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Author: Nicky Sugar

Supervisor/s: Dr Elizabeth Shepherd

University College London

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Why Not Burn The Stuff?
Advocating for the Value of Archives to Society

Nicky Sugar
MLA Archives Fellow 2006-7
Clore Leadership Programme

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Supervised by Dr Elizabeth Shepherd, University College London

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Abbreviations

Whilst most of the abbreviations used are explained in the text on their first use, a complete list appears below.

AAC	Archives Awareness Campaign
ACALG	Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department of Culture, Media and Sport
FoI	Freedom of Information Act (2000)
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
HMRC	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office
MLA	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
NCA	National Council on Archives
PSQG	Public Services Quality Group
SOA	Society of Archivists
TNA	The National Archives

Why Not Burn The Stuff?¹ Advocating for the value of archives to society

Introduction

Ten years ago I wrote my MA thesis on the transformation of archives services in South Africa following the ending of apartheid. In it, I suggested that the measures put in place as part of the transformation process might ultimately ensure that South African archivists were better equipped to demonstrate their importance to society than their British counterparts. My reasoning was that despite our more stable recent history we were facing many common issues - such as the demands of a multi-cultural society and calls for greater openness in government – and yet as a result of this stability we had had nothing to shock us out of our heritage niche. Consequently I believed that those responsible for archives in Britain should be looking for inspiration to the priorities of the new National Archives of South Africa. These were cited as the use of archives to enable a collective memory relevant to all citizens, and consequently a more cohesive society, and the support of democratic rights by the provision of evidence.²

Ten years on, recent literature and advocacy documents have seemed to suggest that there has been some progress in addressing the first of these issues, that the contribution of archives to community identity in Britain has begun to be recognised.³ However, despite the advent of Freedom of Information legislation, the contribution of archives to supporting accountability and human rights has still seemed to receive relatively little attention. Since there have been a large number of changes affecting the archives profession in those ten years, I became interested in examining this notion of the importance of archives to society once again. Given that local authorities alone spend around £60 million per year on archives services,⁴ investigating the value of archives could be said to be an issue of relevance to all.

The decade 1998-2008 has seen key structural changes within the archives profession, most notably the formation of MLA and the National Archives, and other important developments such as Freedom of Information legislation, the inception of the annual Archives Awareness Campaign and the convening and report of the first Archives Task Force. There have also been a number of political priorities which have impacted on the archives domain, including the focus on public value and the need to contribute to wider social and political agendas such as tackling social exclusion. Professionally there has been a greater emphasis on cross-domain working with colleagues from other sectors and changes in funding patterns. From the user perspective trends such as the continuing rise

¹ “If the average man on the street were asked why governments establish archival institutions, he would probably ask “what are archives and what are archival institutions?” If, then, the purposes of an archival institution were explained to him, he would probably dismiss the matter with the comment that the whole thing is just another example of governmental extravagance. As for the archives themselves his final query would more than likely be, ‘Why not burn the stuff?’” Schellenberg, *Modern Archives*, 3.

² Riding, ‘Archives after Apartheid’, 32-37. The National Archives of South Africa mission statement is summarised on page 14.

³ See for example David Lammy’s 2007 speech to the NCA conference, which contained the statement “Individuals and communities across the country need to understand their multiple identities, to combat ignorance and prejudice, and to foster tolerance and understanding. Archives are not just about our past, they are also about our present and our future.”

⁴ CIPFA *Archive Service Statistics 2006-7 (Estimates)*, 7. I am grateful to Justin Cavernelis-Frost of MLA for making these available to me.

of interest in family history and increasing use of the internet have impacted on the archivist's traditional role. The profession has therefore had to respond to these changes whilst maintaining existing skills and services, and has made important strides forward in a number of key ways. Some of these were explored in a 2003 article - entitled 'Archives and Success – Let's Keep Going' - which demonstrated the significant number of aspirations voiced by earlier generations of archivists which have come to fruition in recent years and welcomed the formation of MLA and the Archives Task Force.⁵

However, onsite archive user numbers now appear to have reached a plateau, despite the increased representation for archival concerns at a strategic level and some success in attracting higher numbers of users in recent years.⁶ There has also been disquiet about the apparent lack of representative participation in the demographic of archive users: over 96% of archive users in a recent survey were from a white ethnic background and only 4% were under 24 years old.⁷ Although there have been various recent attempts to widen participation in archives at both user and staff levels, perceptions of typical archives users and staff in the public consciousness will presumably take much longer to shift: in a 2005 survey of young people from a range of ethnic backgrounds over half of respondents felt that archives were "not for people like me."⁸

Moreover, there are questions over whether archives are viewed as providing an important and valued contribution to society. The lack of awareness and esteem for archives at a political level is encapsulated within the Archives Task Force Report itself, which states, "Despite the issue of citizens' rights, community identity and the potential for education and life-long learning they contain, archives have so far largely failed to win the attention for politicians and policymakers."⁹ This theme of apparent lack of interest is also underlined in the NCA's response to the Caring for our Collections Inquiry, both by reference to the downsizing of the Inter-Departmental Archives Committee and by an anecdote highlighting ignorance about archives on the part of an MLA board member.¹⁰ The funding situation appears to bear out these fears surrounding our esteem: compared to museums in particular, the amount of money invested in

⁵ Forde writes in 'Archives and Success', 137, "The mere existence of the Archives Task Force, which has brought together not only archive colleagues, but, more importantly, others from outside with new ideas and influence, suggests that archives are, at last, being taken seriously."

⁶ The CIPFA *Archive Service Statistics 2006-7 (Estimates)*, 4, record that "In recent years there has been an upturn in usage figures, but the 2006-7 survey has shown mixed results for usage figures," with reader visits up 1% but items produced down 12%, 4. In the same year there were over 11 million archive website visits, leading to speculation over whether onsite, as opposed to online visits have reached a peak. This is certainly the case with the Family Records Centre, where onsite visits have dropped by 30% since 2002-3.

⁷ PSQG, *Survey of Visitors to UK Archives*, 2006, 8- 9.

⁸ MLA, *Barriers to Entering Careers in Museums, Libraries and Archive*, 52. One example of a successful attempt to widen participation is the Connecting Histories project at Birmingham City Archives (<http://www.connectinghistories.org.uk/>), which ended up working with over 100 community groups despite the initial target in the project brief having been to work with five. Other recent initiatives include the Sticks and Stones project at Northamptonshire Record Office and the Positive Action Traineeship based at the National Archives.

⁹ MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, 34.

¹⁰ The NCA Chair, Jonathan Pepler, writes, "It would be unthinkable that a Board member of the MLA Council would not know what the British Library or the British Museum were, but a Board member admitting without shame that they didn't know what the National Archives was has been witnessed in the recent past", *Caring for our Collections*, 7.

archives remains very low.¹¹ And at a local authority level, statistics on staffing levels show a 4.5% fall in archive posts and a 16.7% fall in conservation posts between 2005 and 2006.¹²

From the perspective of archive users, 94% of those recently surveyed rated their experience of visiting an archive service as “good” or “very good.”¹³ Yet despite these high rates of user satisfaction, such users undoubtedly make up a small proportion of the UK population. According to a recent survey, 83% of non-users of archives identified their reasons for staying away as “no need to go”, “not really interested” or “never occurred to me.”¹⁴ As the authors of a recent study concluded, “how does the domain demonstrate value to a public where the majority haven’t even heard of archives?”¹⁵ Of those who do use archives, an overwhelming majority feel that archives contribute to society by “preserving our culture and heritage”, but only a minority feel that archives have any role in “supporting the rights of citizens” or “supporting administrative and business activity.”¹⁶ It would appear from this that in terms of convincing even our users of the full range of our wider societal values we have some distance to go.

Over the last few years, the notion of advocacy for the archives sector has come increasingly to the fore.¹⁷ This has partly occurred as a response to the increasingly prominent discourse on public value across society and the cultural sector which is explored later on in this study. It has also been recognised that a strategic method of influencing policymakers with proof of our value is required, and that outreach aimed at attracting users, however satisfied they may be with services, is not adequate on its own

¹¹ Gray, writing in 2006, notes “in the last financial year, the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) invested in archives a pathetic one-thousandth – 0.1% - of its annual grant-in-aid to museums”, ‘Archives and the Tribal Mind’, 124. The Chair of NCA, writing in response to the Caring for our Collections Inquiry, notes that between 2001 and 2006 the DCMS spend on museums and galleries went up by 30% and the MLA spend on regional museums went up by 143% whilst funding for archives development remained static. He noted, “This funding position is in stark contrast to the public value placed on history, historic documents and archival materials that relate directly to them and their interests or locality”, *Caring for our Collections*, 3.

¹² CIPFA *Archive Service Statistics 2006-7 (Estimates)*, 3.

¹³ PSQG, *Survey of Visitors to UK Archives*, 2006, 13.

¹⁴ DCMS, *Taking Part*, 53.

¹⁵ Horton and Spence, *Scoping the Economic and Social Impact of Archives*, 92. This theme is echoed in NCA, *Caring for our Collections*, 1, “In archives, readers can expect to touch the original documents and are entrusted with them, bringing history to life in a way that neither libraries nor museums can hope to do. Yet few people realize that these resources are open to them.” From an international perspective, a 2002 survey of archive professionals worldwide concluded that “respondents believe overwhelmingly (70%) that society in general has formed little or no opinion of archives, records centers and the people who operate them.” A further 21% believed that society had a negative opinion. For further details see Barry, *Report on the Society and Archives Survey*.

¹⁶ PSQG, *Survey of Visitors to UK Archives*, 2006, 17. Over 80% of those recently questioned strongly agreed that archives contributed to society by “preserving our culture and heritage”, compared with 53% who felt that archives contributed by “strengthening family and community identity” and 32% by “supporting the rights of citizens.” A mere 20% felt that archives had a role in “supporting administrative and business activity.”

¹⁷ The Society of Archivists’ Strategic Plan, 2003-2007, included the objective to “raise the profile of the Society, speak out on issues and establish the Society as the ‘recognised voice’ of the sector for all external agencies, including government and the media.” The NCA listed “advocacy and strategic co-ordination” as its top priority in its three year strategy 2006-9, and included the statement “NCA will continue to advocate on behalf of archives and their users at all levels of government; to raise awareness of the value, and enormous potential, of archives among decision-makers.” Available at http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/materials/strategy_final.pdf

to guarantee the future of the sector.¹⁸ Yet despite these moves towards more sustained advocacy effort, as well as more users and greater political representation, the sector still suffers from poor funding, a low level of political clout and low public esteem. Some would doubtless claim a degree of inevitability about this situation: it is not only very small but suffers from the problem highlighted in the Archives Task Force Report that “the wider world has little interest in records until something is needed – as evidence of proof, for research or indeed just for interest.”¹⁹ However, I still felt there to be some scope for considering the potential links between these challenges facing the archives sector and the elements we choose to focus on – or not - when attempting to articulate our importance to society.

A preliminary survey of literature confirmed my initial observation that the role of archives in forging a more cohesive society has achieved greater currency of late. This is especially true in comparison with the paucity of material relating to the role of archives in supporting democracy and citizens’ rights. However, it still appears that powerful examples and evidence on this theme are too often glossed over by professionals and policymakers alike. The role of archives as social spaces, where communities can share memories and reconciliation can be fostered, is not a role which many archivists appear to disagree with, but it is not widely promoted either. Some advocacy documents and speeches certainly mention the importance of archives in evidential and socio-cultural terms,²⁰ but somehow neither of these appears to be the primary message reaching the public, as demonstrated by the survey results above. Instead, the explosion of interest in history as a leisure pursuit and the rise in focus on the instrumental agendas to which archives services can contribute has appeared to lead to much recent publicity being focussed, arguably rather opportunistically, along these lines.²¹ There is also a perception that the heritage view of archives is easier and more tangible for ordinary members of the public to understand and relate to.²² The resulting overall impression can be that of a somewhat limited menu of choice offered (both directly and via professionals) to the potentially archive-using, or at least archive-valuing, public.

Cox and Wallace write passionately of “the need to educate professionals who understand that records are not only artifacts for use by historians and genealogists but that they are also essential sources of evidence and information providing the glue that holds together, and sometimes the agent that unravels, organizations, governments, communities, and societies.”²³ My interest is in whether those professionals could – and should - in turn attempt to educate policymakers and the public, and if so whether the societal value of

¹⁸ As noted by Jonathan Pepler, “The right people we should be talking to are government, opinion formers”, *Interview*, 25/1/08.

¹⁹ MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, 15.

²⁰ The NCA *Caring for our Collections* response states clearly, 2, that “archives uniquely have an evidential, democratic and human rights importance as well as a cultural value” and David Lammy’s speech to the 2007 NCA conference includes the statement “Archival documents are the foundations of our collective understanding of who we are. And any thorough examination or exploration of our identity, our history and our future would flounder without archives.”

²¹ One view expressed has been that the coinciding rise of interest in family history and rise in debate over public value has led elements of the profession to conflate the two as part of a “numbers game”, focussing advocacy attempts chiefly at the family history “market” and subsequently claiming evidence of public value from the resulting high visitor figures, *Interview with John Holden*, 31/7/07.

²² *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07.

²³ Cox and Wallace, *Archives and the Public Good*, 1.

archives would be more widely appreciated, ultimately leading to a firmer statutory and financial footing.

Chapter 1: Research Questions, Context and Methodology

Research Questions and Context

My original intention for this study was to consider whether an increased focus, in advocacy terms, on the importance of archives as sources of evidence and information would result in greater appreciation of their public value – by policymakers and funders, the media and the public.

This broad question divides into the following research objectives:

1. What are the main priorities of the archive sector in terms of advocacy, and why?
2. Is there a link between the sector's priorities for advocacy and value in the eyes of the public and professionals?
3. What are the views of my interviewees and those they may represent, regarding the importance of archives to society?
4. Are the evidential uses of archives an important component of public value? If so, how?
5. Would raising awareness of a greater variety of ways in which archives contribute to society help to alleviate some of the problems currently facing the profession?

The appeal of this question for me was that it addresses a gap in existing research. There has been much written on the role of archives as evidence used to support the rights of individuals, particularly in repressive regimes. There has also been much written on public value, with some attempts to relate the concept to archives. Despite this, I am not aware of work which links these two themes, particularly with my intended focus on advocacy. However, as research progressed, through the interview stage in particular, the suggestion emerged that making evidence and accountability my main focus might not be the most constructive means of addressing the problem of value. This was primarily because a number of other elements of the role of archives were perceived to be similarly poorly promoted and understood, and it was felt that considering the underlying causes of this might be more likely to lead to potential solutions. For many people, there is a lack of coherent vision and mission for the archives sector which encompasses a notion of value to society as an overarching driving force. This is perceived to be more important than the question of whether that value is based on evidence, community identity or something else.

I therefore decided to consider the public value of evidential uses of archives alongside that of other uses, rather than as a separate research objective. I also decided to focus my work more strongly on changes which would need to be made in the sector if future advocacy for the societal value of archives is to be successful. Given that this topic has not previously been addressed in depth, this study is designed to be a preliminary attempt to review the literature around these questions, elicit the views of a range of stakeholders and suggest potential ways forward and scope for more detailed research. I am not anticipating arriving at definitive conclusions, but am aiming to raise awareness of the issues involved and examine the likely worth of carrying out further work in this area. The main focus of this study is on the time period between the formation of Resource (now MLA) in April 2000 and the NCA response to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee Inquiry "Caring for our Collections" in September 2006. This timeframe represents broadly the period between archives being given a voice at government level

for the first time and evidence being given back to government to justify continued investment. Occasionally reference is made to developments and research post 2006 where ignoring such data could undermine my conclusions, or where there is no earlier data available on a particular theme. The latter was the case with the research into the impact of the HLF on the archives profession examined as part of my content analysis. This was the only data I could find on the views of archivists on the value archives contribute to society. In terms of geographical scope my focus is on the UK, with particular reference to the English regions covered by the MLA partnership.

Methodology

This study has been designed as a preliminary piece of research, my main objective being to explore some of the issues involved and consider how more detailed research might emerge. The development of my research questions arose as part of a process of examining gaps in existing literature and data, bearing in mind the advice that "...the research questions should be general enough to permit exploration but focused enough to delimit the study."²⁴ An important part of this process of exploration has been to leave these research questions deliberately broad in the initial stages and follow an inductive process, considering all relevant ideas and responses.

An exploratory approach, rather than one based on hypotheses, required the use of qualitative research methodologies. My primary aim in this study was to attempt to explain issues and situations, eventually suggesting new directions for research; a significant amount of further exploration would have been necessary before the kind of accurate hypotheses which could be tested with quantitative methods could be formulated.²⁵ The recursive approach demanded by exploratory study was particularly relevant, and the opportunity afforded by qualitative methods to analyse data, refine theories and alter research questions throughout the process.²⁶ This process of exploration caused my ideas of what my final research questions should be to change several times.²⁷

The research methods chosen were designed to enable the gathering of data which would allow me to establish a research context and begin to examine what key themes and causations might be. Firstly, a comprehensive literature review was intended to provide a fuller understanding of gaps in existing research. A content analysis of key publications and surveys was then designed to provide justification and preliminary benchmarking for some of the underlying issues in my research questions which I wanted to explore further in interviews. Finally interviews were used as a means of seeking views both on the issues involved in my research questions and on how future research might refine and take them forward.

²⁴ Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 73.

²⁵ Ibid., 7, "In quantitative research, one usually starts with certain assumptions, questions or hypotheses and looks for data that will support or deny them. By contrast, often the qualitative researcher collects evidence and uses this to develop an explanation of events, to establish a theory based on observed phenomena." See also 23ff for more detail on the attributes of qualitative and quantitative research.

²⁶ See Neuman, *Basics of Social Research*, 87, "A qualitative researcher develops theory during the data collection process...conceptualization and operationalization occur simultaneously with data collection and preliminary data analysis."

²⁷ Note Silverman's observation that "In most qualitative research, sticking with your original research design can be a sign of inadequate data analysis rather than demonstrating a welcome consistency," *Doing Qualitative Research*, 121.

Literature Review

Neuman outlines four goals of a literature review:

- To demonstrate a familiarity with a body of knowledge and establish credibility
- To show the path of prior research and how a current project is linked to it
- To integrate and summarize what is known in an area
- To learn from others and stimulate new ideas.²⁸

Beginning my study with a literature review allowed me to introduce and explore themes which would resurface throughout the study. I was also able to use the literature throughout to complement results from my content analysis and interviews. Of particular importance in this study, however, was the establishment of gaps in existing research which would feed back into the development of my research questions, and these were largely confirmed by gaps in the literature.²⁹

Using my preliminary research questions as a starting point, the literature to be consulted fell into a number of sections, the most significant being:

- writing on the theme of public value and measuring impact, specifically in the context of the cultural sector
- contextual literature, including political statements and speeches, on the UK archives sector and recent developments within it
- writing on the contribution of archives to various aspects and issues within society, including evidence and accountability, community cohesion and personal identity.

I also carried out wider reading on subjects including the role information plays in human rights and accountability issues, and classic archival texts which shed light on the development of the role of archivists. This reading confirmed my belief that although there is a limited but increasing volume of literature on the value of archives to society, there are still areas within this largely unexplored, such as the role of archives as evidence in a UK context.

The existence of much of the literature was known to me through previous study and professional interest, including routine reading of journals, but a greater part was sought by citation analysis and recommendations from interviewees and others. Additional items were sought from searching the holdings of libraries such as UCL known to have strong archival studies collections. As the research developed, a danger which threatened to overwhelm the process was the wealth of material in each of the above groups. The method I employed to combat this was to list citations and potential sources, read the seminal works on each theme and then return to judge how much additional material to read later on in the process, based on how important a particular theme was becoming to the overall work.

Content Analysis

²⁸ Neuman, *Basics of Social Research*, 68.

²⁹ Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 73, "...the literature review can aid in focussing the topic, as other studies show what is known and unknown about a topic – a chosen topic should aim to fill this gap, or at least put a new complexion on existing research."

Two of my research questions are concerned with the current focus of archival advocacy and, correspondingly, the perceived value of archives as judged by others. For both of these I required some baseline data in order to begin my examination and on which to base questions for interviewees. The analysis therefore fell into two sections. The first was an examination of policy documents and responses to consultations which would reveal the nature of advocacy emanating from the archives profession and aimed at the public, policymakers and professionals. The second was an analysis of datasets such as surveys which might give information on the usage and perceptions of archives and on where the value in archives is placed by various stakeholders. The analysis involved an element of discussing the sources themselves and suggesting where they could be improved or extended in order to improve advocacy or to collect more meaningful data.

