makers, opinion formers and funders what the benefits of investment might be (what might be done to achieve this will be the subject of another working paper to come to ATF in March). This is a route to improving the appreciation of archives and therefore – in theory – improving funding prospects. But this is a long term (and uncertain) route. In the shorter term – i.e. relevant to this Task Force making recommendations – a more pragmatic approach is required. Critically we must identify funding needs, which can be – as closely as possible – matched to funding opportunities.

**Identifying Funding Needs**

There are no plans at present to conduct a detailed needs assessment under the remit of this Task Force. There exists already a significant body of work (following the same basic methodology) mapping funding needs and priorities in the domain:


4) An Archival Account of Scotland, Funding Opportunities and Development Needs, Archive Services in Scotland Mapping Project Board, 2000
Nevertheless fundamental weaknesses in the evidence available have to be recognised and it is recommended that the Task Force attempts to address as many of these as possible during the lifetime of its work.

Generally speaking most archives and records managers call for an increase in their core capacity to run the service they currently provide but at a higher volume, greater quality and improved efficiency and effectiveness. Some also see opportunities for expanding services or moving into ‘new’ areas (especially learning and education). A few – very few - believe that existing resources can be made to work harder and that strong management (based on clear objectives and rigorous performance management systems) can create services with sufficient flexibility to achieve more with what they have before seeking additional resources.

Asking for more to do the same seems an unlikely way to attract additional core funding. And asking for more with insufficient evidence about what impact increased investment might have is also unlikely to succeed. The absence of any rigorous impact evaluation across the domain and data or other evidence to support the case for increased core resources is a major weakness. Quantitative evidence is generally weaker than qualitative evidence. There is an increasingly impressive proof of case study evidence to illustrate the importance of archives to both society and the individual. Resource is creating a case study database to facilitate and encourage the exploitation of this sort of evidence. Quantitative data is more problematic but again Resource is addressing this as part of its ‘evidence and impact’ programme.

Identifying Potential Funders

Archives and records are found everywhere. So therefore are the owners, trustees or governing bodies that provide their core funding. A diverse domain is matched by a multitude of funders. There are some pre-eminent ones of course. Government (largely -after April 2003- the Lord Chancellor’s Department) directly funds the National Archives Service. It also indirectly funds local authority services through the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The higher education and business sectors are also major funders, so too is the Heritage Lottery Fund. But there are many small funders too. Who should be the ‘target’ for this Task Force’s recommendations?

In part of course it depends on what the recommendations are. But it might be argued that recommendations which have no natural funding home (or target) are likely to remain unfulfilled. The level and scope of the Task Force’s recommendations are important too. Are the recommendations going to be very specific or very general? Will it identify a particular issue that should be addressed by a particular funding body or is it going to appeal for more general support?

We have identified a number of possible funding targets and could prepare plans for approaching the funders:

1. Government (LCD; DCMS; ODPM; DfES)
2. Resource/Regional Agencies
3. Heritage Lottery Fund
4. Other Lottery Distributors
5. Local Government Association

These are the major ‘public’ funders. With the creation of the National Archives, the Lord Chancellor’s Department is the major government funder of archives, with the DCMS responsible for archives in museums and galleries, and local government responsible for local authority archive services. The potential of these funding streams needs to be fully explored. But consideration also needs to be given to private and commercial sources. This is at an early stage and the advice of the Archives Task Force is sought as to how we should proceed. Identification of potential funders should go in parallel with identification of funding needs, where the archives domain has already done much work, summarised below.

Funding from government and quasi-government sources need not necessarily be direct grants to stand alone archive projects, programmes and institutions. A more fruitful route may be to attach an archive perspective to other larger schemes and therefore achieve benefits indirectly.

Priorities for funding bids and partnerships: The case of the Heritage Lottery Fund

One role that the Task Force might consider is whether it should “help” funders by directing them to the areas of greatest need- determined by existing studies or by new research commissioned by the Task Force. An example of pioneering activity in this field is the National Council on Archives report British Archives: The Way Forward (2000). This document, (originally presented to the Trustees of the Heritage Lottery Fund in May 1999) was a bold attempt to recommend strategic priorities for HLF’s spending on the archives domain. In 1999 it was a unique attempt to produce strategic recommendations for HLF. The report identified four major areas for concentration of energy and resources within the archive community for the next five years (i.e. 1999-2004).

- Access for all
- Comprehensive availability
- Preservation
- Conservation and innovation

The report noted that over the previous two years ‘the community has acted together to take stock of its position and plan strategies to move Britain’s Archives into a new century of safe preservation and increased access for all who are the collective legatees of these unique glimpses of our past.’ It noted several major initiatives (especially the Mapping Project Board’s Our Shared Past: an archival Domesday for England (1998)) which helped form the evidential basis for its spending recommendations to HLF (see box below).