Content analysis is a research method utilised in differing ways depending on the topic under consideration and whether the nature of the research is quantitative or qualitative. Often in a social sciences context, content analysis means a technical, sometimes automated process of counting occurrences of words. My approach differed from this, and was based instead on analysing predominant themes in the manner often employed in information studies research.³⁰ My method of choosing sources involved examining the major UK bodies responsible for elements of advocacy related to the archives profession and examining their outputs over the period studied. These were analysed along thematic lines, noting how the value of archives to society was characterised in instances where it is mentioned or suggested. Only a handful of surveys exist covering the same date range which deal with the usage and valuing of archives, including reasons for use or non-use. These were summarised and the results from each compared to highlight and explain patterns or discrepancies. I found the combination of content analysis and interviews a particularly effective way of exploring themes and causations.³¹

Interviews

A significant part of my primary data collection consisted of interviews with a range of individuals. Some were in senior positions within the archive sector; others outside it possessed expertise which would enable them to give an interesting perspective on my research questions. My primary intention had been to solicit the views of interviewees on the value of archives to society and the options for adjusting the focus of advocacy in order to better demonstrate that value. I found in addition that the range of perspectives provided by them fed back into the redesign of research questions and ideas for further research even more than I had initially anticipated.

³⁰ Gorman and Clayton provide an outline of the distinctions between these two approaches in *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 214, “the emphasis in qualitative analysis is less on frequency of occurrences than on the identification of themes,” and 215, “...the strong historical research tradition in library and archival research and writing, in particular, has also involved a form of content analysis which is further removed again from the quantitative paradigm....the researcher notes the recurring themes and concerns which obviously occupied the minds of the protagonists of the time, and also perhaps those issues which did not seem to receive great attention.”

³¹ As suggested by Ezzy, *Qualitative Analysis*, 85, “...in qualitative research content analysis tends to be used in conjunction with other forms of data analysis that are more inductive and sensitive to emergent categories and interpretations.”

There are clearly advantages and disadvantages with the interview method.³² The most important deciding factor in this study was the scope provided for mutual exploration and in depth probing in my attempts to establish the causation behind some of the issues discussed. The mutual exploration element in particular allowed refinement of my research questions at an early enough stage in the process for new concepts to be explored and included. There is an open-endedness to this research, and a desire to uncover how research in this area could best be developed in future, which it would be difficult or impossible to garner from a method such as written questionnaires.³³ I also felt that personal contact would be important, both to explain concepts which may have been less familiar to some interviewees, and to encourage frankness in response. Finally, I felt that my status as a Clore Fellow allowed me access to individuals and networks which it would not normally be possible for an archivist to access, and this seemed a golden opportunity to gain a personal response from some very high-profile individuals about their beliefs for the future of the profession.

Despite the fact that I believe the interview method worked well for research of this type, I also became aware of the potential drawbacks.³⁴ My method of carrying out depth interviews was ideal for gathering the detailed views of selected individuals, rather than collecting data which was statistically representative. However, if concrete actions were to be taken on the basis of the research the subjectivity element inherent in a small sample could severely affect the validity. A different approach, with a larger sample of interviewees backed up by survey responses, would then probably be required.³⁵

Most of the interviews were conducted in person, with a minority by telephone for logistical reasons: a full list is given in appendix 1. The interviews were designed to be semi-structured in format because it was important to me to have flexibility in questioning. I therefore drew up a question guide prior to the interviews, given in appendix 2, which lists a set of generic questions used in each. Additional questions were added, or occasionally some removed, depending on the interviewee and their particular area of interest and expertise. Although I was examining similar issues with each, their backgrounds were sufficiently different that sometimes a special focus on a particular issue was demanded, or more explanation of the context behind a question was necessary. In particular, I needed the scope for the discussion to range freely into their particular areas of expertise and for me to be able to respond to points suggested by them.³⁶ Where I

³² Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 124ff, cite advantages including immediacy, scope for mutual exploration and investigation of causation, personal contact and speed. Disadvantages include cost, and the fact that the process can be uncritical, too personal, and especially open to bias.

³³ *Ibid.*, 41, "Interviewing as used in qualitative research offers two important advantages. First, the person being interviewed is encouraged, by the use of open-ended questions or by non-directive listening, to highlight self-perceived issues or relationships of importance. This can be of inestimable value in understanding contexts and creating links that are such key aspects of qualitative research. Second, dialogue between researcher and subject allows the interaction to move in new and perhaps unexpected directions, thereby adding both depth and breadth to one's understanding of the issues involved. Such self-perceptions and enhanced understanding may be achieved in no other way, making this a cornerstone in qualitative research."

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 131, see the quote from Brenner: "intensive interviewing...in all likelihood will fall short of the ideal of accurate data collection; and it will usually be impossible to know just how far."

³⁵ See Moore, *How to do Research*, 122 for more information on different types of interviews and their advantages and disadvantages.

³⁶ Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 127, "Using an interview guide...the topics are specified in advance but the wording of them is spontaneous; this enables the

became aware that this had resulted in differences in questions asked which might affect the validity of the results, I was able to rectify by follow up calls or emails.

I decided not to record the interviews as I wanted to encourage honesty and frankness on the part of the respondents, particularly in a couple of cases where the views of the individual interviewee may conceivably have differed from those of their employing organisation. Instead I took detailed notes which were typed up as soon as possible, occasionally contacting interviewees afterwards to check points again. There are significant advantages and disadvantages to recording, but the most crucial to my purposes was the risk that sensitive information would not be volunteered.³⁷ Analysis was ongoing as soon as possible after the interviews had taken place, which made a significant contribution to my ability to develop my own reading and understanding, prioritise questions for forthcoming interviews and refine research questions.³⁸

Interviewees

A purposive sample of interviewees was chosen to represent a range of backgrounds and viewpoints, from both within and outside the archives sector.³⁹ These included central government, local government, the wider cultural sector, professional bodies and archive users. Some, such as Natalie Ceeney, Chief Executive of TNA, and Roy Clare, Chief Executive of MLA, were chosen as representatives of their employers or stakeholder groups, or because they filled a particular position. It was important that some, such as Bruce Jackson of ACALG, were representatives of groups, as it gave added strength to the findings if respondents were able to speak confidently on behalf of their members. Some interviewees were individuals I had heard give talks or had read their writing, and wanted to hear them expand on their views about the uses or value of archives in a particular context. John Holden, Pat Thane and Vic Gray all fell into this category. There was also an element of snowballing, where interviewees I spoke to recommended others. Some theorists, including Ezzy, criticize the use of the snowball sample, describing its “only rationale being ease or convenience.”⁴⁰ However, I found it valuable in the instance

interview to be more natural and conversational. It is easier for the interviewer to respond to points made by the interviewee, and to gather quite detailed, comprehensive data. Nevertheless, it is possible some issues may be inadvertently overlooked, and different respondents are inevitably asked slightly different questions, limiting the usefulness of comparisons between interviews.”

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 136. 4 drawbacks to recording are listed: minimising the likelihood of sensitive information being volunteered, visually intrusive or noisy, background noise, wordy and long. “It can significantly reduce the likelihood of interviewees volunteering sensitive or embarrassing material.”

³⁸ For more information on this see Ezzy, *Qualitative Analysis*, 60, “If data analysis begins only after the data have been collected, researchers will have missed many valuable opportunities that can be taken only *at the same time* as they are collecting their data” and 61, “...during data analysis the researcher will typically discover and notice unanticipated issues that have arisen early in the data collection. If data analysis is left until afterwards these issues will not be noticed during data collection; they will therefore not be pursued during the data collection and cannot be pursued in any depth during the data analysis.”

³⁹ Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, 104, defines purposive sampling as allowing us “to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or purpose in which we are interested.” Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 128, describe a purposive sample as “one chosen by the researcher to include representatives from within the population being studied who have a range of characteristics relevant to the research project.”

⁴⁰ Ezzy, *Qualitative Analysis*, 74.

where I had assumed certain people would not be accessible to me, and a personal introduction meant that in fact they were.

The process of selecting interviewees was a fluid one, and as research questions were refined I was able to judge where other people should be spoken to, for example where a representative of one body at a certain level of seniority demanded representation from another at an equivalent level. By the end of the process I was convinced I had included representatives from most major bodies although undoubtedly I had omitted other people who held interesting views. Through the ongoing process of reviewing interviews, I was also able to realise when saturation had been reached.⁴¹ As the interviews progressed I became more used to contrasting differing views and separating out potential reasons for divergence, such as differing institutional priorities, and this became an important part of the research process.⁴²

Research problems

The greatest difficulty I encountered throughout was the paucity of data across the archives sector. This was particularly significant when attempting to uncover statistics on the use of archives. The CIPFA statistics carry data only on local authority archive services, and the *Digest of Statistics* produced annually by Loughborough University for MLA carries data only on local authority services and the National Archives.⁴³ Justin Cavernelis-Frost of MLA acknowledged these difficulties, admitting “One of the biggest problems I have with making the case for archives is the lack of hard data and evidence, which we are trying to address.”⁴⁴ Nick Kingsley, Head of National Advisory Services at TNA, suggested that extending self-assessment beyond local authorities was a possibility which might yield such data in future.⁴⁵

Another problem lay in a lack of published research more generally on issues related to the usage, impact and value of archives. In particular, a number of publications which claimed to be concerned with the societal contribution of the MLA sector seemed to betray a lack of knowledge about archives, in contrast with a much deeper understanding of the priorities and activities of the museum and library sectors.⁴⁶ The tendency of much research to be funded by bodies such as MLA whose remit is linked to government

⁴¹ See Gorman and Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional*, 74, “Theoretical sampling stops when the researcher decides the study has reached saturation. ...To be able to do this requires, of course, that researchers are analyzing their data as they are collecting it, otherwise it would be very difficult to identify when saturation had been achieved.”

⁴² *Ibid.*, 129, “...if different individuals see the same events or issues from different perspectives, this can only enhance your understanding of them.”

⁴³ The CIPFA *Archive Service Statistics 2006-7 (Estimates)* were kindly made available to me by Justin Cavernelis-Frost of MLA. The MLA *Digest of Statistics* is available at http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets/D/digest_of_statistics_2006_10589.pdf

⁴⁴ Justin Cavernelis-Frost: email of 23 October 2007 to the author.

⁴⁵ Nick Kingsley: email of 7 January 2008 to the author.

⁴⁶ This was the case with the Demos publication *Knowledge and Inspiration*, which focussed in depth on the contribution of the MLA sector to objectives related to learning whilst almost entirely overlooking the contribution of archives as evidence. The AHRB funded report ‘Relevant Repositories of Public Knowledge’ stated in its opening justification, 8, “It was considered appropriate to combine the three individual cultural organisations as one research topic because of the increasing commonality of purpose ascribed to museums, libraries and archives, particularly in response to key social policy objectives such as social inclusion and lifelong learning.” Although this is true, the resulting conclusions gave only a partial picture to the reader of the remit and priorities of the archives sector.

priorities for the sector has also led to a predominance of research concerned with the social and economic benefits of archives as they relate to policy objectives such as social inclusion and very little on other aspects of their contribution, such as the evidential. The difficulties caused by the perceived lack of a research culture in the archives profession and its impact on advocacy were highlighted by a number of interviewees.⁴⁷

Potential for future research

My aim for the eventual outcome of this study was that it would lead to a future strand of inductive research concerned with identifying possible solutions to some of the current challenges facing the archives sector. My initial focus, the lack of advocacy concerned with the importance of archives as evidence, might be confirmed or eliminated as a factor, and I believe there is still scope for further research on this topic. However, I also expected that other issues might emerge from the research which could either provide a starting point for further investigation, or might link to existing research, helping ultimately to ensure the continued development of the sector. This of course was the case as the need to focus more heavily on wider issues connected to the sector's mission and a strategy for demonstrating value emerged from interviews.

If aspects of this research are to be taken forward, either on one or more of my specific research questions or others which have emerged from them, it will be necessary to employ a range of different methods. Issues such as value in the eyes of the public, and the differences a change in advocacy focus might make, could only be comprehensively examined through extensive surveys of the public and professionals. In this way the methods utilised here can provide only a starting point and some baseline data which can potentially be built on. Ezzy writes that "The voice of the participant, rather than the voice of the researcher, will be heard best when participants not only provide the data to be analysed, but when they also contribute to the questions that frame the research and contribute to the way data are analysed."⁴⁸ This became a particularly important facet of this study, and I hope that the contributions and suggestions which I was unable to address here can be utilised in future.

⁴⁷ Including Justin Cavernelis-Frost and Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan. This issue will be explored in detail in chapter 6.

⁴⁸ Ezzy, *Qualitative Analysis*, 64.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A survey of literature shows that debate about the purpose and value of archives is not a new phenomenon, nor one which is confined to the UK. Throughout countries in the West over the last two hundred years, two distinct functions of archives seem to have emerged: as tools of accountability and good governance on the one hand and resources for cultural scholarship on the other. These have rarely been embraced on equal terms within the same institution or even geographical area, and a more common scenario has been for one function to be promoted to the near exclusion of the other.⁴⁹ The legacy of this has been a growing unease, which has in recent years been the subject of attention by professionals and commentators internationally amid attempts to define models which can harness the strengths of the varying viewpoints to ensure the continued future of the profession.⁵⁰

In the last decade, a number of key changes both within and outside the UK archive sector have brought the general issue of an archival *raison d'être* to the fore. One of these is the recent rise in literature and debate about the very nature of value and how it is defined and measured, specifically as it applies to the public sector where the majority of UK archives services are still located. This area will be explored below, before some of the changes within the archive sector since the formation of MLA are summarised. An attempt will then be made to outline the different values most frequently assigned in literature to the existence and use of archives.

Public Value

The term “Public Value” was originally developed by Moore in the USA in 1995,⁵¹ and came into widespread use across the UK public sector following the publication of a Cabinet Office Strategy Unit paper in 2002. This work arose largely as a response to the perceived inadequacies of “New Public Management” with its targets based approach to delivering outcomes. The paper put forward notions of how governments create and add

⁴⁹ Duranti, in ‘Archives as a Place’, 248, argues that the 1794 decree enabling public access to the seized records of the *Ancien Régime* at the new *Archives Nationales* in France marks the point at which “the dichotomy between administrative and historical archives was born.” Cunningham, writing in McKemmish et al. (eds.), *Archives: record keeping in society*, 29-34, urges caution on this point but provides a useful overview of the dichotomy through time and place, from the North American tradition of historical societies, fulfilling a scholarly function, to the very different situation in Europe where “legal and administrative purposes” were at the basis of the initial establishment of (usually government) archives services. Shepherd, speaking of the development of the UK archival profession, notes, “Even at the PRO, whose legislative mandate was the preservation of the records of courts and central government, the archivists had a largely historical bent and their own interests were in archives as culture”, ‘Culture and Evidence.’

⁵⁰ For example, the widespread adoption of the continuum model in Australia has represented a sustained attempt to combine the dual recordkeeping functions of business accountability with the safeguarding of a cultural resource, but the profession there has not escaped the problem of manuscripts archivists feeling alienated by the vocal championing of the evidence function, an issue addressed at a public conference by Cook, ‘Beyond the Screen.’

⁵¹ In *Creating Public Value*, Moore defined Public Value as “initiating and reshaping public sector enterprises in ways that increase their value to the public in both the short and long term.” Quoted in Hewison, *Not a Sideshow*, 28.

value by their actions and how important public consultation and accountable assessment of the value provided are to the process.⁵²

The relevance of Public Value to the arts has since been picked up on both sides of the Atlantic.⁵³ In Britain, the debate about what Public Value may offer for the cultural sector has become particularly prominent as it has been embraced by key politicians and thinkers, leading to the assertion in 2006 that “the concept of Public Value in heritage was coming from all angles.”⁵⁴ Such a rapid rise of interest in, and adoption of, these ideas can perhaps be explained by their potential to address current problems for the cultural sector. These include a growing public desire to see evidence of value⁵⁵ and the need to mark a shift away from crude instrumentalist measures for valuing culture, which have alienated many professionals and only partially stand up to detailed economic scrutiny.⁵⁶ Despite the complexities inherent in defining and measuring Public Value, the appeal for policymakers of a system which openly “places concepts of value at the centre of thinking” is clear.⁵⁷ The cultural sector has long struggled to find the tools to convince the public of the justification for funding culture as a core service.⁵⁸ Public Value sounds more inclusive than the appeal to aesthetics once associated with justifying culture, and also aims to demonstrate empirically its return on public investment. Crucially, moreover,

⁵² Kelly et al., *Creating Public Value*. The “overlaps and tensions” involved in the Public Value concept are stressed throughout, with the authors reflecting on the need to embrace the inherent complexities when striving towards a framework for delivering value, 21.

⁵³ See Gilmore, ‘Public Value for the Arts’, for an outline of the situation in the US non-profit Arts sector.

⁵⁴ Clark, *Capturing the Public Value of Heritage*, 1. The Demos conference “Valuing Culture” was organised in 2003, and Jowell’s paper *Government and the Value of Culture*, which aimed to start a debate about new models for valuing culture, was published in 2004. In the same year the BBC, in the words of Hewison, *Not a Sideshow*, 31, became “the first British organisation to make a persuasive link between Public Value and culture”, choosing as they did to make the case for their charter renewal in a document entitled *Building Public Value*. The DCMS, Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England have all subsequently begun to incorporate notions of public value into developing their services.

⁵⁵ Horton and Spence, *Shaping the Economic and Social Impact of Archives*, 9, quote the introduction to the MLA study prepared by Burns Owens Partnership, which lists factors including public scepticism, a diminution in the public’s desire to take professionals at their word and an increase in policy-related publications lying behind the pressure on public bodies to produce evidence for decisions and actions.

⁵⁶ It is generally accepted that the role of cultural organisations in meeting policy objectives in areas such as education, social inclusion and economic regeneration, promoted widely by New Labour immediately following the 1997 election victory, is important and needed to be highlighted. However, it has in some areas led to a crude focus on outputs which has threatened professional integrity and artistic risk, as Holden notes in *Capturing Cultural Value* as he talks about a growing sense of unease: “the attempt to make the effect of culture transparent and manageable, in order to support it effectively, has somehow obscured the true nature of the activities and experiences themselves,” 14. The difficulty of quantifying the economic benefits thus provided has also caused problems for the sector, and the point is made by Weil in Anderson (ed.), *Reinventing the Museum*, 343, that justifying value largely in economic or educational terms can mean that if other agencies can produce the same benefits for less cost our role will become unclear.

⁵⁷ Clark, *Capturing the Public Value of Heritage*, 3. The inadequacies of the focus on instrumental values have been openly addressed by Jowell, who writes “As a Culture Department we still have to deliver the utilitarian agenda, and the measures of instrumentality that this implies, but we must acknowledge that in supporting culture we are doing more than that, and in doing more than that must find ways of expressing it”, *Government and the Value of Culture*, 9.

⁵⁸ A point summarised by Hewison, who writes “as people working in the sector are deeply aware, publicly funded culture does not enjoy the same political legitimacy afforded to education, health, law and order, defence or even sport”, *Not a Sideshow*, 10. He also notes “There are...severe doubts about the ability of the methodologies that have been used in the past to demonstrate economic and social impact to capture the totality of the contribution of culture to the public realm”, 45.

it is characterised not as a way to react to public opinion, but as a tool with which to shape it.

The potential that this framework could offer for the cultural sector can be seen in the number of new models recently proposed which are based on the key tenets of Public Value. Based on the work of Moore, Holden summarised value within the cultural sector as a three-way relationship between the intrinsic, the instrumental and the institutional. From this point he developed his model of Cultural Value, which aims to give back power to the professionals to define the value created by their institutions proactively. This is done with reference to a wide range of criteria and types of evidence, rather than on the basis of narrow criteria for justification devised by other parties.⁵⁹ Cultural Value has in turn been taken a stage further by Hewison, who devised Institutional Value as a means of mapping ideas within Cultural Value to the relationship between organisations and their stakeholders.⁶⁰

The MLA sector, in common with the rest of the cultural sector, has sought to define itself with reference to Public Value. Methods for achieving this have included commissioning research, such as the Demos report *Knowledge and Inspiration*,⁶¹ and developing its own frameworks as a means of mapping outcomes from core activities to wider values.⁶² This reflects the sector's wish to prove to policymakers that it has a key societal role to play, with the aim of further empowering its professionals.⁶³ From an archive-specific perspective, it is surely no coincidence that the title of the 2005 NCA publication *Giving Value* acknowledges this prevailing theme. Interestingly, many of the issues and notions raised in connection with articulating cultural value, such as intergenerational equity and non-use value, are especially pertinent to the MLA sector in general and archives in particular.⁶⁴ The importance of non-use value, for example, has been made in relation to the archive sector by several commentators, including Horton and Spence who state that this mere existence value is increasingly "being seen in terms of *public value*, particularly in government circles."⁶⁵ Although Public Value applies

⁵⁹ Holden's aim was that any application of the Public Value notion to the cultural sector must do what statistics cannot, that is "satisfy the strategic concerns of the politicians, the scholarly discipline of the professionals and the social and educational needs of the public", *Knowledge and Inspiration*, 37. For a full introduction to Cultural Value, looking in detail at what the cultural sector can learn from others in terms of how to articulate and prove notions of value, see Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value*.

⁶⁰ Hewison set out to develop the idea of Cultural Value into "a critical tool that can be used by cultural institutions to improve their professional practice, the services they deliver, and the value they create." He identifies key components of Institutional Value as being creativity, continuity and care, without which organisations will find it difficult to articulate their message of value. The framework is explained fully in Hewison, *Not a Sideshow*.

⁶¹ Holden and Jones, *Knowledge and Inspiration*, characterise organisations in the MLA sector as "deliverers of value", demonstrating their important role in informing, educating and promoting greater understanding.

⁶² For details of the MLA's "Generic Learning Outcomes," see http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/measuring_learning/learning_outcomes/why_do_we_need_glos/217/default.aspx?flash=true. A draft of the "Generic Social Outcomes" currently in preparation were kindly made available to me by Javier Stanziola, MLA's Head of Research and Evidence.

⁶³ Holden and Jones note "the increased popularity of the sector, and the trust politicians have placed in it," *Knowledge and Inspiration*, 5.

⁶⁴ Holden draws interesting parallels with the environment movement to show that the concept of spending public money on preserving something for future generations is not unique to the cultural sector, *Capturing Cultural Value*, 34ff. The importance of preserving cultural capital, even if it is not currently heavily used, in order that practices or knowledge could be pieced together in future, is also highlighted, 32-33.

⁶⁵ Horton and Spence, *Shaping the Economic and Social Impact of Archives*, 45.

specifically to public sector organisations, the wider implications of increasing awareness of the sector's contribution to society are of concern to archival organisations across the board.

Market research and impact assessments have also risen in visibility in recent years as means by which evidence of value is provided, within organisations or across sectors. Again, the archive sector has been caught up this trend, initially through the Best Value programme in local authorities but also through the Public Services Quality Group annual survey and more recently through strands of the DCMS and MLA research and evidence functions.⁶⁶ Individual impact assessment research projects have also been commissioned by agencies representing archives at a national and regional level.⁶⁷ The aim of this paper is not to provide a detailed analysis of the theory of public value and impact assessment as it relates to the MLA or archive sectors, particularly as excellent work already exists in those areas. However, it would be impossible to move on to discuss attempts to define and promote the purpose and value of archives without taking into account this backdrop of current trends within which the sector is operating.

The Policy Context for Archives

Alongside the recent rise in debate over the nature of value across the cultural and wider public sector, the literature shows other societal trends and changes during the past decade impacting on the archives domain and leading to fresh perspectives being put forward on its role and purpose. The 1999 *Government Policy on Archives*, preceding the formal establishment of MLA, was the first such policy in existence and aimed, in the words of the then Keeper of Public Records, “to demonstrate the importance of archives in our national life to opinion formers outside the archival world,” by highlighting the contribution of archives to a number of key Government objectives.⁶⁸ The direct pledge of support for archives contained within the Policy was followed in 2002 by the commissioning of MLA by DCMS to set up an Archives Task Force.

The direct link between archives and records and the modernising government agenda, stated so bluntly in the *Government Policy*, evidently heralded the Freedom of Information Act, passed in 2000 and in force from 2005.⁶⁹ This Act offered the potential

⁶⁶ See in particular the PSQG *Annual Survey*, which has been running since 1998 and measures statistics from users of archives, and the DCMS *Taking Part* survey which measures participation in cultural and sport activities in a sample of households.

⁶⁷ Horton and Spence, *Shaping the Economic and Social Impact of Archives*, commissioned by MLA Yorkshire, discusses in some detail the available methodologies in use within other sectors for impact assessment, and offers a critique of their possible relevance and uses for archives. It also addresses the important question of a notion of impact that flows out through a relatively small number of users to produce value for wider society, and summarises recent studies which have informed thinking on the positive impacts of archives and the wider cultural sector.

⁶⁸ Tyacke, foreword to the ‘Government Policy on Archives’, 11. These key objectives are defined in the policy as public access, modernisation of public services, open and accountable government, education, social inclusion, economic regeneration and regionalism. With specific reference to modernising institutions and improving access to information, the policy states that the Government “is keen to harness the knowledge and expertise of the archive sector, which it believes has a significant role to play in the pursuit of these objectives.”

⁶⁹ The Policy states “As far as the public sector is concerned, citizens have a general right to obtain information about the activities carried out by organisations acting on their behalf. This goes right to the heart of democratic accountability and is essential if public bodies are to be subject to informed public scrutiny.” The contribution of the archives profession to this process is made clear by the assertion that

for a renewed focus on the uses of documentary evidence and on those responsible for keeping the records which might be the subject of requests. However, data suggests there was little initial impact on the enquiries received by archives services.⁷⁰ Moreover, comment to date on the early years of FoI implementation, from Government and in the media, does not seem to have resulted in explicit links being made with the recordkeeping profession. These issues will be examined in more detail in later chapters.

Similarly, the focus on social inclusion, education and regeneration in the *Government Policy* echoed a number of documents in preparation by the DCMS in the first few years of the New Labour government, which highlighted the contribution of archives, alongside libraries and museums, to a range of social policy objectives.⁷¹ The rallying cry to institutions to “act as agents of social change”⁷² could be described as the start of a marked shift in focus for archivists towards making a difference for users, both in professional practice and advocacy. This shift was sustained by the focus of MLA on these priorities and the corresponding availability of funding for projects which contributed to these aims.⁷³ Moreover, it demonstrated a continuing tendency for archive institutions, individually and collectively, to highlight potential matches between their own activities and policy objectives. The wide-ranging nature of the impacts that archives can have on those who use them was clearly not a completely new idea for many in the archive profession, as commentators have pointed out. However, the shift could perhaps be said to represent a mainstreaming of a viewpoint which was previously held by a smaller proportion of practitioners, or at least articulated in different ways.⁷⁴

The Archives Task Force reported in 2004, with *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future* referencing many of the themes in the *Government Policy* four years previously. Once again the contribution of archives to society was stressed, and specific action areas were listed and funded.⁷⁵ Sustained advocacy over the same period from the NCA and MLA, which will be the subject of detailed focus in chapter three, showed the profession presenting a picture of the relevance of archives to society in a way that arguably hadn't happened in the past. The public profile of archives may still remain relatively

“without effective record-keeping the right of the citizen to information will remain purely theoretical and cannot be put into practice.”

⁷⁰ A survey of archives services during 2005 showed no significant change in the numbers of archives enquiries received. This information was kindly supplied by Susan Healy, Information Policy Consultant at The National Archives.

⁷¹ *Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All: Co-operating Across the Sectors to Tackle Social Exclusion* (2001) built on the earlier documents *Libraries for All* (1999) and *Centres for Social Change* (2000). The latter document, 8, stated clearly that museums, galleries and archives “can play a role in generating social change by engaging with and empowering people to determine their place in the world, educate themselves to achieve their own potential, play a full part in society, and contribute to transforming it in the future.”

⁷² DCMS, *Centres for Social Change*, 5.

⁷³ Horton and Spence write, “The archives domain, in common with the rest of cultural heritage sector, is becoming increasingly user-centric. There is now an emphasis on access to services and materials, on the development of the individual and on the growth of communities. This has occurred partly, perhaps largely, in response to UK government strategies and policies, specifically with respect to social exclusion”, *Shaping the Economic and Social Impact of Archives*, 56.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 15, “While archives as a resource have arguably always had some form of ‘cultural identity role’, the association with meeting community needs is something that has only recently received wide acceptance at the service delivery level.”

⁷⁵ See MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, for summary details of the outcomes proposed for archives.

insignificant compared with that of museums or libraries, but in comparison with the position prior to 2000 the notion that archives too have something to offer no longer sounds alien to many people.⁷⁶

A very significant trend over the last ten years, increasing even since the publication of the Archives Task Force report, has been the rise of interest in recreational history. In particular, genealogy has been steadily gaining in popularity since the 1970s, but there has been growing interest also in local area and house history. 74% of archive users in a 2006 survey were visiting record offices for family history research.⁷⁷ The reason most often cited by commentators for this is the increase in history programmes on television, in particular the BBC celebrity family history series *Who Do You Think You Are?* and the corresponding successful attempts of archival organisations to take advantage of this trend to raise awareness and develop audiences.⁷⁸ However, it is unclear thus far whether this upsurge of interest in the resources offered by archive institutions has actually widened the demographic of visitors, a factor which could prove crucial to assessing the impact of this type of advocacy and which will be considered in more detail in the content analysis.⁷⁹

This overview of some of the documented changes impacting on the archives domain over the past ten years in the UK omits much. However, a number of factors noted here are of direct relevance when considering the purpose of archives within wider society. Some of the aspects of the societal value of records and archives which have been proposed and debated in the UK and internationally will now be examined in more detail.

The Value of Archives to Society

A summary reading of archival literature can at first appear to yield several discrete alternatives for the value offered by archives to society. These include evidence and accountability, collective memory and cultural identity, instrumental value (encompassing educational, health and economic impacts) and the participatory benefits enabled by recreational uses of records. However, a slightly more in-depth analysis reveals the erroneous nature of this reading, and shows up the huge crossovers actually present between all of these viewpoints. For example, the concept of “accountability” is shown to relate not only to present-day legal or statutory concerns but to a broader notion of accountability to future generations through the shaping of collective memory and

⁷⁶ Forde writes in ‘Archives and Success’, “In 1993 it was averred in the comment section of the *Journal* that archives could never be as relevant to society as swimming pools or museums. Ten years later, at the recent NCA conference on social exclusion in Birmingham, Vic Gray urged archivists to keep relevance to society at the top of the agenda. The mere fact that the conference was happening at all is proof of success in asserting the relevance of archival material.”

⁷⁷ PSQG, *Survey of Visitors to UK Archives*.

⁷⁸ According to the BBC’s evaluation, the first series resulted in 7% of UK adults researching their family history for the first time. Throughout the time period of the series the Archives Awareness Campaign worked in a successful partnership with the BBC on a range of resources and events, for details see *Giving Value*, 24.

⁷⁹ The NCA document *Giving Value* notes, 26, “Since the election of the Labour government in 1997, there has been increasing pressure on publicly funded archives to improve access to their collections to the broadest possible audience. This has meant addressing the issues surrounding the narrow demographic make-up of the traditional user base.” However, it is also mentioned within the same document, 23, that according to PSQG, “the archive user demographic has remained relatively stable during the past five years.”

provision of a unique resource.⁸⁰ Family history, often characterised as little more than a leisure pursuit, has been shown to be a key component of mental health in cases where individuals gain or regain a sense of self following circumstances such as family breakdown.⁸¹ Following the establishment of democracy in former totalitarian regimes, the functions of records in supporting transparent government and re-establishing a cohesive national identity are closely connected.⁸² Finally, examples abound of instances where records are “resurrected” into active usage as vital evidence decades or centuries after it has been assumed their only usage will be for scholarly research or personal interest.⁸³

Several commentators have deliberately highlighted these crossover points, thereby attempting to bring greater unity to the profession.⁸⁴ It is also interesting to note that debates on these subjects do not exist in a theoretical vacuum but cut to the heart of professional practice: macro-appraisal and continuum theory are two examples of attempts to embed the multi-faceted societal values of records into everyday practices.⁸⁵ However, it is clear from archival literature that attempts to draw distinctions still persist in some quarters, where one usage or value of records is primarily promoted above others.⁸⁶ Moreover, given that one purpose of this study is to examine perceptions of these notions of value, it will be necessary to consider and attempt definitions of each of the above concepts even if inadequacies exist in their characterisations and in the distinctions drawn between them. The “values” that are described below are not intended as a comprehensive summary, but a reflection of some of the concepts of value which have been articulated in literature, policy documents and professional debate over the

⁸⁰ Cox and Wallace neatly define this notion as “a broad accountability binding individuals with each other and with governments, organizations and society across space and time”, *Archives and the Public Good*, 4. This notion is also strongly proposed by Briston, ‘Keeping an Account’; Gale, ‘Recordkeeping as an Ethical Imperative’; Bundsgaard, writing in Blouin and Rosenberg (eds.), *Archives, Documentation and Institutions of Social Memory*.

⁸¹ A compelling and in-depth account of these processes is provided by Etherton, ‘The Role of Archives in the Perception of Self.’

⁸² Examples from situations worldwide have been provided by a number of commentators: two such as Tyacke, ‘Archives in a Democratic State’ and Harris, ‘Redefining Archives in South Africa.’

⁸³ One example is the CLIWOC project (<http://www.ucm.es/info/cliwoc>), where naval log books from the seventeenth century onwards are being examined for evidence of weather patterns important in studying climate change.

⁸⁴ Cox and Wallace in their Introduction to *Archives and the Public Good* write “While on the surface memory seems soft and fuzzy and accountability can be viewed in a legalistic manner, the concepts are much more closely related,” 3. See also McKemmish writing in *Archives: record keeping in society* and Cook, ‘Beyond the Screen’, in which he sets out to tackle the “unresolved tension between the concepts of evidence and memory”, 3.

⁸⁵ See Cook, ‘Macro-appraisal and Functional Analysis’, for an explanation of how macro-appraisal seeks to document “governance” rather than “government”, i.e. evidence of the state’s impact on society rather than merely the functions of government itself. In ‘Beyond the Screen’ Cook takes the “governance not government” line again to explain how the continuum model allows the cultural heritage role of archivists to be viewed as “critically important” alongside the management of current records. Gale, in ‘Recordkeeping as an Ethical Imperative’, also takes up this point to suggest that the records continuum, by placing business, cultural and other values of records alongside one another, can avoid the “straight opposition between business and cultural record-keeping purposes” which threatens to divide the profession.

⁸⁶ Cunningham, in McKemmish et al. (eds.), *Archives: record keeping in society*, 34, writes of “a polarization that exists to this day in a profession which seems unable to attain a comfortable and balanced view of the dual role of archival institutions.” Evidence of this polarisation can be glimpsed in some of the documents and reports examined in the content analysis, which fail to demonstrate the broad nature of the value of archives.

period of this study. The two most prominent of these in literature have been the evidential and the cultural, “the use of archives as a guarantee of accountability on the one hand and the role of archives as cultural artefacts on the other.”⁸⁷

Evidential Value

Evidence, in its broadest rather than its legal sense, is one of the terms used most frequently by members of the archive profession in explaining or defending their role, and yet is often ill-defined. For many the idea that archives are, or provide, evidence of events and transactions has its roots in Jenkinson’s notion of “impartiality” and “authenticity,”⁸⁸ the notion that the archives never lie. Later commentators, including Schellenberg, continued the focus on evidence, in his case contrasting “evidential value” – the record of events – with the “informational value” likely to be of interest to current or future researchers.⁸⁹ Although seeming at first sight a simple concept, the “records = evidence” hypothesis has been shown by commentators to be riddled with complexities, including the inherent contradiction of anything which has been selected by someone laying claim to impartiality and questions over whether “evidence” can be designated as a quality of the archival record before it has been used as such.⁹⁰

Most often, mention of evidence by those in the recordkeeping profession ties in with the ability to prove something by the use of archives. This has relevance at a society-wide level, where bold claims are frequently made about the critical role of records in supporting democracy and human rights in repressive regimes.⁹¹ The importance of records as proof has traditionally received less attention in stable democracies such as the UK, but applies at an individual level, and is often now mentioned in the context of the Freedom of Information Act.⁹² This aspect of the role of archives is not limited to public

⁸⁷ This was characterised as a “tension” by Elizabeth Shepherd, ‘Culture and Evidence.’

⁸⁸ The two features of archives described as being of “extraordinary value and importance” in *A Manual of Archive Administration*, 12.

⁸⁹ One of the key points of departure from Jenkinson was Schellenberg’s belief that informational value was a sufficient reason for archivists to appraise archives as worthy of permanent preservation, in contrast with Jenkinson’s belief that archivists should not be involved in appraisal at all.

⁹⁰ See Brothman, ‘Afterglow’, for an in-depth analysis of the debate over whether “records=evidence” is a claim which can be substantiated and also various suggestions for societal factors, such as a drive for professional recognition, which have given rise to this claim in many archival quarters. The “myth of impartiality, neutrality and objectivity” as described by Schwartz and Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power’, 1, is a common theme of postmodernist readings of archival theory which highlight the inherent power structures at play behind any selection of material.

⁹¹ Such as Pederson’s assertion in McKemmish et al. (eds.), *Archives: record keeping in society*, 51, that “the components of an ideal society, freedom, responsibility, accountability, integrity, industry and justice, cannot exist without effective recordkeeping support” and Forde’s that “the essential role of the archivist in the prevention of human rights abuse is being recognized increasingly”, ‘We Must Remember Our Past’, 122. Cook, in ‘Professional Practice in a Human Rights Context’, 7, writes “a concern for human rights has been an increasingly important element in ARM work for some time. This concern arises, in the first place, from the fact that the history of the twentieth century is so very much a history of political repression and the struggle to recover from that repression. Every continent has a place in that history.”

⁹² Ketelaar is just one commentator who summarises the situation: “access to public archives gives the people the possibility to exercise their rights and to control their government, its successes, its failures”, *The Archival Image*, 15. With specific reference to the UK Forde points out that here “the issue is less the mass denial of human rights, more the recurrent denial to individuals”, ‘We Must Remember Our Past’, 117. Margaret Proctor also notes the importance of the evidential role despite the UK political context in ‘Professional Education and the Public Policy Agenda,’ 30, “While ideals of good governance are as relevant to the UK as elsewhere, the failures of good record-keeping are often more dramatically played out in an overseas context where poor record-keeping may result in lack of livelihood, pension or worse.”

sector records: despite the focus of many commentators on Government documents, scandals such as Enron and the subsequent Sarbanes-Oxley Act have increased the focus on records providing proof and preventing abuse across the whole of society. Other reasons for the rise in interest in this area noted by commentators are increased litigation and technological advances driving a need to focus on future evidential use at the time of record creation.⁹³ “Accountability” is another term often used both in literature and rhetoric alongside “evidence”, usually to denote a concept of records and archives being held up as evidence to ensure that individuals and governments can account for their decisions and actions. Accountability, records and evidence have been closely associated in literature emerging from sociologists and campaigning groups as well as the recordkeeping community.⁹⁴

For the purposes of this study, “evidential value” will be used to mean the value of records or archives when used to verify, substantiate or shed light on events for reasons other than cultural understanding. These might include the protection of citizens’ individual or collective rights, furthering scientific understanding or supporting the course of justice. This broad definition also encompasses the use of archives for historical research relevant to or utilised in contemporary policy making, which will receive particular consideration in chapter four.⁹⁵ In focussing firmly on use, philosophical debates on the nature and attributes of evidence will be left aside, as will discussion of the problems inherent in trying to ensure the survival of different types of archival “evidence” for the future, for example by a detailed examination of appraisal theory.⁹⁶ In the context of value, no attempt will be made to draw a categorical distinction between the evidential and informational values of the records themselves, which has been addressed by a number of scholars.⁹⁷ Finally, in discussing the use of archives as proof, there is no inherent assertion that all archival records equal objective truths, or that they record all sides of a given story.

Socio-cultural Value

The role of archives in developing a sense of self, a sense of place and increased understanding of our lives and communities has been another recent growth area in research⁹⁸ and, as is the case with evidence, writing on the topic contains terms which are

⁹³ See Brothman, ‘Afterglow’, for an overview of some of the factors influencing the focus on issues of evidence.

⁹⁴ Meijer, in ‘Anticipating Accountability Processes’, notes that “records management does not seem to have attracted much attention from researchers in the field of public administration” despite the importance of records to accountability, 52. His subsequent examination of “accountability processes”, in which he also highlights some of the same concerns as Brothman regarding the lack of clear definition of the nature of evidence by recordkeepers, 57, is taken up by Hurley in McKemmish et al. (eds.), *Archives: record keeping in society* and related directly to an archival context. Pope, writing in Transparency International’s *Global Corruption Report* (2003), asserts “when we campaign for greater access to information we must at the same time campaign for improved records management”, 19.

⁹⁵ See the website <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/> for some interesting current examples of this kind of research.

⁹⁶ Brothman is one commentator who has attempted precise definitions on the nature of records and evidence. For a full explanation of these concepts, see ‘Afterglow’, 322. For an overview of archival theory and appraisal theory in the context of macro-appraisal, see Cook, ‘Macro-appraisal and Functional Analysis’.

⁹⁷ For an overview of the options for defining “evidence” and “information” as attributes of archival records, see Shepherd and Yeo, *Managing Records*, 148-151.

⁹⁸ Cook writes in Blouin and Rosenberg (eds.), *Archives, Documentation and Social Memory*, 173, “A collective shift has taken place during the past century from a juridical-administrative justification for

liberally used but not always clearly defined. Despite the relative invisibility of archives – Schwartz and Cook write that “recent writing on cultural institutions has seldom touched upon the powerful impact of archives and records on collective memory and human identity”⁹⁹ - commentators from within the cultural sector and wider disciplines such as cultural theory have begun to address the issue.¹⁰⁰ Within the archives domain, variations on the theme of archives as a critical factor in developing collective memory and cultural identity, and contributing to the healing of societies following conflict, frequently surface in assertions made in professional literature, as do caveats against making claims of this nature which are too bold.¹⁰¹ The societal importance of keeping archives “for posterity” is also well documented. Non-use values, comprising existence value, option value and bequest value¹⁰² are frequently cited in literature as reasons to keep and value archives.