- 30% of the annual HLF allocation of funding to archives is devoted across the next five years to the support of the National Electronic Network for Archives
- 15% of the archives allocation for a fixed period of five years for creation of collection level descriptions of collections of archives in each UK archive repository
- 30% of the archive allocation to address priority cases of substandard premises (perhaps 12 substantial schemes over the next five years)
- 10% of the archives allocation to set aside for smaller-scale capital refurbishment schemes to bring accommodation up to accepted objective standards.
- 15% of the archives allocation for work in support of preservation and
conservation, for in-depth cataloguing of archives of pre-eminent importance and for innovative ‘spearhead’ projects to encourage and develop their practice.

This was a groundbreaking report, clearly identifying objectives and funding targets for the archives domain as a whole. The funding targets were directed at only one funder but the strategic thinking behind this initiative can hardly be faulted. Does the Task Force wish to develop this theme or would it prefer to highlight needs while being less prescriptive in the attached funding profile suggestions?

If it wished to develop this approach then there are a number of partners we could bring together. The National Council of Archives would be the first given its important role to date. But we could also bring together Resource, Regional Archive Councils, Regional Agencies, HLF and the National Archives Service to consider where priorities for funding lie. Establishing priorities for funding bids and partnerships is not the same as needs assessment. Some needs may not be addressed in the lifetime of this Task Force’s recommendations (say five years?). This may not be because they are less important than others; it may simply be that either considerable groundwork (itself to be funded) must go before it or that a funding source cannot be at present identified. What was different about *British Archives: The Way Forward* was the recognition that need and funding opportunity had to be strategically matched so that the priority needs might be addressed and the funding opportunity not squandered on less important projects. This was a challenge both to the archives community and HLF’s Trustees. Did it work?

The National Council on Archives’ recommendations and priorities were built upon the mapping exercises sponsored by the PRO, HMC and others. But to have any hope of success, other initiatives - such as the NCA’s Lottery Officer and expert advisers at HLF itself are needed. This is part of the strategic partnership approach. As the HMC said in 1999 (in *Archives at the Millennium*, p.32):

“We are optimistic that the call for more investment in Britain’s archives has now been amply made, and that with the help of the NCA’s Lottery Officer more potential applicants from the field of archives are preparing their cases. The appointment by HLF of a Libraries and Archives Adviser, and more recently of expert panellists in this field, and the indicative increase of HLF’s expectations for archives in the years ahead have all served to strengthen our confidence that a strategic vision will prevail.”

From a slow start the archives community now looked forward to benefiting significantly from lottery funding.

**Prioritisation of Activity**

Prioritisation studies continue to be commissioned and reported. In 2002 the *Full Disclosure Prioritisation Study* was published. The report makes the following recommendations:

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2 The report *Full Disclosure: Releasing the Value of Library and Archive Collections* was published under the auspices of the Library and Information Commission in 1999, and is a report on a national strategy for the retrospective conversion of library and archive catalogues. The Full Disclosure Prioritisation study was published in 2002 to identify strategies and priorities for action.
1) Institutions should identify and prioritise those collections that remain entirely uncatalogued as a basis for possible collaborative dialogue with other institutions or regional coordination of priorities.

2) To ensure that diversity of views on defining ‘collections’ does not impede collaboration on retro-conversion and cataloguing / documentation work, collaborating institutions should adopt pragmatic and flexible attitudes; disclosure and increasing public access should remain the overriding aims.

3) Access to electronic records needs to be placed within the context of a wider institutional physical access strategy.

4) Further collaboration at a national strategic level should be undertaken to develop the required controlled vocabulary, building on the work of the HILT project.

5) Resource should be encouraged to develop a co-ordinating role in national standards of collection care and stewardship, to which organisations from all three domains can commit.

6) Collection description and location (mapping) as a centrally coordinated activity is already a strategic objective for Resource. An implementation agency now needs to be identified or established, capable of taking this coordination forward.

7) Regional cross-domain strategic organisations should identify gaps in the provision of information and communications technology and encourage the development of collaborative partnerships with those smaller institutions that require improved technical skills in order to meet appropriate standards and basic record requirements.

8) Funders should be made aware of the need to remain flexible in the provision of grants, to ensure that the smaller, less advantaged institutions are given the appropriate help, guidance and support required to participate in funding opportunities.

9) Training and skills development in identifying project funding opportunities and the preparation of successful project proposals should be incorporated into continuing and professional education programmes.

10) Funding bodies inviting proposals for digitisation projects should also emphasise the necessity for investment in record creation to underpin digitisation activities.

11) Urgent consideration should be given to ways in which training and professional education related to cataloguing and documentation skills can be improved and coordinated across the three domains.

12) A mechanism should be sought which would ensure that a core of qualified staff is always available to assist in the implementation of Full Disclosure projects, such as a cataloguing ‘hit squad’ or coordinated pool of expert personnel.

The Full Disclosure Implementation Group (FDIG) is committed to developing long-term relationships with funders and to providing guidance and support to those seeking funding, and will emphasise to funders the need for record creation to underpin digitisation. This work needs to be tied in to the HMC Survey of Archive Cataloguing Problems (England and Wales) also published in 2002 (see www.hmc.gov.uk).
HLF has essentially a bidding culture based on individual organisations. But *British Archives: The Way Forward* pointed the way towards a partnership funding relationship that would be more strategically effective. If the archives domain could enter into a partnership with HLF which preserved HLF’s funding criteria (through which it maintains quality standards) but allowed strategic priorities to be set (or at least suggested) by the domain or sector then this opens up some interesting possibilities for partnerships between the archives domain and a range of funding bodies. No one likes bidding cultures or challenge funds because they focus energy on the process and are inefficient of resources. Developing longer-term partnerships with funding bodies should be a more rewarding route, which the Task Force might like to at least advocate and possibly be proactive in creating.