The influence of recent postmodernist thinking on the nature of power and memory, particularly in relation to archives, has been a significant factor in the rise in debate on this issue.¹⁰³ However, in the UK context concepts of archives (often along with museums and libraries) as somehow facilitating community cohesion are not confined to scholarly literature but found frequently in policy documents, thus demonstrating again the desired link to current Government objectives which the archives, MLA and wider cultural sectors are keen to stress.¹⁰⁴ As was the case with evidential value, a more detailed discussion of the concepts outlined above would be a study in itself, which will

archives grounded in concepts of the state to a socio-cultural justification for archives grounded in wider public policy and public use.”

⁹⁹ In ‘Archives, Records and Power’, 2, archives are contrasted with “human and natural history, museums, art galleries, libraries, historical monuments, even zoos” in this regard.

¹⁰⁰ Two issues of *History of the Human Sciences* were devoted to writings on archives, with articles ranging from philosophical treatises on the nature of recordkeeping to more practical examinations of the politics of shaping collective memory inherent in archival practice. See particularly Brown and Davis-Brown, ‘The Making of Memory’, and Lynch, ‘Archives in Formation’. Gurian, writing of material held in museums but citing documents among her examples, notes “the evidence of history has something central to do with the spirit, will, pride identity and civility of people, ...destroying such material may lead to forgetting, broken spirits and docility”, Anderson (ed.), *Reinventing the Museum*, 269.

¹⁰¹ Two examples of the former would be found in McKemmish et al. (eds.), *Archives: record keeping in society*, Introduction and Bearman, *Archival Methods*, 1-2. Ketelaar, speaking at a conference in Belfast in 2007, described archives as “social spaces of memory,” giving validity to memories in a way which could contribute to reconciliation in divided societies, a theme which often surfaces with reference to South Africa and elsewhere. Piggott, writing in McKemmish et al. (eds.), *Archives: record keeping in society*, whilst acknowledging the role of archives in contributing to a sense of collective memory, urges caution over assertions that archives equal or directly represent the memory of society, 325.

¹⁰² Holden describes how people may value the existence of an aspect of culture or heritage even if they have no wish to use it themselves, or may wish to keep open the possibility of using it in future, or may value the notion of leaving it for future generations, *Capturing Cultural Value*, 32.

¹⁰³ The publication of Derrida’s *Mal D’Archive* in 1995 seemingly proved the catalyst for a number of cultural theorists to turn their attention to the concept of the archive, attracted by the interesting backdrop it provides for a study of central themes within the human sciences, such as power and identity. Similarly within the archive profession, postmodern interpretations of the key tenets of archival theory have allowed new readings on the nature of memory and authenticity to emerge which have impacted on notions of the purpose and value of archives. See Osborne, ‘The Ordinarity of the Archive,’ Schwartz and Cook, ‘Archives, Records and Power,’ Ketelaar’s chapter on “Recordkeeping and societal power” in McKemmish et al., *Archives: record keeping in society*, Cook, ‘Archival Science and Postmodernism’ and Cook in Blouin and Rosenberg (eds.), *Archives, Documentation and Institutions of Social Memory*.

¹⁰⁴ One example would be the MLA-commissioned *Knowledge and Inspiration* (subtitled “Evidence in Making the Case for Museums, Libraries and Archives”), in which the authors assert, 7, “museums, libraries and archives house the evidence of all that we have been and all that we have felt. Without them, we would have a severely impoverished picture of our communal and individual identities.”

not be attempted here. Instead, for the purposes of this study, the definition of socio-cultural values of archives put forward by Cook will be used, that is of “archives being able to offer citizens a sense of identity, locality, history, culture, and personal and collective memory.”¹⁰⁵

In addition to the longstanding evidential and cultural interpretations of the value of archives, policy documents and other literature show a number of other alternatives used in assessing and advocating for the impacts the sector can enable. Some of these have emerged recently in response to political or societal developments. Those examined below may not be the only perceived values of archives, but all have been the subject of debate during the period covered by this study and have a bearing on the contribution of archives to society.

Instrumental Value

The notion of instrumental value has already been mentioned as part of a wider trend in the cultural sector, as well as a justification employed by the MLA and DCMS in proving the relevance of archives to Government policy objectives. Despite the widely-noted dangers of overstressing the instrumental¹⁰⁶ there has nevertheless been a large amount of very high quality work carried out in archives in pursuit of objectives relating to education or social inclusion, with impressive results.¹⁰⁷ Complex concepts such as the fostering of cohesive communities have also sometimes been expressed in instrumental terms, particularly under pressure from funders and other bodies to quantify impacts which seem unquantifiable.¹⁰⁸ Whilst bearing the difficulties of definition in mind, for the purposes of this study the notion of instrumental value outlined by Holden will be adopted, of “the wider social and economic contributions the sector makes to the public realm,”¹⁰⁹ including but not limited to education, health, regeneration, social inclusion and income generation, in contexts where the importance of archives is promoted solely or chiefly in terms of these contributions.

Recreational Value

The recent rise in recreational users of archives studying topics such as family history, noted above, is too recent a phenomenon to have attracted much scholarly comment. Where the topic has been addressed, the consequences vary widely: at one extreme the focus of archivists on the needs of alleged leisure users has been described as

¹⁰⁵ In ‘Archival Science and Postmodernism’, 18, Cook describes this aspect as being “the principal justification for archives to most users, and to the tax-paying public at large.”

¹⁰⁶ Such as that highlighted by Holden in *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy*, 30, “Several effects come out of the value politicians put on instrumental values: resources flow to instrumental aims such as regeneration; money flows into measurement; culture becomes stuck in “service agent” mode, expected to achieve extraneous purposes.”

¹⁰⁷ Examples can be found in documents including the NCA’s *Taking Part and Giving Value*, and the MLA’s Archives Task Force Report *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*. Although these publications were produced from an advocacy perspective, it is not my belief that this detracts from their representation of the impacts of activities on participants.

¹⁰⁸ MLA commissioned work such as the Burns Owens Partnership’s *Developing the Evidence Base* and Horton and Spence, *Scoping the Economic and Social Impact of Archives*, are examples of this trend, the latter stating, 9, “The continuing focus of central government policy on social issues, such as social exclusion, neighbourhood renewal, regeneration and sustainable communities, also points to the relevance of social impact measures, and the need for archives (as with their counterparts in the cultural sector) to demonstrate their relevance to these agendas.”

¹⁰⁹ Holden, *Knowledge and Inspiration*, 38.

dangerous,¹¹⁰ whilst at the other the unprecedented popularity of services has been trumpeted in purely beneficial terms.¹¹¹ It is also far more difficult to define leisure users than might be initially assumed, particularly given the sometimes complex motivations for undertaking family history research.¹¹² Official surveys of archive users can also fail to shed light on this issue, as a distinction is not always made between the different motivations of those using archives for personal use.¹¹³ It can certainly not be assumed that all are recreational users, especially if a value judgement is implied in the use of the term recreational. However, recreational usage will be defined here as that undertaken as a hobby rather than to uncover proof of fact which will later be utilised for purposes other than personal interest, and which, self-consciously at least, is not undertaken for therapeutic purposes.

Research Value

The value of archival records when used for academic research has received relatively little mention in recent literature, despite the traditionally held view in many quarters worldwide that such usage is the primary reason for the existence of archives services.¹¹⁴ Although this remains the motivation for fairly consistent numbers of archives users, it is rarely proposed as an argument by commentators for the value of archives to wider society, possibly because research (in particular historical research) is taken for granted as a reason for archives services to exist and be valued.¹¹⁵ This is in contrast with concepts such as the role of archives in maintaining cultural identity whose relevance for the sector have been suggested far more recently. Moreover, the values emanating from professional research usage have often tended to be expressed via other categorisations, such as evidential value in the case of epidemiological research, instrumental value in the case of pre-eminent scholars putting their institution or locality on the map, or socio-cultural value when scholars uncover details about the world we inhabit and how the past

¹¹⁰ Mortimer, in 'Discriminating Between Readers', is strongly critical of what he sees as the "marginalization" of those who use records for non-leisure purposes. Although his assertions regarding the perceived value of services on the part of local authorities may be viewed differently now following the wider currency of concepts of public and instrumental value, his caution regarding the sustainability of archives if they are viewed merely as leisure services is important to note.

¹¹¹ The NCA publication, *Giving Value*, 24, noting the recent popular interest in history, states "Although this level of general interest in historical subjects cannot be guaranteed to continue it is important that archives are given the funding and tools to capitalize on the current enthusiasm." This is referenced in Horton and Spence, *Scoping the Economic and Social Impact of Archives*, 93, and it is noted simply that "the archive domain needs to do all it can to capitalize on current enthusiasm", arguably a subtle change of emphasis from a resourcing to an advocacy issue which possibly reflects the perspective of the MLA as commissioners of the study.

¹¹² Etherton, 'The Role of Archives in the Perception of Self', gives an example of an assumed genealogist who, it later transpired, was attempting to seek out a family member from whom he had become estranged in childhood. She comments, 237, "Unfortunately, to date, no statistics have been gathered to provide information on what percentage of family historians are doing research to gain a greater perception of self. However, in view of the statistics which show an increasing number of people suffering some kind of disruption to their bonding processes during childhood, we must be aware that the likelihood is high that, as time passes, the urge to make sense of disconnected memories, to find answers to puzzles – indeed, to learn the truth – is likely to bring many of these people, as adults, into archive reading rooms." This issue is also acknowledged in the NCA's *Changing the Future of Our Past* publication, 10.

¹¹³ Although the PSQG's *Annual Survey* distinguishes between "personal leisure/ recreation" and "non-leisure personal or family business", it has only done so since 2002.

¹¹⁴ See for example Mortimer, 'Discriminating Between Readers.'

¹¹⁵ Note Cook's "Archives of the state are *not just* repositories of historical sources for researchers to use in understanding the past; they are also political manifestations of and active agents of the dominant culture of society", Cox and Wallace (eds.), *Archives and the Public Good*, 38, [my italics.]

affects our lives today. This is the case with much of the data examined throughout this study.

Conclusion

The aim of this research project is to move towards a greater understanding of how the archive sector defines and advocates for its value to society, how that value is perceived by the public and how it could be better recognised and understood. This literature review has explored some of the underlying themes pertinent to this aim, including the context of the sector's recent development, concepts of value to society and some common interpretations of the role and importance of archives. I will now move on to an examination of primary sources in an attempt to discover how they show the role of archives being promoted by the sector and perceived by the public. Later in the study I will return to the values outlined here, in considering how my interviewees characterise the public value of archives.

Chapter 3: Advocacy Priorities and the Public Response

My first research aim concerns the main priorities of the archive sector for advocacy and, if possible, the reasons behind these priorities. The second considers whether there are links between the attributes or benefits of archives prioritised in professional advocacy and those which appear to be most valued by others. I chose to use a form of content analysis to examine the themes occurring most frequently in policy documents and outreach material which attempt to highlight the value or importance of archives. Using the same method, I then carried out an analysis of recent surveys reporting on the usage and valuing of archives, as a starting point to uncovering links between the two. The data gathered as a result of the analysis has been utilised in two main ways: firstly as a basis for assessing the message which the archive sector is projecting alongside the message which the public are hearing. Secondly, it has been used as a basis for the interview design and can be used to triangulate the findings. Further analysis of these sources therefore follows in later chapters.

The first section of the content analysis is concerned with advocacy priorities for the archives sector. In it I considered the main UK bodies involved in the representation of archives and archivists at a national level: the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), the National Council on Archives (NCA), The National Archives (TNA) and the Society of Archivists (SoA). In addition, I analysed material available as part of the Archives Awareness Campaign (AAC) separately from those of its sponsoring bodies, as I felt was appropriate given the branding and the advocacy objectives it possesses in its own right. I analysed all available publications and policy documents published by these bodies between 2000 and 2006 which could be described as containing elements of advocacy relating to the importance of archives, whether aimed at policymakers, professionals or the public.¹¹⁶ Where an organisation had not published any relevant documents, the website was analysed instead for evidence of the message that organisation wished to project concerning the value of archives. Similarly, some publications were concerned predominantly with strategies and recommendations for the future of the archive sector rather than advocacy *per se*, and in these cases such priorities for action have been interpreted as providing clues to the perceived value of archives. The research data have been arranged by publication or other data source within each creating organisation for ease of comparison between the advocacy priorities of the different bodies.

The second section of the content analysis deals with views on the value of the archives. To consider this I obtained results from all available UK national surveys undertaken during the period which measure either usage of archives, participation in archives activities or opinions on the value or importance of archives. Those studied were the Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) *Survey of Visitors to UK Archives*, the DCMS *Taking Part* survey, the evaluation data from Archives Awareness Campaigns and data from the British Academy funded research project examining the impact of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) on perceptions of the roles and duties of the archives profession. Some data sources, such as the PSQG *Survey*, ask respondents directly about their

¹¹⁶ In this context I define “available” as being in the public domain, and available in printed or electronic form either through the website of the organisation concerned or by contacting a named individual connected with the organisation.

opinions on the value of archives; in other cases, such as *Taking Part*, some inferences have been made about the way in which potential value is perceived on the basis of reasons for use or non-use. None of these sources present a comprehensive picture of the use of and value ascribed to archives in the UK, but their diversity is intended to cover as wide a range of views as possible. The research data have again been arranged by source.

1. *Advocacy Priorities for the Archives Sector*

MLA

MLA produce a number of documents each year which contain an element of advocacy, covering the separate domains of museums, libraries and archives and the entire sector together.¹¹⁷ Since MLA's formation there have been two documents produced at national level devoted solely to the archives sector, containing information which could be described as advocacy in tone alongside contextual information and recommendations. These have been the subject of detailed analysis below. Archives have also been included alongside museums and libraries in numerous other publications which aim to show what the sector as a whole can contribute to government objectives in areas such as learning and building communities.¹¹⁸ The intended audience for these documents varies, but includes government and policymakers, professionals and the public. Given the structural position of MLA as an agency of the DCMS, I would expect their assertions regarding the value of the sector to be largely focussed on issues related to culture and heritage, particularly those with links to current government objectives such as enhancing learning and social inclusion.¹¹⁹

*Developing the 21st Century Archive (2001)*¹²⁰

This document was developed to build on the 2001 Archives Agenda Consultation Paper, taking into account responses from professionals and users. Aimed at the sector itself and DCMS, it was “essentially the first public statement of what Resource thought archives were about and what our initial interventions in archives were going to be.”¹²¹ It presents a clear picture of the varied contributions of archives to society. For example, section 3 of the document, entitled “The Value and Relevance of Archives,” highlights three ways in which archives contribute to society which could be said to comprise the cultural, instrumental and evidential points of view.¹²²

¹¹⁷ A list of MLA's publications to date, including documents with an advocacy focus and others such as statistics on usage across the sector, can be browsed at http://www.mla.gov.uk/website/publications/browse_by_date/browse_by_date/. The majority are available online.

¹¹⁸ One recent example of this type of document is *Inspiring Learning, Building Communities* (2006), available at http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets/I/inspiring_learning_building_communities_11171.pdf

¹¹⁹ See DCMS documents such as *Centres for Social Change*, which outline some of their expectations for the sector's priorities.

¹²⁰ Available at http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets/2/21centarc_pdf_6861.pdf

¹²¹ Justin Cavernelis-Frost: email of 17 Jan 2008 to the author.

¹²² MLA, *Developing the 21st Century Archive*, 10-11. These are, “...archives are a treasure house for the nation...important custodians of our collective memories and identity”; “The holdings of archives can unlock a world of information and learning, of pleasure, contemplation and enthusiasm for history and culture”; “Archives and records management services play a key role in the effective and efficient management of both public and private business.”

Throughout the document the need to raise awareness, especially with government, of this contribution which archives make to society comes across particularly strongly.¹²³ The aim is stated to “reinforce the importance of the archives domain in a number of areas.” Seven of these are listed, falling into the following categories:¹²⁴

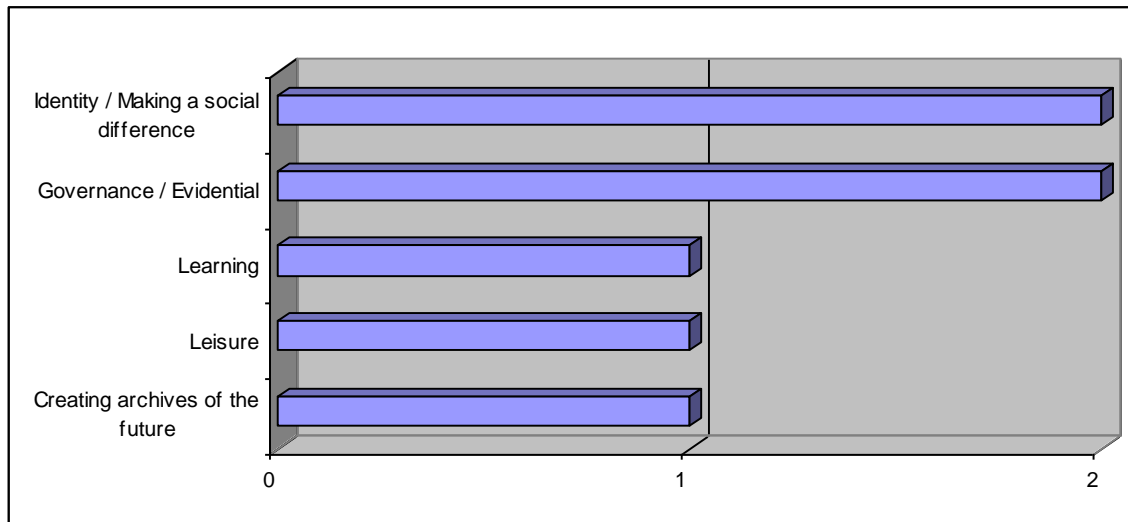


Figure 1: Perceived areas of importance of archives (Developing the 21st Century Archive)

However, this range is not reflected in the document’s Strategic Plan. Of these seven areas, only Learning and Access is singled out as a key development area, the rest of the plan being concerned with structural objectives relating to advocacy, seeking resources, training and infrastructure.

The evidential value of archives is noted in the Executive Summary, which includes a paragraph on the unique importance of archives for good governance and accountability.¹²⁵ However, the document goes on to state “Resource has taken the view that other institutions, such as the PRO and Cabinet Office are leading on key information policy and records management agendas, and that we should focus on those areas where we can make a difference and add value.”¹²⁶ These areas are those shared with museums and libraries. This statement could perhaps provide an explanation for the apparent contradiction whereby the stated importance of archives’ contribution to good governance and accountability is not translated into concrete attempts to develop or promote this strand of the archives offer.

¹²³ Ibid., 14, “We want to demonstrate this potential to the world at large – and in particular to political decision-makers and funders.”

¹²⁴ Ibid., 11. The full list is: valuable learning tools and educational resources; contribution to recording and reflecting personal, family and community identity; a source of enjoyment and leisure pursuit; promoting transparency and government accountability; evidential and legal information that can make a real difference to the lives of individuals; something with an inherent social value that can make a real difference to the lives of individuals; the survival of our unique, irreplaceable archival heritage.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 3, “Resource recognises that the case for the value and importance of archives extends far beyond the parameters of cultural heritage... One of the principal features that distinguish archives from museums and libraries is the role they play in the development and implementation of information policy and records management.”

¹²⁶ Ibid., 11.

*Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future (2004)*¹²⁷

This document formed the report of the Archives Task Force, set up at the request of the DCMS to "...carry out an in-depth analysis and review of the state of the UK's unique and diverse archives."¹²⁸ Following a period of wide consultation, it set out recommendations for priority activities for which it was hoped the DCMS and other funders would allocate resources. The recommendations in the report are wide-ranging, and some deal with structural issues such as provision of ICT infrastructure and staff development. Those elements which have been examined here relate to the perceived value of archives and how this is to be promoted.

As was the case with the 2001 document, the full range of the contribution of archives to society is acknowledged in the report. The introduction to the Executive Summary highlights the importance of archives as "evidential components of the official record" as well as resources of "interest" and providers of a "sense of history".¹²⁹ Similarly section 1, "The Importance of Archives", contains paragraphs which expand on this in detail by expressing the societal value of archives in terms of evidence essential for good governance, a sense of history, and a resource for the community.¹³⁰ Yet once again, as the report turns to actual recommendations, those relating to the cultural and instrumental values of archives could be said to dominate.¹³¹

Issues relating to access and users are prioritised, as was the case in *Developing the 21st Century Archive*. The "Vision" section of the Executive Summary places the strongest focus on "placing access as the highest priority."¹³² Section 2, which outlines the Task Force findings, begins by highlighting the focus on users which has informed the process¹³³ and characterises the nature of the demand from these users who have used archives to explore their identity or family history, take part in learning or make connections within their communities.¹³⁴ In summarising the findings and building towards the formulation of strategy, the report states "We cannot stress too highly that our recommendations are designed to achieve effective and sustainable access to our national archival heritage wherever it may be, not simply to raise awareness of archives and their services."¹³⁵ This theme is central to section 3, which deals specifically with the proposed UK Archives Gateway and its benefits, focussing on the potential for community archiving, learning, leisure usage and promoting citizenship and community identity.¹³⁶ Profile-raising is once again a concern, with section 4, "Developing Archives

¹²⁷ Available at http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//A/atf_report_pdf_6716.pdf

¹²⁸ MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, 3.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 8. Of those which relate to the uses of archives, as opposed to service management issues, one is concerned with positioning UK archives as "contributors to local, regional and national social and economic objectives", one with releasing "the potential of archives to enrich and enhance teaching and learning" and one with increasing "community participation."

¹³² *Ibid.*, 6-7, "long-term sustainability will come from engaging as many people as possible with the archival heritage whether for leisure, learning, personal development, business or community involvement."

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 16, "The focus on users has been a thread running through the consultation process and the shaping of our vision for a 21st century archive service."

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 24-29.

and Audiences,” including examples of “new and imaginative ways” to tackle the persistent problem of profile.¹³⁷

The overall picture emerging is that recommendations for action are in line with MLA’s earlier pledge to develop and advocate for the areas where they can best add value.¹³⁸ The themes which resound throughout the majority of this document, such as communities, learning and tourism, are those which the archive sector shares with museums and libraries, and with other parts of the DCMS domain. Once again the role of archives as evidence, facilitating accountability, is outlined in detail and given some prominence in the chapter dealing with the “importance” of archives, yet does not form any part of the reported findings or recommendations. This is to be expected given the objective of focussing on the use of archives both in the report’s findings and priorities for action, as the bulk of users could be loosely described as using archives for purposes connected to learning or leisure.¹³⁹

Summary

In terms of organisational remit, MLA part fund and collaborate with the NCA, whose role is advocacy on behalf of the archives sector. MLA’s priority is therefore to advocate for the importance of the MLA sector as a whole, and this can be seen in the themes of many of their official publications.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, the need to “accentuate the common ground” between the three sectors is an organisational priority at the highest level.¹⁴¹ The view of archives that MLA appears to project could be said to accurately reflect this priority, as well as their structural position under DCMS where the expectation is that government agendas for the cultural sector as a whole will predominate. The opinion of Roy Clare, Chief Executive of MLA, that a priority is looking at “what we need to do to the archival function to connect it to exploration and learning” demonstrates this.¹⁴² Similarly, the belief of Justin Cavernelis-Frost, MLA’s Head of Archives Policy, is that “there will increasingly be a focus on the public sector and communities because that’s where the government issues are.”¹⁴³ It could be also be argued that the learning and communities agenda is more likely to bring visitors into archives who are both large in number and easy to characterise in demographic terms, such as groups of young people, which chimes with the MLA’s stated priority for archives of focussing on actual use.¹⁴⁴

One concern arising out of this brief analysis might be that professionals within the sector and policymakers outside of it will at times look to MLA for leadership on the importance of archives, despite the existence of NCA. Although there are clear

¹³⁷ Ibid., 34-47. These include economic development (focussing on creativity, regeneration and tourism), commercial activities (such as merchandising), information management, learning and social inclusion, and connecting with communities.

¹³⁸ MLA, *Developing the 21st Century Archive*, 11.

¹³⁹ Statistics on the usage of archives are explored in detail on pages 46-48, but according to the 2006 PSQG *Survey* learning and leisure accounted for over 80% of reasons given for visiting archives.

¹⁴⁰ The majority of publications with an advocacy focus, as opposed to statistics on the sector, cover issues such as learning, building communities, diversity and social inclusion which are common across the three domains.

¹⁴¹ *Interview with Roy Clare*, 21/1/08.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07.

¹⁴⁴ “We have to be clear about our interventions for the sector, and where our work can add value. These have largely focused on working with the sector to deliver real opportunities for consumers.” Roy Clare: email of 21 Feb 2008 to the author.

explanations as to why priorities linked to government agendas and cultural heritage predominate, MLA's own published research demonstrates the importance of the evidential and other unique elements of the role of archives.¹⁴⁵ Their response is that in order to add value in the most effective way they have avoided duplicating TNA's role in developing actual strands of work devoted to the evidential role of archives,¹⁴⁶ but this could potentially cause confusion. There is also the risk highlighted by Proctor, that "MLA's high profile also threatens to create an image of the domain which is unrepresentative of a majority of its practitioners, and, moreover, an image which fails to acknowledge the primary importance of the evidential, as opposed to the 'cultural', role of recordkeeping."¹⁴⁷ A final potential concern is that MLA have a clear priority of focussing on the needs of the user,¹⁴⁸ yet the needs of all users will not be met by a dominant focus on cultural heritage. The goal of moving beyond raising awareness of archives has arguably led to recommendations biased towards increasing use in the short-term.¹⁴⁹ From the public value perspective, raising awareness throughout wider society is perhaps more important than has been acknowledged here.

NCA

The National Council on Archives aims to bring together all the major bodies in the UK concerned with archives and their use.¹⁵⁰ Following discussions between professional bodies in the archives field in 2007 it was decided that the NCA would take the lead on matters relating to advocacy, building on its existing achievements in this area; the Head of Public Affairs subsequently recruited was an NCA appointment.¹⁵¹ The NCA produce a number of publications and responses to consultations each year as well as organising events and conferences. Some of these have an advocacy focus, with the public and policymakers; others on a variety of topics are aimed at professionals and their employers.¹⁵² Their aim with regard to advocacy, as stated in their 3 year strategy published in 2006, was to "continue to advocate on behalf of archives and their users at all levels of government; to raise awareness of the value, and enormous potential, of

¹⁴⁵ As well as the excerpts quoted above, see MLA/Burns Owens Partnership, *Developing the Evidence Base*, 22, "Culture is linked to civil renewal principally through its participatory dimension, as outlined below. However, the 'factual' element of the museums, libraries and archives sector – as represented predominantly by archives – plays a specific role in terms of supporting informed democracy." It is interesting to note that the MLA's *Digest of Statistics* 2006, 10, quotes information from the PSQG Survey on the perceived societal contributions of archives, yet omits those relating to the evidential role, quoting only those relating to the role of archives in preserving culture and providing opportunities for learning.

¹⁴⁶ Roy Clare: email of 21 Feb 2008 to the author. Instead, they claim that as "a business to business organisation", they use the evidential elements in ongoing advocacy work such as justifying investment in archives by local authorities.

¹⁴⁷ Proctor, 'Professional Education and the Public Policy Agenda', 134.

¹⁴⁸ "Advocacy for archives has to be around usefulness to people," *Interview with Roy Clare*, 21/1/08.

¹⁴⁹ Possible examples of these include "programmes to digitise archival documents focused on popular themes and topics" and "packages to support particular communities of interest (children, students, tourists and businesses)," MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, 61-2. The theme of short term thinking on the part of MLA was also raised in interviews, for example by Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan who stated "for MLA the archives agenda has to be about self-preservation," *Interview*, 29/1/08.

¹⁵⁰ For information on the NCA, their aims and priorities, see

http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/about_nca/what_we_do/

¹⁵¹ Discussions regarding the potential duplication of effort between professional bodies took place throughout 2006, and the decision that the NCA would lead on advocacy was taken in April 2007, *Interview with Jonathan Pepler*, 25/1/08. Prior to this, the NCA's 3 year strategy, 2006-9, had stated its top two priorities as "advocacy and strategic co-ordination" and "marketing and publicity for archives."

Available at http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/materials/strategy_final.pdf

¹⁵² A list of all recent publications can be found at <http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/advocacy/>

archives among decision-makers. NCA will also continue to impress upon archivists the need to fulfil archives' potential in the social inclusion, education and citizenship agendas...¹⁵³ Given this wide remit, and their role in supporting TNA and MLA as their core funders, I would expect NCA's publications to promote a wide spectrum of views on the societal values of archives. Here I have analysed those of their publications which focus predominantly on advocacy, as well as responses to consultations where archives are of particular relevance.

*Changing the Future of Our Past (2002)*¹⁵⁴

Described by its author as "part of the effort to try and raise the profile of archives within Government and with other 'movers and shakers,'" ¹⁵⁵ the document attempts throughout to promote the importance of archives: why they matter, how important they are to society and the help the sector will need to build on the previous decade of advances. Overall it gives a broad overview of how the very varied uses of archives can be important and valuable in a range of ways, and to different sections of society. The document's section on "Why do Archives Matter" devotes a page to each of five topics:

- "a record of our national history and culture" (incorporating both political decision-making and the interests of ordinary people)
- "a source of community identity"
- "personal identity" (incorporating records used both for interest and as proof)
- "the corporate and public memory"
- "pathways to learning and social inclusion"¹⁵⁶

Key issues for the future are then listed as "creating sustainable services", "stewardship", "providing access", "widening access for all" and "creating partnerships."¹⁵⁷ Getting the message across about the value of archives is also seen as a priority, with the introduction concluding with the need for archives to "shake off inappropriate public perceptions." Archives are then described as "a fundamental bulwark of our democracy, our culture, our community and personal identity."¹⁵⁸

*Giving Value (2005)*¹⁵⁹

This publication, aimed at funders, sets out priorities for the development of archives 2005-2010, as based on the common view of Council members.¹⁶⁰ Its remit is therefore less to promote the ongoing worth of the existence of archives to society than to set out objectives for how services can be developed in order to deliver visible value. It does this by listing "Key Priorities", which to a large extent match the priorities of bodies such as DCMS and the HLF. These are:

- Online access (including e-learning)
- Engaging new audiences (including education work, efforts to tackle social exclusion, and marketing)

¹⁵³ NCA, *Strategy 2006-2009*, 2.

¹⁵⁴ Available at <http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/materials/changingfutureofourpast.pdf>

¹⁵⁵ Nick Kingsley: email of 28 Jan 2008 to the author.

¹⁵⁶ NCA, *Changing the Future of Our Past*, 6-15.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 19-27.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵⁹ Available at http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/materials/nca_giving_value.pdf

¹⁶⁰ NCA, *Giving Value*, 2. The document "builds on a range of policy and strategy publications issued by the NCA and other key strategic agencies involved in supporting archives in the UK."

- Sustainable development (including buildings, preservation and workforce development)
- Interpretation (including cataloguing and exhibitions)
- Excellence and innovation (including cross-domain working)¹⁶¹

There appear to be similarities with the MLA documents, where plans or suggestions for action do not necessarily mesh with the importance attributed to a particular area. For example, the section entitled “Context – the Last Five Years”, notes that “There do appear to have been shifts in the usage of archives, demonstrating an increased understanding of the evidential value of records.”¹⁶² However, the section on engaging new audiences does not mention the possibility of further targeting this potential user group,¹⁶³ nor is the idea of building on this increased understanding explored elsewhere in the document.

*Consultation Response to Archives Task Force (2003)*¹⁶⁴

The Archives Task Force was a major landmark in attempts to develop the archives sector following the formation of MLA. In the NCA’s Response I would expect a broad spectrum of views on the value of archives, and this is delivered from the beginning with the statement “the ATF needs to spell out the role archives and records management have to play in meeting some of the Government’s overarching policy objectives in the areas of citizenship, lifelong learning, social inclusion, e-service delivery and accountability.”¹⁶⁵ More detailed examples include responses to the question “Where do you see the wider world of archives and RM in 10 years time?” Electronic records management is mentioned as important in “improving accountability and openness”, and it is also desired that archives will be “recognised and valued in public surveys for the role they successfully play in firing peoples’ imagination, learning and curiosity.”¹⁶⁶

*Response to DCMS Caring for our Collections Inquiry (2006)*¹⁶⁷

This response consists of evidence being presented to government to justify continued investment in the archives sector. Once again, therefore, I would expect it to include a broad overview of the value of archives to society, possibly with a focus on outcomes of particular relevance to the DCMS, such as learning and social inclusion. In fact, the evidential role of archives is given some prominence. On the first page, the response states that archives “defend democracy by enabling everyone to see and explore the documents of the past.”¹⁶⁸ Two complete paragraphs are then devoted to the uses of archives as evidence both in the present and for the future, before specific points are made in response to questions about funding and representation for the sector.

Summary

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁶² Ibid., 23. This figure is based on the fall in users citing their main purpose in visiting as “personal interest” in the 2004 PSQG Survey.

¹⁶³ Instead, the example given under “Improving marketing of archive services” in this section, 11, is that of the Archives Awareness Campaign link with the BBC *Who Do You Think You Are?* series.

¹⁶⁴ Available at <http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/materials/atf.pdf>

¹⁶⁵ NCA, *Consultation Response to Archives Task Force*, 1.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶⁷ Available at http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/materials/nca_cfoc_response_final.pdf

¹⁶⁸ NCA, *Response to DCMS Caring for our Collections Inquiry*, 1.

All the documents considered here were published before the appointment of NCA's Head of Public Affairs, and before their mandate to lead on advocacy on behalf of the sector. Despite this, the overall picture emerging from these publications, aimed at very different audiences, is that they highlight a wide spectrum of the values of archives to society, and in an accessible way. NCA publications on single issues have similarly covered a broad spread of areas where the profession can add value.¹⁶⁹ In terms of working with professionals, the themes of NCA's annual conferences also demonstrate the variety of contributions archives can make.¹⁷⁰ The challenge will be to ensure that this remains the case as an advocacy programme is rolled out in a more strategic way to a targeted audience.

TNA

The National Archives has a mission to lead the way in developing information management expertise across government and the wider sector,¹⁷¹ but does not assume an advocacy role on behalf of the archives profession, a function which is fulfilled via its sponsorship of the NCA. However, given the position of TNA within the sector, as well as its name, I felt its website may be a first stop for people interested in archives, perhaps containing information or FAQs on what archives are which it would be helpful to analyse.

In terms of its own mission, TNA has three aims:

- “lead and transform information management”
- “guarantee the survival of today's information for tomorrow”
- “bring history to life for everyone.”¹⁷²

These are deliberately set out in order of priority.¹⁷³ Although it is true that TNA are leading on information policy and records management agendas,¹⁷⁴ there is no evidence that that encompasses an advocacy role with the public as to the importance of archives or information management, although advocacy with central government as to the transforming power of good information management is seen as a priority. The website contains no introductory information on what archives are, or on their value to society, or information on where one might go to access that information. Despite the fact that, like MLA, they fund and collaborate with the NCA on advocacy issues, it could be argued that an overview of their vision for the value of archives would be helpful.

SoA

The Society of Archivists is a professional body for members, existing “to promote the care and preservation of archives and the better administration of archive repositories, to

¹⁶⁹ For example, *Taking Part* (2001) contains recommendations in the foreword for government, DCMS, funding bodies, archivists and others, on the role of archives as a means of tackling social exclusion. *Your Data at Risk* (2005) is aimed at employers, or those with responsibility for “strategic direction of an organisation's information management,” and outlines the importance of digital preservation for statutory and business purposes.

¹⁷⁰ The 2006 conference was on “Evidence of our Value – Our Value as Evidence” and 2007 on “The Role of Archives in Teaching Diversity and Citizenship.”

¹⁷¹ For further information on the aims and mission of TNA, see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/?source=about>

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ According to Natalie Ceeney, Chief Executive of TNA, *Interview*, 28/11/07.

¹⁷⁴ As quoted in MLA, *Developing the 21st Century Archive*, 11.

advance the training of its members and to encourage relevant research and publication.”¹⁷⁵ Following the decision that the NCA is to lead on advocacy across the profession one wouldn’t expect large amounts of promotional activity to be undertaken by the Society, but, as with TNA, I thought there might be information on its website regarding what archives are and can enable which would provide an insight into the priorities of its members. Once again this information, or directions to where it might be found elsewhere, was not available, the only brief introduction to archives being buried within information for those considering a career in the sector. Despite the priority of the SoA being services to its members, I felt that once again a statement on archives, or a link to the location of introductory information, might be a way of addressing some of the profile issues within the sector. There is clearly no guarantee that potential users of archives looking for basic information will be aware of the remit of the NCA with regards to advocacy and thus know to address initial enquiries to them.

Archives Awareness Campaign

Although under the auspices of NCA, and funded by TNA and MLA, the annual Archives Awareness Campaign has a distinct brand as a method of promoting archives to the public. The Marketing for Archives section of the NCA’s strategic plan states “The NCA will continue to promote archives as places open to all and of relevance to all, not just a small group of stereotyped researchers. Family history, and programmes such as *Who Do You Think You Are?* have raised the profile and popularity of archives, and the NCA will continue to build on this increased demand.”¹⁷⁶ The AAC is seen as a key part of achieving this objective. It has its own website, which has been analysed here. As it has a specific mission based around widening participation in archives, I would expect the main focus to be practical information on family history and other topics which will appeal to the popular user base, rather than more theoretical information on the wider value of archives to society.

The AAC website¹⁷⁷ is aimed at the general public, particularly at non-users of archives. It mainly consists of listings of events and links to online sources, but also contains a short introduction to what archives are. The focus of this is almost solely on history, and the associated use of archives, as a leisure interest, although there is one passing reference to the fact that archives can “help in legal matters.”¹⁷⁸ The impression given is that visiting archives is something one does for recreation, which is likely to be the most successful strategy when attempting to target a large number of users and convince them of the potential benefits and accessibility of what archives can offer.¹⁷⁹

It could be argued that the promotion of archives carried out by the AAC achieves its stated aims and that a campaign of this type is not the place for making explicit the wider societal benefits of archives. However, the marketing of archives as a fun day out for people with time on their hands could threaten to deter both those who might want to use archives for other reasons and those who might feel reassured by an acknowledgement of

¹⁷⁵ <http://www.archives.org.uk/>

¹⁷⁶ NCA, *Strategy 2006-2009*, 5.

¹⁷⁷ Available at <http://www.archiveawareness.com/>. The website was analysed in January 2008, which did not fall into the period of the annual campaign.

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.archiveawareness.com/about>

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, “Whether your favourite hobby is stamp collecting or bee-keeping there will be archives somewhere which will interest you!”

the personal and community benefits to family or local history research. If the “small group of stereotyped researchers” which forms the image the campaign wishes to move away from is merely replaced by a small group of stereotyped hobbyists (as is arguably rather unfortunately typified by the image of stamp collectors and bee keepers) the campaign is unlikely to enjoy great success at developing new types of audiences. Moreover, the golden opportunity that the campaign provides to reach out to large numbers of the public could be said to be partially wasted if a wider vision of what archives enable is ignored, a view shared by several within the profession. Natalie Ceeney, with particular reference to the AAC, described archives attempts at advocacy as “abysmal”, and the 2006 campaign as “an exercise in self-congratulation” and an example of the profession “talking to ourselves.”¹⁸⁰ Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, the NCA’s press and publicity officer, described how “people genuinely wanted the AAC, but only had the skills to advocate to people they knew...people just went on doing the same things to the same audiences but with the AAC badge.”¹⁸¹ These views, in highlighting the fact that perceived problems with the campaign might in fact be down to the way it was interpreted and delivered by the profession, have once again highlighted wider issues than those of how the sector promotes its value. These will be explored in more detail in chapter six.

2. Views on the Value of Archives

PSQG

The Public Services Quality Group is an affiliated group of the NCA, concerned particularly with the public-facing side of archives services.¹⁸² One of its most high-profile activities is the *Survey of Visitors to UK Archives*, taken every 18 months since 1998 for a period of between 1-4 weeks, which the group describes as the “most comprehensive survey of archive user satisfaction and demographics in the world.”¹⁸³ Certainly in a sector where there is a paucity of evidence relating to the user experience, the PSQG survey is frequently quoted as a benchmark in research and promotional activities, hence its inclusion here.¹⁸⁴ Participation is voluntary, and the majority of participating archives are local authority record offices, with some from other sectors such as businesses and universities. This is possibly owing to the resources involved in participation, which could be prohibitive for smaller archives. Although the survey includes a large number of those using UK archives during the data collection period, the proportion of users studying family and local history is larger in local authority archives than in specialist repositories. This may have a bearing on results, and is a caveat to bear in mind if decisions are taken based on them.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Natalie Ceeney, 28/11/07, speaking in a personal capacity.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, 29/1/08, speaking in a personal capacity.

¹⁸² More information about PSQG is available at

http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/research_and_development/public_services_quality_group/

¹⁸³ http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/research_and_development/survey/

¹⁸⁴ Some examples of such uses of the PSQG *Survey* are the NCA’s *Giving Value*, and the HLF research project. Charlotte Hodgson, Convenor of PSQG, writes “I think we have all found it surprising how successful the survey has been and it is certainly quoted in many articles and pieces of research.” Charlotte Hodgson: email of 6 Mar 2008 to the author.