**Some funding objectives and target funders**

Are there lessons to be learnt from the HLF success story? Prioritisation statements in areas of non-lottery funding are more difficult to find and – at least superficially – seem less strategic and therefore perhaps less convincing.

*Archives at the Millennium*, HMC’s excellent assessment of the archives world at the end of the 1990’s includes these:

- There should be a more deliberate and focussed injection of central funding to support care and access to archives
- The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLAC, later Resource) should support the NCA
- MLAC should reintroduce direct financial support to a number of bodies in the voluntary sector (e.g. British Records Association and the Business Archives Council) which operate in the national interest to rescue and promote archives
- MLAC should pay attention to financing of film and sound archives
- Means should be found of injecting central funding directly into local government archive services
- Re-imburse local places of deposit for their care of public records
- Incentive funding should also continue to be made available by the Heritage Lottery Fund to assist repositories in meeting national standards
- Generally the governing bodies of archives should properly fund their archive services

Another way of brigading funding needs - and potential funders - might be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Potential funder(s)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cataloguing/ collection description</td>
<td>HLF?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digitisation</td>
<td>HLF?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Electronic Network for Archives</td>
<td>HLF?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premises upgrade or rebuild</td>
<td>HLF?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation and conservation</td>
<td>HLF?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Improving standards                     | JISC for HE (continuing)  
                                           | Plus other central funding for other sectors? |
| Shortage of skilled staff               | Learning & Skills Council? |
Other central sources?

‘Rescue’ services
Central funding for voluntary and other bodies?

‘Orphaned collections’
National Strategy & Central funding?

Professional training of archivists and Record managers
Central funds (to guarantee supply of professionally qualified people)? Will Resource's Workforce Development Strategy lead to a solution?

Data and statistics about the archives domain
Resource-as part of its research Evidence and impact programme

Film and Sound Archives
Central funding stream?

Social inclusion
Central funding to implement DCMS policy recommendations (see below too)

Archives and Education
Resource/Regional Agencies funding Learning and Development

Access posts. But what
about individual organisations?

Funding Development
Resource/Regional Agencies to support Funding Development Officers in each region?

Funding Support

Creating new funding streams is only part of the story. Part of the role of national and regional agencies must be to identify potential funding streams, ensure both funders and sectoral organisations know of its existence and to assist sectoral organisations to tap into those funding streams.

Identification of funding streams, creating a database and then keeping it up to date, is an important function of agencies. Sectoral organisations rarely have the capacity to do the research and liaison necessary. (Some funders need to be persuaded that their programme is relevant to our sector or that are sectoral organisations are eligible). It is more efficient for agencies to do it and there is a greater guarantee that information will be disseminated to all relevant organisations.

The scale of the task of identification can be quite daunting. Resource recently commissioned an Overview of Funding Streams for Libraries and Learning in England from Stuart Brewer (2002) which identified 38 ‘major’ schemes (and detailed information about them), excluding those of private trusts and foundations.

The material- criteria, guidance notes, application process and forms- relating to funding streams can be dauntingly complex, often requiring an investment of time in familiarisation and discussion with the funding body. An additional issue for those
who are aware of funding opportunities is keeping this kind of information once
gathered, up to date and accurate, and being in a position to advise and guide other
workers in the cultural and education sectors on the funding opportunities that might
be open to their organisations.

The North East Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (NEMLAC) has addressed
these issues by appointing a Funding Development Officer (FDO) on secondment
from the Government Office North East, with effect from 30th July 2001. The FDO
provides detailed advice on current funding sources for the sector, and assists
members of NEMLAC with the preparation of all types of funding applications.

NEMLAC reports that the need for direct support of organisations preparing funding
applications is broadly recognised across the sector, and the archives domain in
particular has highlighted the immediate need for this support and expressed it in the
Regional Archives Strategy. The funding development role is an integral part of
NEMLAC’s strategic plan.

All regional agencies have been charged with addressing this issue. Many of the
Regional Archive Development Officers (RADOS) consider funding development and
advice to be part of their role. The Area Museum Councils had been giving this sort
of advice (though not through dedicated officers) for years. The success of the NCA’s
Lottery Adviser in helping archive bodies to apply to the HLF is widely acknowledged.
Yet there still is more to be done. Brewer (p.4) suggests that the regional agencies
would benefit from having access to a single cross-domain database of funding
streams and funding opportunities at national level. This national database would
need to be comprehensive, supported by expert staff, and regularly updated. This
might be a role for Resource. The database would be complemented at SRA
(Regional Agency) level by databases of regional and local funding streams and
opportunities.’

The Archives Task Force might ask to recommend that Resource ensure that an
appropriate network of Funding Development Officers and databases exist to support
the archives domain.

Resource
January 2003