The *Survey* asks a large variety of questions aimed at uncovering the demographic profile of users, details of their visit experience and their satisfaction with various aspects of the archive service. In this study I have chosen to analyse only those areas concerned with reasons for use and perceptions of the value to society of archives. I encountered a number of problems with using the data, in particular that the questions and available choice of responses varies between surveys, as does the format, detail and availability of reports.¹⁸⁵ Nevertheless, I believe that despite the gaps in my analysis and difficulty in drawing definitive conclusions the findings at least provide a good starting point on which further research could be based.

Survey 2001¹⁸⁶

The stated “main purpose of visiting” an archive for respondents was:

- personal interest/ hobby: 82%
- formal education as a student/ researcher: 4% (this total includes responses in the categories of school project, adult education project, taught degree or further education project and research degree project)
- professional researcher: 7%
- research for business or public body: 3%
- media research: 1%
- formal education as a teacher: 1% (this total includes responses for school project (staff) and research by academic staff)

In terms of the role users believe archives play in society, their perceived contribution was viewed as follows. Note that in this survey respondents were asked which of the following benefits archives contributed to society, as opposed to later surveys where they were asked to strongly agree/ agree/ disagree/ strongly disagree with statements on the societal contribution of archives.¹⁸⁷

- Preserving culture: 82% agree
- Strengthening family and community identity: 72% agree
- Providing opportunities for learning: 66% agree
- Supporting administrative and business activity: 20% agree

Survey 2002¹⁸⁸

The stated “main purpose of visiting” an archive for respondents was:

- personal interest/ recreation: 63%
- formal education as a student/ researcher: 15%
- non-leisure personal or family business: 11%
- work connected to employment: 10%
- formal education as a teacher: 1%

¹⁸⁵ Data from 2001, 2002 and 2006 is available on the NCA website, but full details for all participating services are only available for 2006. Data for 2004 was obtained from the PSQG convenor, although it has since also been uploaded to the website. The format and detail of the published data varies slightly each year. Examples of variation in questions includes a 2001 question, not repeated in later years, asking respondents’ opinions on which areas of heritage, culture and recreation should be supported through public funding. The choice of reasons for visiting an archive differed significantly in 2001 from later years.

¹⁸⁶ Available at <http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/materials/nationalresults2001.pdf>

¹⁸⁷ Although note also that in both instances respondents could choose the same response for each option, so were not being asked to choose between the relative merits of each view of the role of archives.

¹⁸⁸ Available at <http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/materials/nationalresults2002.pdf>

72% of the total number of users stated that they were researching family history. These figures appear to show a large drop in the number of personal interest researchers and a corresponding rise in those using archives for education or employment compared to 2001. However, since the available choice of responses differs significantly between 2001 and 2002 it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions from these results.¹⁸⁹

The question exploring ways in which respondents believe archives contribute to society was not included in this survey.

Survey 2004¹⁹⁰

The stated “main purpose of visiting” an archive for respondents was:

- personal interest/ recreation: 51%
- formal education as a student/ researcher: 23%
- non-leisure personal or family business: 10%
- work connected to employment: 15%
- formal education as a teacher: 2%

60% of all respondents stated that they were researching family history. These results show a further marked drop in the number of users pursuing a personal interest or researching family history, and corresponding rise in the numbers involved in education or work connected to employment. However, analysis of the detailed data shows that low leisure usage in one or two regions was responsible for bringing down the overall averages, potentially due to a seasonal variation.¹⁹¹ It is therefore difficult to conclude that these changes are the result of genuine variations in the demographic or motivations of archive users.

In terms of how archives are viewed and valued, respondents felt that archives “contribute to society by”:

- providing opportunities for learning: 67% strongly agree, 32% agree
- preserving our culture and heritage: 85% strongly agree, 15% agree
- strengthening family and community identity: 45% strongly agree, 37% agree
- supporting administrative and business activity: 20% strongly agree, 35% agree
- supporting the rights of citizens: 34% strongly agree, 33% agree

This last category was included in the survey for the first time. Taken with the new category of “non-leisure personal or family business” as a reason for visiting archives in the 2002 survey, this perhaps suggests a growing awareness of the importance of using archives for evidential purposes. The options to “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statements on the value of archives for the first time in this survey make comparison with the 2001 survey problematic.

¹⁸⁹ For instance, users may have chosen the option which most closely represented their reason for visiting in 2001 and chosen a different option from those available in 2002, although their reason for visiting may have remained unchanged.

¹⁹⁰ I am very grateful to Charlotte Hodgson, Convenor of PSQG, for making the results of the 2004 *Survey* available to me. They are now also available at http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/materials/2004_national_visitors_survey_report.pdf.

¹⁹¹ This was particularly true of results for the London region, where there is a higher proportion of specialist repositories more likely to host academic researchers in larger numbers, and a lower proportion of local authority archives more likely to host recreational users. Only 41% of users at repositories in London were researching for personal interest or recreation, compared to over 60% in all other regions.

Survey 2006¹⁹²

Among the results highlighted in an “interesting findings” section were the number visiting archives for personal leisure/ recreation, which rose from 51% in 2004 to 67%. This figure was, however, similar to 2002 and lower than 2001, and does not therefore present proof of a sustained rise. Family history users rose correspondingly by 15% to 74%, and there was a 9% rise to 54% in the numbers “strongly agreeing” that archives “strengthened family and community identity.”

The stated “main purpose of visiting” an archive for respondents was:

- personal interest/ recreation: 67%
- formal education: 13.5%
- non-leisure personal or family business: 9.5%
- work connected to employment: 10%

These figures show only a slight variation in each category from those in the 2002 survey.

In terms of how archives are viewed and valued, respondents felt that archives “contribute to society by”:

- providing opportunities for learning: 64% strongly agree, 33% agree
- preserving our culture and heritage: 81% strongly agree, 18% agree
- strengthening family and community identity: 54% strongly agree, 35% agree
- supporting administrative and business activity: 20% strongly agree, 34% agree
- supporting the rights of citizens: 33% strongly agree, 33% agree

Once again, these results do not differ significantly from those obtained in previous years where this question was included.

Summary

Despite the difficulties in comparing the data under consideration across all four years of the survey, some conclusions have emerged. The overall trend since 2001, as represented in figure 2, has been towards a slight fall in the number of recreational users, and a slight increase in those using archives for education and learning. Note that owing to the changes in available responses from 2002 onwards, only data in the first two columns for 2001 has been included.

¹⁹² Available at http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/research_and_development/survey/survey_2006

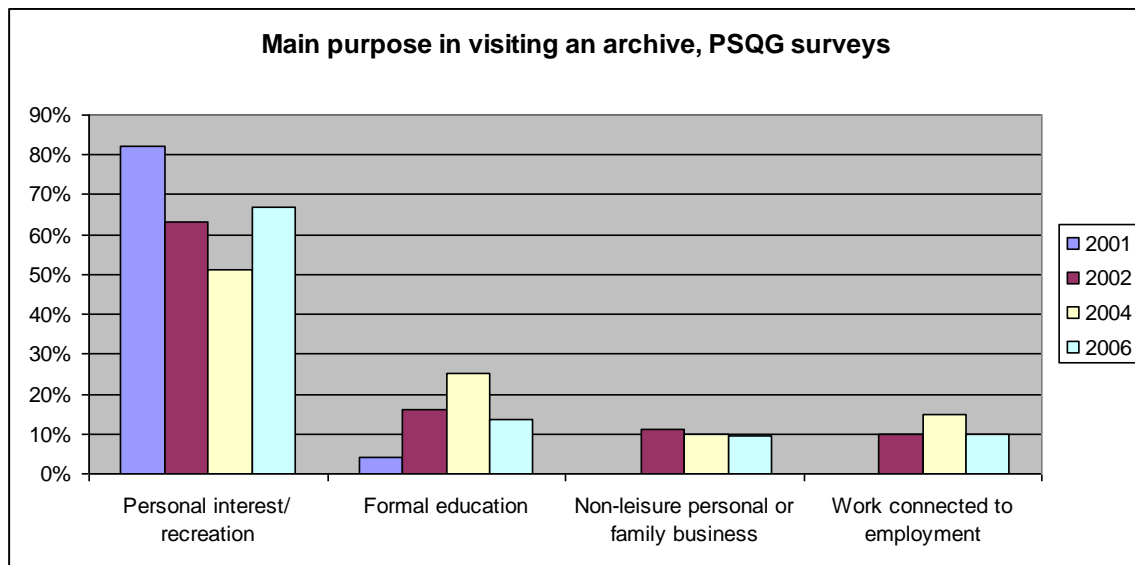


Figure 2: Main purpose for visiting for archive, PSQG 2001-6

There is also a discrepancy of approximately 10% in each survey between those visiting for recreational purposes and the greater number researching family history, shown in figure 3. This supports data from the interviews explored in chapter four, where the assumption that all family history users are hobbyists is challenged by a number of respondents. As well as professional researchers and those researching family history for an educational project, there is a likelihood that a proportion of family history researchers may actually be concerned with uncovering some kind of proof such as information on parentage or hereditary illnesses, as the PSQG convenor believes.¹⁹³ This trend is also mentioned by Horton and Spence with specific reference to the inclusion of the separate category of “non-leisure personal or family business” in the PSQG Survey from 2002.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ “There are many people who are looking at family history for evidential reasons - such as those who are adopted and looking for birth parents and siblings; those in care or brought up in children’s homes, ditto those trying to trace any hereditary illnesses, especially mental ones; here [South Wales] we also have people tracing death certificates to claim compensation for the deaths of mining relatives who died from pneumoconiosis.” Charlotte Hodgson: email of 6 Mar 2008 to the author.

¹⁹⁴ Horton and Spence, *Scoping the Economic and Social Impact of Archives*, 24 “...the pre-2002 categorisations neglected this element which although representing a fairly small proportion of overall use (11.1% in 2002) can be particularly significant in terms of consequences for the individual concerned.” For further reading on this theme, see Etherton, ‘The Role of Archives in the Perception of Self.’

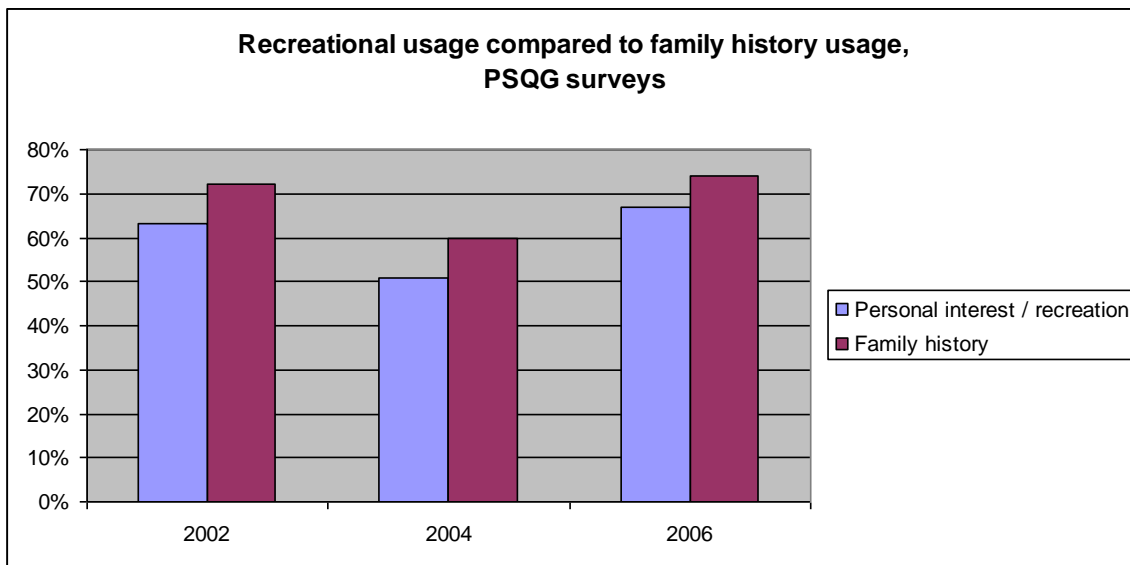


Figure 3: Recreational use of archives compared to family history usage, PSQG 2002-6

In terms of how the contribution of archives to society is perceived, there is little change over the years of the survey analysed. The numbers appreciating the role of archives in “supporting administrative and business activity” and “supporting the rights of citizens” are significantly lower than for other categories connected to heritage and learning. However, they are higher than they might be considering the views of archivists on the same questions as shown in the results of research into the impact of the HLF on the archives profession, examined later in this chapter. As is suggested in other sections of this content analysis, this aspect has also tended to be overlooked in advocacy for the archives sector.

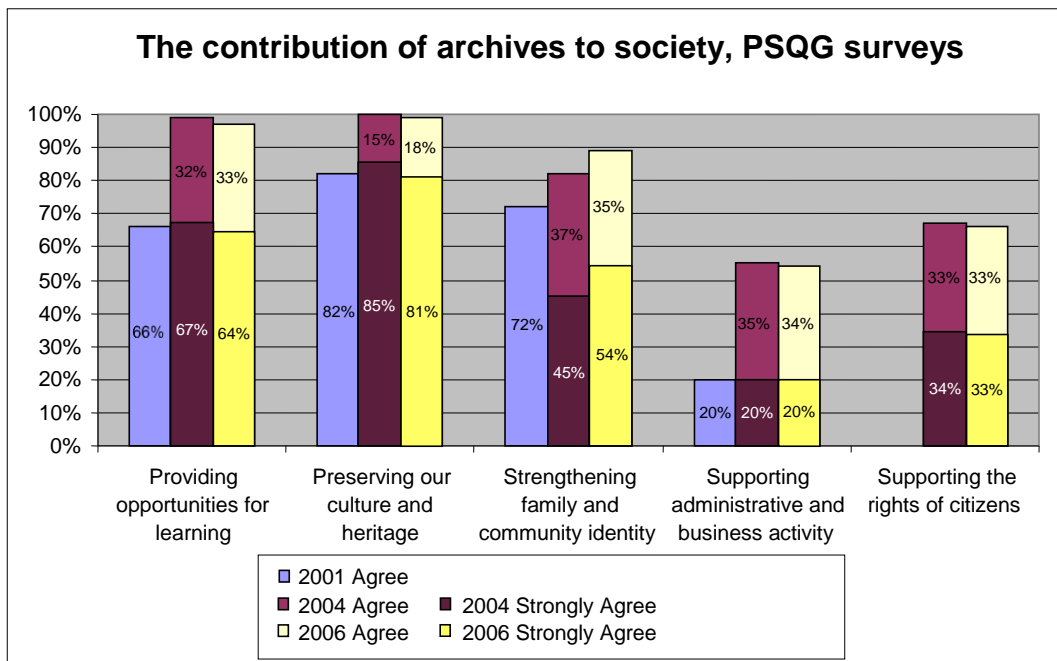


Figure 4: Perceived contributions of archives to society, PSQG 2001-6

The *Survey* contains a good deal of useful information despite some shortcomings, and is already well used.¹⁹⁵ This analysis shows again that there is interesting information on the motivations behind usage of archives which could potentially be used in working towards an advocacy strategy, particularly in conjunction with other figures, such as those from *Taking Part*, which examine other parts of the usage picture. However, there would also be scope to expand the survey and use it as the basis for further research. The questions seeking opinions on the contribution of archives to society are particularly interesting, but arguably don't go far enough. A way to strengthen the evidence base available to the sector, as was suggested as a priority in interviews, would be to add to these. One possibility would be to reinstate questions used in earlier surveys, such as that asked in 2001 regarding which areas of the cultural sector should receive public funding. Others could also be designed which attempt to uncover more about the value ascribed to the archives sector as well as the quality of the services provided.¹⁹⁶

Taking Part¹⁹⁷

Taking Part is an annual survey introduced by the DCMS in 2005 which measures participation across all parts of their remit, including the MLA sector. As such, using archives is considered as a leisure pursuit alongside sport, gambling and the theatre. The survey aims "...to help the Department and its partner bodies to better understand those who do, and do not, engage with its sectors," and the results are based upon 28,117 face to face interviews with respondents in England.¹⁹⁸ It measures levels of participation (although excludes those using archives for non-leisure purposes) and the accompanying reasons for participation and non-participation, rather than specifically inviting questions as to the perceived value of each activity. However, the fact that the survey is conducted across a section of the population rather than existing users in the manner of the PSQG *Survey* means that an insight into priorities and perceptions of value can be gleaned from, for example, reasons for non-use.

Annual Report 2005-6¹⁹⁹

The results show that 6% of adults in England had attended an archive in the past 12 months. Those aged between 16-24 years and 25-44 years showed significantly lower rates of attendance than those aged between 45-64 years and 65-74 years. Of most relevance to an attempt to extrapolate views on the value of archives are the reasons given for use and non-use of archives. Of those who used archives, the reasons for doing so were:

- family history: 37%
- local history: 15%
- hobby/ interest: 10%

¹⁹⁵ According to the PSQG convenor, who writes, "I think we have all found it surprising how successful the survey has been and it is certainly quoted in many articles and pieces of research." Charlotte Hodgson: email of 6 Mar 2008 to the author.

¹⁹⁶ This need to move on from attempts at market research which focus too overly on the "empirical" was mentioned as a priority by Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, *Interview*, 29/1/08.

¹⁹⁷ For further information and detailed survey reports, see http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/research_and_statistics/4828.aspx

¹⁹⁸ DCMS, *Taking Part*, Executive Summary, 6, available at http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/research/TPMay2007_1_ExecutiveSummary.pdf

¹⁹⁹ Available at http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/3682.aspx. The Archives chapter can be found at pages 48-55.

- registering a birth/ marriage/ death: 8%
- house history: 5%
- study: 3%
- voluntary work: 3%
- work: 2%
- helping someone else: 1%
- other: 15% (this included don't know, giving something to an archive and attending a social event)

For those who didn't use archives, the reasons given were:

- "no need to go": 50%
- "not really interested": 19%
- "never occurred to me": 14%

In other words, 83% of those surveyed believe that archives have nothing to offer them.

The chief validity issue with this survey from the sector's perspective is the exclusion of non-leisure users of archives, who potentially account for up to a third of users and whose reasons for use deserve consideration.²⁰⁰ This could be considered a flaw from the point of view of getting a picture of the totality of use across the sector, and could therefore have serious implications for the use of this data with government. And yet it has been stated that the status of the survey, as a designated National Statistic, "means that the information derived from it will be seen by politicians, decision-makers and funders as being of the highest quality and the most reliable."²⁰¹ Some within the sector have taken comfort from the fact that archives have been included in the survey at all.²⁰² However, the fact that using archives is seen purely as a leisure pursuit, that motives for use/ non-use are not explored in depth and there is no equivalent survey for non-leisure uses sends out a message which could potentially cause problems for the sector's attempts at proving value. This is a particularly pressing problem given the very high percentage of respondents for whom archives appear to hold no appeal.

AAC Evaluation

The available evaluation documents from AAC campaigns are analysed here separately from the outreach material produced by the campaign as they deal specifically with the public's view of the value of archives as distinct from the message promoted by the sector. Although these documents are aimed at the sector and at contributors to events from within the profession, the reports for the 2004 and 2005 campaigns are publicly available online.²⁰³ The value of the documents for this study is that they give the views of both event attendees and professionals on the campaign which can shed light on how the benefits of using archives are, and should be, promoted. Evaluation is also provided on the ways used to attract new users and how they responded. One potential drawback which I anticipated regarding the completeness of this data is that the campaigns were

²⁰⁰ DCMS, *Taking Part*, Executive Summary, 7, "The survey measures involvement in activities where the purpose is for recreation or leisure, including voluntary work. It excludes involvement in activities where the prime motivation is paid work or academic study." According to the PSQG *Survey* in 2006, only 67% of archives users described themselves as leisure users.

²⁰¹ Matty, *Making the Case*, 13.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 12, "The good news is that the survey includes some questions on archives."

²⁰³ Available at <http://www.archiveawareness.com/contributors/gettingstarted/>

widely acknowledged throughout the profession to have been successful, which I suspect may have reduced the impetus in some quarters to focus on areas for improvement.

*Impact Assessment and Evaluation Report 2004*²⁰⁴

The overall analysis of press coverage and circulation figures, and survey results of those attending events, concluded that “AAC had an effect on raising general awareness of archives in a positive way.”²⁰⁵ 40% of AAC participants had not visited an archive before, and the campaign therefore seems to have succeeded in attracting non-users. The report also states that “78% described their purpose in visiting as leisure/ recreation/fun compared to 50% from general visits to archives,” but since these visits were largely to events this is hardly surprising. Those who organised events were quoted as having “an overwhelmingly positive view of the association with the BBC *Who Do You Think You Are?* series, which attracted 4.7 million viewers similar in age and gender profile to usual archives visitors.”²⁰⁶ The report also includes a range of largely positive qualitative information gathered from organisers and events attendees. However, one feedback form from a participating repository stated “It needs to be developed beyond family history showing that archives are relevant in much broader terms to people’s lives.”²⁰⁷

*Impact Assessment and Evaluation Report 2005*²⁰⁸

The number of questionnaires returned from organisations and participants involved in this campaign was so small as to be considered statistically invalid. Despite this, the report highlights a couple of interesting issues. One of these is the suggestion that despite the campaign’s success in attracting participants, there are doubts as to whether it is having any impact on widening the demographic of traditional archive users.²⁰⁹ Those attending events were asked whether their previous perceptions of archives had changed: of those whose replies are included most are positive, with several mentioning that they now view archives as welcoming and friendly places.²¹⁰ Nevertheless, there is no evidence that a realisation of the reasons for using archives beyond recreation or personal interest formed a part of this change in perceptions.

Summary

This is the only example available for analysis where the advocacy attempt and the response to it can be directly compared in any way, despite the admitted statistical invalidity and lack of comprehensiveness of parts of the evaluation. The uncertainty mentioned already that the campaign’s narrow focus on family and recreational history had the potential to raise awareness and users of archives, but not necessarily among differing demographic groups to those represented by existing users, is echoed by the official evaluation. However, in order to draw further conclusions about the effects of the

²⁰⁴ Available at <http://www.archiveawareness.com/contributors/evaluation/>

²⁰⁵ AAC, *Impact Assessment and Evaluation Report 2004*, 5.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 20, feedback from the University of Wales, Swansea.

²⁰⁸ Available at http://www.archiveawareness.com/materials/aac_2005_evaluation_final.pdf

²⁰⁹ AAC, *Impact Assessment and Evaluation Report 2005*, 4, “...it is suggested that the campaign continues to find it easier to find new users and raise awareness of archives and archive services amongst what might be referred to as traditional, archival user groups rather than amongst those demographics more usually associated with non-use.”

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

campaign it would be necessary to obtain additional evaluation material, preferably in the form of raw data from respondents and participants.

Research into the impact of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

This project, begun in 2007 to examine whether the impact of the Heritage Lottery Fund has influenced the way archivists see their work, has relevance here as the only data known to me concerned with the views of archive professionals on the work they do and the value inherent within it.²¹¹ As such, it complements data on where the public place the value in archives, allowing comparison, potential insights into causation and ideas for further research. The data gathered for the project came via an online questionnaire, publicised to members of the archive profession, followed up by focus groups. The questions covered a number of areas including professional priorities, the skills needed by the archives workforce and the impact of the HLF, and clearly not all of the data gathered is relevant here. In terms of questions which dealt with the value of archives to society, I expected that responses may focus heavily on access, learning, and other areas strongly promoted by the HLF's aims. This was because a self-selecting group of respondents completed the online survey, many of whom presumably had experience of HLF projects; possibly those professionals whose interests and priorities lay in other areas would not have responded.

Using the same questions as used by the PSQG survey, the results of where archivists “strongly agreed” that value lay in archives was:

- providing opportunities for learning: 56%
- preserving our culture and heritage: 88%
- strengthening family and community identity: 29%
- supporting administrative and business activity: 47%
- supporting the rights of citizens: 40%²¹²

When the results were broken down by professional experience, only 18% of newly qualified archivists (those qualified less than 3 years) strongly agreed that archives had value in strengthening family and community identity and 23% felt they had a value in supporting the rights of citizens. The only statement which newly qualified archivists strongly agreed with in higher numbers than the overall average of respondents was “preserving our culture and heritage.”

²¹¹For brief information on the project, see http://www.ncaonline.org.uk/research_and_development/ncaucl_research_project/. I am extremely grateful to Louise Ray of the National Lottery Advisory Service for making data collected for the project available to me.

²¹²As with the PSQG Survey, respondents were given the choice of “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree” or “strongly disagree,” and could have chosen the same response for each option.

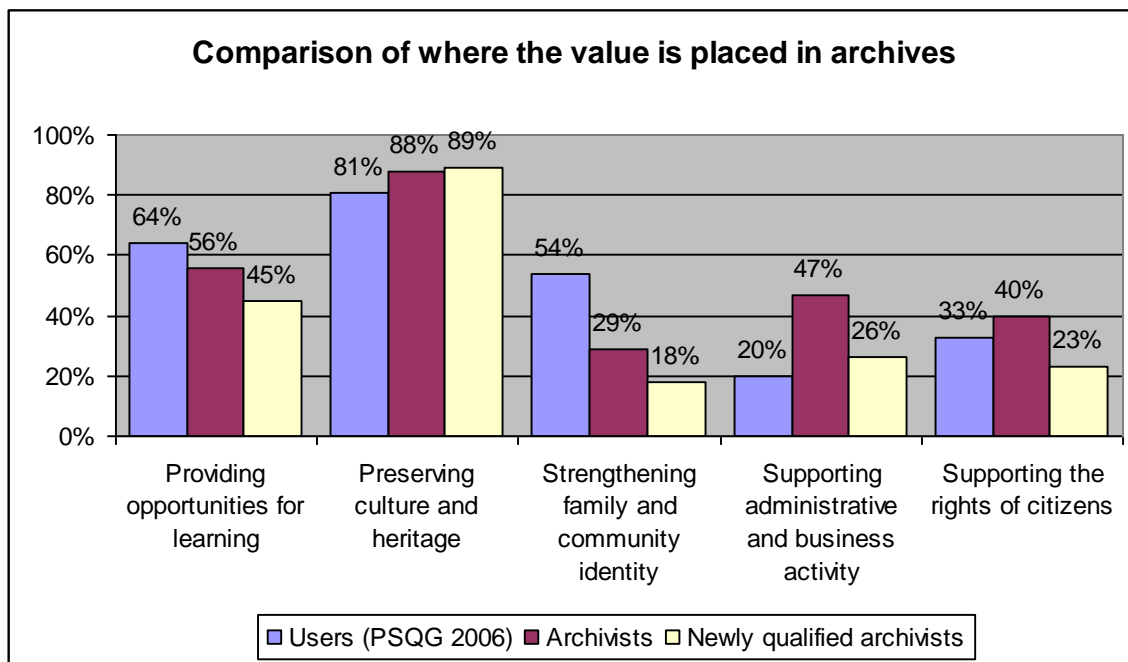


Figure 5: Perceptions of the value of archives, PSQG and HLF research

Another area covered by the survey was the perceived importance of different duties which could form part of the archivist’s role, both now and in the future. 58% of respondents felt that advocacy was either “important” or “very important” at the present time, and 75% felt it would be so in the future. However, out of eight choices of “perceived priorities” for a publicly funded archive, advocacy was ranked as the lowest priority both with circumstances as they are and if extra money became available. Around 10% of respondents felt it was a priority now, rising to 18% if the service was awarded extra funds.²¹³

This source of information is not yet complete, as qualitative work undertaken to follow up on the survey results has not yet been made available. It is also obviously slanted towards questions which can inform its research aims relating to the impact of the HLF. In many ways therefore it poses as many questions as it provides answers, many of which it is not possible to answer here. In broad terms, however, the results as a snapshot of views are useful and interesting even if unexplained. The tendency to see advocacy as relatively unimportant and to focus heavily on preserving heritage as the main value of archives can both shed light on priorities for the sector. The discrepancies between respondents to this survey and PSQG as to where the value in archives is perceived to lie is also unexpected and interesting. One might expect users, who often visit archives with one topic or objective in mind, to have a narrower view of the value of archives to society than professionals who should have more opportunities to view the totality.

Examples of areas in which the views of users and views of professionals significantly differ have been particularly useful as a point of exploration in interviews. For example, when I asked respondents why they thought so few newly qualified archivists (23%) strongly agreed that archives had a value in supporting the rights of citizens, NCA Chair

²¹³ The other seven available priorities were onsite user services, cataloguing, preservation and conservation, outreach, advice and support, online services, education and lifelong learning and developing new audiences.

Jonathan Pepler admitted surprise, his only possible explanation being that respondents may have exercised caution in choosing “agree” rather than “strongly agree” with the statements.²¹⁴ Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan believed it reflected how rarely archives are used for purposes connected to accountability and citizens’ rights on a day to day basis, with the lack of broader awareness attributable to the fact that “often archivists below the top level of an organisation don’t know what their parent body stands for.”²¹⁵ The opinion of Vic Gray, former MLA board member and Vice-Chair of the Archives Task Force, was that it reflected the expectations of people entering the archives profession, that too often they had “no engagement with the community value” of archives, seeing it as an afterthought in comparison with the technical skills contained in the work.²¹⁶ Opinions such as these have all been useful in exploring wider issues connected to professional value and advocacy.

Overall Findings

The findings from this content analysis suggest that there are no clear shared priorities for advocacy for the sector as a whole, and similarly that the message received by others regarding the value of archives is not uniform. This ties in with comments made in several interviews about the piecemeal nature of advocacy efforts made by the sector up until now.²¹⁷ Different agencies and organisations have been shown working to their own priorities and have been responded to accordingly. Examples of this include the focus of MLA on advocating for areas common to libraries and museums as well as archives, and the decision of TNA to concentrate on proving their value to government. It is therefore difficult to generalise about why advocacy priorities are as they are for the sector as a whole as opposed to individual cases. However, a number of interesting trends and issues have emerged as a result of this analysis which have an impact on the sector, and will form the basis of more detailed exploration later on in this study.

- For the wider public, particularly non-users of archives, the main problem emerging from these findings is still a lack of visibility, coupled with the fact that where visibility does exist it is often limited to the uses of archives highlighted by television programmes. The results of the Taking Part survey suggest that a message of the relevance of archives is not getting through to many people, and the Archives Awareness Campaign could be said to have had only limited success in highlighting the broad nature of that relevance. Where people have had first hand experience of using archives, the broad nature of their relevance generally appears to be better understood, as the PSQG surveys show. However, it is questionable whether focussing outreach attempts on increasing user numbers, as it the priority in some quarters, is exacerbating the situation whereby non-users are not having their assumptions about the sector challenged.
- In terms of the message reaching government, a similar picture emerges in that there appears to be no one coherent view of the value of archives resulting from advocacy

²¹⁴ *Interview with Jonathan Pepler, 25/1/08.*

²¹⁵ *Interview with Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, 29/1/08.*

²¹⁶ *Interview with Vic Gray, 5/2/08.*

²¹⁷ For example, Jonathan Pepler outlined how the NCA had “always done odds and bits of advocacy work” but efforts up until now had been “a one-off, not a consistent programme of developing a range of contacts”, *Interview with Jonathan Pepler, 25/1/08.*

attempts. According to Natalie Ceeney, TNA's attempts to establish their importance with central government have been proven to be successful, but I can find no evidence that this has influenced the government's view on the rest of the sector.²¹⁸ Instead, the tendency seems to have been for the bulk of the sector to be viewed as a small part of MLA which is in turn a small part of DCMS, with the notion of archives and archive professionals as spanning both successful information management initiatives and the cultural heritage aspects of the profession not generally being recognised.²¹⁹

- An unexpected element thrown up by these results was the potential influence of professionals on the ground on the way in which the public in particular value archives. Campaigns such as AAC are dependent on, and to a large extent shaped by, the input and commitment of archive professionals. And yet almost double the number of users strongly agree that archives have a value in supporting family and community identity as archivists. If archivists are not able to understand and promote the inherent importance of archives to potential users then the work of NCA and others to influence government could be partially undermined.

The overall conclusion suggested by this analysis is that the archives sector does have a problem with demonstrating value, and that the notion of an intrinsic relevance to society cannot be shown as coming across to the majority of the public, or sections within government, at all. The sector has responded to opportunities, such as the increasing popularity of social history, and the public have in turn responded to outreach attempts like AAC. However, in the absence of a cohesive strategic plan for promoting the public value of archives, efforts such as these, and similarly participation in MLA initiatives focussed on the instrumental outcomes achievable through archives, can sometimes appear as short term opportunism. My aim in this chapter was to consider the advocacy priorities of the archive sector and whether there was a link between these priorities and its value in the eyes of the public. One possible conclusion emerging from the data studied is that both advocacy and the public's response to it have emerged in a rather haphazard fashion. Therefore, the fact that consistent advocacy is *not* a priority links to the sector's value, or lack thereof, in the eyes of the public. The following chapters will examine some of these issues, and the ways in which they could be addressed, in more detail.

²¹⁸ With reference to the continuum between supporting government and bringing history to life, she states "The government now get it, with TNA they see it in the correct way." As an example, she cites the fact that TNA were asked to sit on the review into the HMRC data scandal, which she claims would not have happened in the past, *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07.

²¹⁹ For instance, I could find no mention in DCMS publications such as the *Taking Part* survey of the broader outcomes to which archives may contribute. David Lammy, Culture Minister, in his speech to the 2007 NCA conference stated, "We are putting in place the foundations for a bolder future for archives - that recognises that there will be increasing demand *from both educational and leisure perspectives*," [my italics.]

Chapter 4: The Value of Archives to Society

The sources examined in the content analysis allow some insight into both the vision the archive sector presents of its own value and purpose and the way in which that value and purpose is perceived by others. My next research activity is to examine the views of my interviewees on the value of archives to society. I aim to see if any consensus emerges which could eventually form the basis of a strategic vision for promoting societal value, with a view to improving on the more indiscriminate attempts at promotion which emerged at the conclusion of the previous chapter.

Data from those interviewed includes not just a variety of views from the individuals themselves but also the views of those they may – formally or informally - represent as stakeholders, including other professionals, the public and policymakers. This chapter reports on the views of the interviewees, and can therefore not be comprehensive. There may well be other elements of the value of archives which were not mentioned by interviewees, and a number of areas where aspects of these values overlap. As my aim was to represent these values as presented to me, I have identified these areas of overlap rather than edit them out. There were also many instances where discussions on the value of archives veered into other areas which would be research topics in themselves, such as appraisal policy or the role of professional bodies. Valuable as these areas may be for further research, I have attempted in this account to remain focused on the question of societal value. Each of the elements of the role of archives proposed by one or more interviewees in this context will be discussed below.

Evidential Value

Evidential value was defined in the literature review as “the value of records or archives when used to verify, substantiate or shed light on events for reasons other than cultural understanding, such as protection of citizens’ individual or collective rights, furthering scientific understanding or supporting the course of justice.” The majority of my interviewees mentioned evidential value as an important part of the role of archives without prompting. There was a general appreciation that despite the relatively small numbers of individuals for whom it is perceived using archives as evidence makes a fundamental difference, it is nevertheless of real value to society. John Holden, Head of Culture at Demos, described archives as “fundamental to manipulating democracy,” suggesting that an interesting topic for further research would be the measure of “utility against use”: assessing the impact on the lives of those who use archives for evidential purposes even though they may frequent repositories in relatively small numbers.²²⁰ Moreover, figures from the PSQG *Survey* suggest that numbers of those using archives for evidential purposes are not insignificant.²²¹

²²⁰ *Interview with John Holden, 31/7/07.* This echoes the view expressed in the NCA publication *Changing the Future of Our Past* that “For a minority, their quest for personal identity is far more urgent and immediate... the existence of relevant archives can change their lives; perhaps even affect their mental health...” 10.

²²¹ Around 10% of archives users documented in the PSQG *Survey, 2002-2006*, state their main purpose in visiting an archive as “non-leisure personal or family business.” There is also the strong possibility that a proportion of those visiting to pursue “formal education” or “work connected to employment” may be engaged in activities such as epidemiological research or professional research into legal issues as a result of which archives used as evidence may have a significant impact on people’s lives.

However, although the value of archives as evidence in individual cases was unquestioned, uncertainty was expressed by several interviewees as to whether this alone would be enough to justify continued large scale investment in archives in the eyes of the public. Bruce Jackson, Chair of the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government, warned against overstating the evidential role in a UK context, highlighting the fact that “the ‘need to know’ is on a more individual basis” here than in many other countries, and that need is small.²²² This question of whether the ‘need to know’ and issues of public trust more generally are important to UK citizens was one on which it was difficult to find agreement. In contrast to the critical nature of archives in less stable situations worldwide, Jonathan Pepler, Chair of NCA, noted that “the idea of protecting democratic freedoms rarely surfaces in this country.”²²³ Natalie Ceeney, however, felt that despite the absence of large scale human rights disasters in the UK, “only the presence of archives underpinned by good records management gives the public the confidence that the truth will out in cases where mistakes do happen,”²²⁴ a view supported in part by literature on archives and human rights.²²⁵

Those working in or with local archives services in the UK were particularly unlikely to see the role of archives in the protection of rights as a priority, despite recognising its importance. This view was usually based on the holdings and day to day usage of records in these repositories, and the fact that they saw limited use for purposes connected to evidence and accountability, such as responding to FoI requests.²²⁶ Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, the NCA’s press and publicity officer, stated “Records which could be used for accountability aren’t usually with the archives: they’re with the parent body. Accountability rarely goes back beyond 20-30 years...that’s why people aren’t interested. So with FoI there’s a currency problem: we just don’t hold the stuff.”²²⁷ Bruce Jackson also believed that “the public aren’t taking FoI to their hearts,” and that the lack of focus on human rights in a UK context made it unlikely that a closer alliance between the recordkeeping profession and the human rights lobby would advance societal understanding of the importance of archives.²²⁸

²²² *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07. He explained “Britain will never be like Kosovo...records have never been a way of control in Britain.” It is worth noting that Annex H of the Archives Task Force Report, available at http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//A/atf_annex_h_pdf_5494.pdf, comprises a summary of online media coverage of archives, 1999-2003, arranged by theme. The section “Archives as evidence” is a large one, but the vast majority of stories relate to overseas regimes.

²²³ *Interview with Jonathan Pepler*, 25/1/08. In a worldwide context, he acknowledged that “most human rights abuses are accompanied by widespread destructions of records.”

²²⁴ *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07.

²²⁵ See for example Forde, “There is no room for complacency in the UK where opportunities still abound for the denial of fundamental rights to groups or individuals as a result of poor record-keeping, misunderstanding of the importance of records of actions and decisions, and the destruction of records whether deliberately or in error,” ‘We Must Remember Our Past,’ 120.

²²⁶ This view is supported by data on the perceived value of archives by users responding to the 2006 PSQG Survey, where only 33% “strongly agreed” that archives held a value in “supporting the rights of citizens” (a further 33% “agreed”). Only 40% of archivists responding to the survey prepared for research into the impact of the HLF on the archives profession strongly agreed with the same statement, a fact attributed by Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan to the fact that “the average archive just doesn’t do that much with accountability,” *Interview*, 29/1/08.

²²⁷ *Interview with Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan*, 29/1/08.

²²⁸ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07. Vic Gray echoed this view, stating “I’m just not sure the public are hugely interested in FoI,” *Interview with Vic Gray*, 5/2/08.

However, the view from The National Archives was very different. Issues connected to accountability are its priority, as discussed in the content analysis, and the exploitation of historical archives is viewed solely as part of a continuum alongside current information management.²²⁹ Perhaps because of its role supporting the management of current government information,²³⁰ public trust issues which do surface are likely to be high profile and seized on as such by politicians and the media, as shown by the 2007 scandal involving missing HMRC data.²³¹ Natalie Ceeney, representing TNA, was involved in the official review into this episode, and believes that “information accountability is critical to the government: it leads to public trust.”²³² Episodes such as this are not paralleled except in rare cases in local authorities or other archive holding bodies, about which Natalie Ceeney freely admitted she was far less knowledgeable. However, she remained adamant that FoI is considered an important issue, and that the “need to be a trusted underpinning body,” supporting accountability and evidence, was relevant to local authorities just as to central government. Commenting on the relative merits of different aspects of the value of archives to society, she insisted “whether you’re talking philosophically or pragmatically, the evidence argument wins over cultural heritage.”²³³

There is a possibility that the discrepancies between interviewees over the perceived importance of archives to evidence and accountability could lie partly in their interpretation of my questions: some replied with reference only to the priorities of their own organisations; others spoke with reference to the wider priorities of bodies such as government or local authorities. This raises wider issues regarding the suggested tendencies of many within the archive sector both to focus predominantly on their own experiences, and indeed collections, rather than on the bigger picture, and to define “evidential” in narrow terms. Both of these will be explored further in later chapters.

There is no data available which settles conclusively the question of whether FoI requests nationally are falling or rising.²³⁴ However, three years after the implementation of the Act the Information Commissioner’s Office reports a sharp increase in the number of people who claim it has increased their confidence in public authorities, believing that the ability to access information promotes accountability and transparency.²³⁵ In addition, 12% of respondents to a survey commissioned by the ICO in 2007 had requested to see

²²⁹ As stated by Natalie Ceeney, “The profession isn’t archives, the profession is information management. FoI, cultural heritage and recordkeeping are all subsets on a continuum...it’s fine to promote archives, as long as it’s in the context of evidence and accountability,” *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07.

²³⁰ TNA’s website states “The National Archives is at the heart of information policy - setting standards and supporting innovation in information and records management across the UK,” <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/?source=about>. This is in contrast to the role of many other archives services, which are run separately from their parent body’s records and information management operations and therefore more removed from accountability and public trust issues.

²³¹ In the autumn of 2007, computer discs containing personal details of over 7 million families in receipt of child benefit were lost in transit between HMRC and National Audit Office premises. The story led the national news for several days. For further details see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7103828.stm.

²³² *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07. In turn, she claims, this leads to trust in the records preserved as archives and therefore to “the value of the historical archive.”

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ However, a study is currently underway at the Constitution Unit, University College London, which aims to evaluate the impact of FoI in the UK. Further details of the latest research are available at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/foidp/research/Evaluation/index.html>

²³⁵ Over 80% in 2007, compared with 58% in 2005. Further information is available at http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/pressreleases/2007/three_years_on_finall.pdf. Accessed 22 April 2008.

information held by government or other public authorities, compared with 5% in 2006.²³⁶ Despite these figures, it seems difficult to claim without further evidence that the issue of records and accountability is sufficiently close to the hearts of policymakers and the public that greater awareness of the evidential importance of archives would see it accepted as the foremost reason to keep and value them. As Bruce Jackson suggested, so often archives in this context “are only important when people need them.”²³⁷ Potentially, however, there may be room to steer a middle ground between the views expressed by my interviewees. Although in a UK context, particularly in some types of repository, issues connected to evidential value will be less significant, there is perhaps scope to research the impact of archives used in this way more than has been done up to this point.²³⁸

Another theme raised in both literature and interviews as deserving further consideration is the role and impact of archives as reference sources in contemporary debate and policymaking, the notion that evidence found in archives can contribute to the immediate political process. The belief of Pat Thane, Director of London University’s Centre for Contemporary British History, is that “In almost every area of policy, public debate about current options would be improved by knowledge and understanding drawn from the archives,”²³⁹ and she highlights the importance of recent archives as well as older records to this process.²⁴⁰ This has been tried to some degree at a local government level in the US, with archivists alerting policymakers to documents of relevance to “continuing public dialogue.”²⁴¹ However, Pat Thane herself admits that “Policy is always made in a hurry: archives are not the only thing overlooked.”²⁴² Justin Cavernelis-Frost of MLA expressed doubt that this use of archives would attract much interest, except potentially from journalists.²⁴³ Therefore although there may be scope for some influence on policy, which could make a difference in a limited number of cases, the case for widespread impact on society from this use of archives is not proven.

“Your Place in the World”: Socio-cultural Value

²³⁶ Figures available at

http://www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/corporate/research_and_reports/ico_annual_track_2007_individuals_report.pdf. Accessed 22 April 2008.

²³⁷ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07. This relates to the view of Barbara Reed, writing in *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*, 101, that “at times of crisis, however they are defined – personally, locally, nationally or internationally – we turn to or seek authoritative records to support or deny actions and provide us with accounts of what happened, when and who knew about it.” For many UK citizens, however, this type of crisis may occur only once in a lifetime.

²³⁸ This view was supported by a number of my interviewees, including Pat Thane, “People don’t see archives as having a role in human rights or any issues like that, so archivists need to speak up more...it could be relevant to the UK, there’s a need to try,” *Interview*, 27/11/07, and Jonathan Pepler, “We could definitely make more of the link with FoI and empowerment,” *Interview*, 25/1/08. Proctor, Cook and Williams note in the preface to *Political Pressure and the Archival Record* that “Rather than just paying lip service to the notion of information access as a democratic marker, we may have to become proactive in defence of that ideal.”

²³⁹ Pat Thane, Speech to the NCA Conference *Evidence of Our Value: Our Value as Evidence*, 22 February 2006.

²⁴⁰ *Interview with Pat Thane*, 27/11/08.

²⁴¹ See <http://vermont-archives.org/govhistory/governance/index.htm> for details of the “Continuing Issues” programme of Vermont State Archives.

²⁴² *Interview with Pat Thane*, 27/11/07.

²⁴³ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07.

The socio-cultural value of archives as defined in the literature review was taken from Terry Cook, and referred to the ability of archives to provide “a sense of identity, locality, history, culture, and personal and collective memory.”²⁴⁴ This notion, believed by him to encapsulate the societal value of archives, was described by Justin Cavernelis-Frost as “Your Place in the World.”²⁴⁵ Socio-cultural value in an archives context is a difficult concept to define, and can encompass, amongst other aspects, a sense of self, community cohesion, and a broad sense of wellbeing. There are inevitable overlaps between socio-cultural value and other views put forward for the value of archives, both in the research interviews and in the literature. For example, the importance of individual wellbeing has been cited with reference to the ability of archives to engender a sense of self or of one’s role as part of a cohesive community. However, in other contexts this notion can veer towards the instrumental, with “wellbeing” being used to describe a more “tick box” approach of engagement with archives providing people with a way to pass their time.

The responses from my interviewees showed that no other view of the importance of archives received such widespread agreement. The view of Roy Clare, Chief Executive of MLA, is that “without archives there would be no real sense of history, or our place within it.”²⁴⁶ Jonathan Pepler also stated that without archives, “how else would you know how you got where you are? And therefore where you’re going tomorrow.”²⁴⁷ Pat Thane believed that “the main value to society is the ability to reconstruct the past. Without archives we can have no sense of who we are.”²⁴⁸ Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan spoke of the main value of archives as “a sense of identity: the ability to root yourself in time and place.”²⁴⁹ This notion of the ability of archives to engender a sense of self, time and place is also seen as key by its stakeholders, according to Bruce Jackson. He speaks of elected members and those in charge of local authorities viewing the preservation of archives in the public domain as “preserving the historic soul of an area.”²⁵⁰ In addition, this view of the role of archives appears to be shared by large numbers of users as well as forming part of the official agenda for archives via DCMS and MLA. The number of respondents to the PSQG *Survey* believing that archives have a value in “strengthening family and community identity” rose by 17% in 5 years.²⁵¹ One factor forming a discrepancy with this overall picture is the views of archivists quoted in the recent research into the impact of the HLF on the archives profession. Only 29% of archivists, and a mere 18% of those recently qualified, strongly agreed with the above statement, compared to 54% of users, a factor for which I can find no apparent explanation.

In terms of the practical manifestations of this recognition of the socio-cultural value of archives, recent thinking and writing has attempted to promote the importance of archives

²⁴⁴ Cook, ‘Archival Science and Postmodernism,’ 18.

²⁴⁵ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07. He continued “We need to help people feel proud of their past – who else will do that if not for museums, libraries and archives?”

²⁴⁶ Roy Clare: email of 21 Feb 2008 to the author. He goes on to state that in recent years “world events have highlighted the need for people to make surroundings and lives through exploring sense of place and identity.”

²⁴⁷ *Interview with Jonathan Pepler*, 25/1/08.

²⁴⁸ *Interview with Pat Thane*, 27/11/07.

²⁴⁹ *Interview with Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan*, 29/1/08.

²⁵⁰ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07.

²⁵¹ In the 2001 *Survey*, 72% of respondents agreed with this statement. By 2006, the figure was 89%. Horton and Spence note that the association of archives with “meeting community needs” has, albeit only recently, “received wide acceptance at the service delivery level,” *Scoping the Economic and Social Impact of Archives*, 15.

services engaging with communities.²⁵² Jonathan Pepler spoke in our interview of the “need for archives to latch more onto the place shaping agenda”²⁵³ and Justin Cavernelis-Frost of the need to “engage people with a sense of place who haven’t been long in a place.”²⁵⁴ There was less clear agreement on the role of archives in healing divided communities, a subject which has received considerable attention in recent literature, with reference largely to countries overseas. The communities agenda would potentially provide the scope for a greater focus on this issue with regard to troubled communities within Britain. However, none of my interviewees volunteered it unprompted as a definitive aspect of the value of archives. Vic Gray typified several responses, saying “There just isn’t enough evidence yet for the healing and building communities role for archives. It’s a beguiling rhetoric, when you hear people speak who believe in it, and it sounds convincing, but when it comes to deeper social problems people want hard evidence.”²⁵⁵

Despite broad agreement about the importance of the socio-cultural value of archives, this issue of lack of evidence emerged as a problem, particularly in discussions with those professionals whose working lives frequently put them in the position of having to justify their remit in terms of outcomes.²⁵⁶ Caution was also expressed about the wisdom of focusing on the importance of cultural heritage and the value of archives to communities in a vacuum. Natalie Ceeney warned that “the cultural heritage arguments [for keeping archives] won’t help archives to exist in 30 years time”, that if the profession doesn’t prioritise information management and in particular the management of digital records, “there’ll be no culture to exploit.”²⁵⁷ Therefore, despite overwhelming support for the socio-cultural value of archives, there are strong arguments for maintaining a focus on the whole continuum.

Instrumental Value

In common with the rest of the cultural sector, the archives profession since 1997 has had to engage with the new concept of instrumental value in addition to the more familiar evidential and cultural values.²⁵⁸ Defined as “the wider social and economic contributions the sector makes to the public realm,”²⁵⁹ instrumental value has received particular attention in local authority and DCMS contexts but was only suggested as a component

²⁵² Two recent examples are Andrew Flinn’s article ‘Community Histories, Community Archives’ and Vic Gray’s speech on community archives at the Society of Archivists 2007 Conference.

²⁵³ *Interview with Jonathan Pepler*, 25/1/08.

²⁵⁴ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07. Interestingly, the valuation study undertaken by Jura Consultants into Bolton’s Museums, Libraries and Archives found that “it was considered by ethnic groups in particular that the archives had a critical role in future of reflecting the changing face of Bolton culturally,” 31.

²⁵⁵ *Interview with Vic Gray*, 5/2/08.

²⁵⁶ Such as Roy Clare, who spoke of the need for the archives sector to “contribute to the communities agenda” as a priority, *Interview*, 21/1/08 and Bruce Jackson, who expressed the view from a local authority perspective that the sector has already “demonstrated worth by showing ourselves supporting communities,” *Interview*, 15/11/07.

²⁵⁷ *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07.

²⁵⁸ Holden, in *Capturing Cultural Value*, 19, writes “When New Labour came to power, a set of socially instrumental outcomes was added: in addition to regeneration and the ‘creative economy’, culture was expected to reduce crime, promote lifelong learning and improve the nation’s health.”

²⁵⁹ Matty, *Making the Case*, 6.

of the value of archives by a small number of my interviewees.²⁶⁰ Bruce Jackson was one who spoke of the “main agenda of importance to local authorities at the moment” as “wellbeing”, encompassing amongst other aspects strong communities and “keeping people from needing social care.” He concluded that in the context of “strong and prosperous communities,”²⁶¹ “archives are able to tick many of the boxes for performance indicators.”²⁶² There are of course numerous other attributes of the instrumental value of archives in addition to wellbeing, including tourism, regeneration, education and literacy and social inclusion.

Learning is one outcome enabled by using archives which was mentioned in interviews in connection with both their instrumental and socio-cultural value, demonstrating again the difficulties inherent in characterising values. Although many professionals are keen to engage with the education agenda and can see its role in benefiting young people and communities, it tended to be characterised by most interviewees as a secondary rather than fundamental reason to keep archives. This appears at odds with the MLA stance, of strongly emphasising the themes of learning and information provision which archives share with museums and libraries.²⁶³ Indeed, Roy Clare’s response when asked for his view on the ability of archives to contribute to democracy made no mention of records management, FoI or archives used as evidence, instead claiming “archives can and do play a significant role in supporting the teaching of democratic values and citizenship through the national curriculum.”²⁶⁴ This stance was criticised by other respondents, including Bruce Jackson, who argued “Where MLA have gone wrong is to assume it’s all about learning when it isn’t. Learning is a good spin off, but we don’t preserve records for learning.”²⁶⁵

Whilst not wishing to deny that genuine and meaningful impacts, for example on education or health, can result at an instrumental level from engagement with archives, caution was expressed by a number of interviewees as to the wisdom of promoting these alleged spin off benefits of the archives offer in a way that could obfuscate their ‘true’ value.²⁶⁶ It was also noted in literature that the public’s perception of archives could be devalued by advocacy based on outcomes which could equally be delivered by other agencies.²⁶⁷ The consensus is therefore possibly that learning about oneself, one’s history

²⁶⁰ Referring to the cultural sector as a whole, Holden notes that the requirement to justify value in instrumental terms is particularly acute for local authorities, “even where targets refer to cultural activities, they are often expressed in terms of efficiency, cost-per-user and audience diversity, rather than discussed in terms of cultural achievement,” *Capturing Cultural Value*, 13. See Matty, *Making the Case*, for an overview of the applicability of instrumental value to the archives sector.

²⁶¹ The title of a 2006 Local Government White Paper.

²⁶² *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07.

²⁶³ *Interview with Roy Clare*, 21/1/08. The “core value” of the MLA sector is also described as being “the provision of knowledge” by Holden and Jones, *Knowledge and Inspiration*, 22.

²⁶⁴ Roy Clare: email of 21 Feb to the author.

²⁶⁵ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07.

²⁶⁶ Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, for example, spoke of the need to focus promotional attempts on impacts such as the power of uncovering personal heritage from archives, rather than more generic outcomes such as learning new skills, *Interview*, 29/1/08.

²⁶⁷ Weil, in *Reinventing the Museum*, 343, raises this issue with regard to the museum community, “The museum seeking to articulate the ways in which it attends to have an effect on its target community would be wise to observe one caution: that it concentrate on those object-related outcomes that are most distinct to museums and not inadvertently undermine its unique importance by describing outcomes that might as easily be achieved by some other organisation.” Bruce Jackson acknowledged the relevance of this argument with relation to the wellbeing agenda.

and one's community is of vital importance, and that this is a value of the archives and wider MLA sector which indeed needs to be recognised and promoted. However, it was felt that expressing the value of archives predominantly in terms of educational outcomes or allowing the existence of common values such as learning across the MLA sector to cloud debate over the unique attributes of archives is perhaps something that should be resisted.²⁶⁸

Personal Heritage Value

The recreational uses of archives and intrinsic value to the individual from engaging in research as a leisure pursuit are surprisingly difficult to characterise. The literature review has already noted the folly of assuming all apparent leisure users are hobbyists, and Nick Barratt, seen by many as a doyen of the recreational history community following his appearance on family and local history television programmes, is at pains to stress his preferred definition of "personal heritage," described as investigating one's own circumstances.²⁶⁹ This notion was highlighted by several interviewees, including Bruce Jackson who argued "When we talk about leisure, we need to be careful we don't just mean frippery. All leisure is about wellbeing, whether physical or social."²⁷⁰ The importance of personal heritage was also highlighted in the Archives Task Force Report, which stated "The exploration of personal history and identity should be the right of every citizen."²⁷¹ Statistics from the PSQG *Surveys* show approximately one in seven family history researchers does not consider themselves to be researching for personal interest or recreation, and the number of self-declared recreational users has fallen by 16% in five years.²⁷²

However, there are doubtless a significant number of archives users who would cite recreational enjoyment over personal wellbeing as their prime reason for engagement. This use of archives was mentioned by my interviewees as a value predominantly in a promotional context, based on the numbers involved. Vic Gray, for example, cautioned "We shouldn't be too dismissive of the *Who Do You Think You Are?* stuff. Even DCMS has admitted it hadn't been alert enough to follow up on that potential."²⁷³ Clearly, that which is important to the public will be taken seriously by policymakers and professionals, as well as other stakeholders such as the media. Interviewees, particularly those who engage with leisure users on a regular basis, saw it as important to take account of that perceived value, and not to dismiss recreational use too easily.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ Similarly, although data such as that gathered in the PSQG *Survey* on the economic impact on local areas of visits to archives repositories is useful to have, there are risks involved in disseminating or promoting it in a way which encourages professionals and users to view the value of archives predominantly in those terms.

²⁶⁹ Barratt, 'Memory, History and Social Networks.' This theme is explored in depth in Etherton, 'The Role of Archives in the Perception of Self.'

²⁷⁰ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07.

²⁷¹ MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, 19.

²⁷² The number of archive users researching family history, 2002-2006, averages around 70%, but the number using archives for "personal heritage or recreation" averages around 60%. This last figure fell from 83% in 2001 to 67% in 2006.

²⁷³ *Interview with Vic Gray*, 5/2/08. Bruce Jackson also agreed that "politicians are swayed by the levels of engagement by family historians," *Interview*, 15/11/07.

²⁷⁴ Bruce Jackson believed the family history lobby to be a recognised and valuable force for the archives cause at a central and local government level, *Interview*, 15/11/07; Jonathan Pepler spoke of the importance of family and local history in "feeding the media what they want," *Interview*, 25/1/08.

However, the importance of not conflating use with value was also raised, and the wisdom questioned of advocating for archives based on current trends rather than a more strategically thought out notion of value to society.²⁷⁵ These issues will be explored further in the following chapters.

Non-use Value

Non-use values emerged from the interviews as a significant factor in advocating for the value of archives. In the context of the wider cultural sector, Holden writes, “Non-use values provide one set of reasons for supporting forms of culture that do not command instant, widespread popularity or commercial return.”²⁷⁶ Both the archives and wider MLA sectors have in recent years been the subject of studies attempting to assess their public value using stated preference techniques, in which the non-use values ascribed to archives have been significant.²⁷⁷ Bequest value in particular is also invoked frequently by archive professionals in debates over issues such as appraisal policy or preservation priorities.

John Holden described bequest value in our interview as “the USP of archives: you don’t know when data is going to turn into knowledge.”²⁷⁸ Bruce Jackson stressed the importance of existence value from the perspective of elected members in local authorities, saying, “there’s a huge issue of selling the family silver: the notion that when it’s gone it’s gone.”²⁷⁹ However, there was not total agreement with this stance, particularly from representatives of MLA who viewed the valuing of archives from the perspective of non-users and future generations as contrary to their stated priority of focusing on the needs of users and would-be users.²⁸⁰ Bearman makes the suggestion that the value of archives rests with “the contribution we make to the continuity of culture, by connecting the present with the recent past, not by passively conserving the evidence of a distant past for the unmeasurable benefit of some equally remote future.”²⁸¹ This concept of the continuity of culture could perhaps be the basis of a compromise: rather than non-use value being accepted and promoted *per se*, the sector could promote preservation for future users in conjunction with the enabling of individuals to understand their place in the world at present. Most interesting, however, is the suggestion emerging from studies that in many cases people had no objection, once informed, to paying for or valuing archives services, but didn’t previously know what they were.²⁸² This suggests that the

²⁷⁵ John Holden, Justin Cavernelis-Frost and Pat Thane were among those who raised concerns connected to these issues.

²⁷⁶ See *Capturing Cultural Value*, 33.

²⁷⁷ In the Jura Consultants assessment of Bolton’s museums, libraries and archives services, 38, non-users claimed a willingness to pay 68 pence each per month to support the archives service, which actually costs each council tax payer 17 pence per month. A study by Mourato et al. discovered that 97% of local residents would be prepared to pay to avoid the hypothetical full or partial closure of Surrey History Centre, ‘Beyond Dusty Archives,’ 109.

²⁷⁸ *Interview with John Holden*, 31/7/07.

²⁷⁹ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07.

²⁸⁰ Justin Cavernelis-Frost, for example, believes that “non-use value is quite a middle class, public service ethos construct...the public service ethos is disappearing from modern life – the personalised society might see an end to the emphasis on non-use value,” *Interview*, 18/9/07.

²⁸¹ Bearman, *Archival Methods*, 59.

²⁸² This was the case both in the Bolton study, 7, “Members of the local community appear to be less willing to pay for Bolton’s archives, however, the focus groups revealed that this was partly due to a lack of understanding amongst all ages and walks of life about what archives actually are and what they contain” and in Usherwood et al., ‘Relevant Repositories of Public Knowledge’, 4, “The archive service had the

main issue for the profession is therefore not whether non-use values are valid and relevant, but whether more people might become users rather than non-users if they were better informed about archives.

“Fundamental Principles”

A number of interviewees expressed their belief that the most important value of archives to society was not any of those outlined above, nor intrinsic value, that which simply makes individuals on a personal basis decide to engage and feel good about engaging. Instead, it was felt to be something more holistic and overarching, described variously as the “totality”, “bedrock”, or “fundamental principles” of the value of archives. The desire to uncover these fundamental principles appears to be partly about showing the entirety of the archives and records management spectrum with a view to strengthening its perceived value and what it can accomplish as a whole. This might provide a potential solution to the problem highlighted in the content analysis, whereby separate elements of the recordkeeping function are promoted, often with results, but in a vacuum. It is also partly about enabling meaningful advocacy, which will sustain despite changing government priorities or research fashions. Vic Gray spoke at length about the need to agree on a view of the totality of the value of archives as a matter of professional priority, saying, “Archives are the rock on which we build everything else. That perception is difficult to get across to people, but should be our starting point whatever other focus we have at different times, for reasons political, expedient or whatever.”²⁸³ John Holden agreed, suggesting that this could be a way of adapting the sector’s message to satisfy advocacy requirements in different contexts, “You need to set out the fundamental principles of archives – if all the key elements are present you can shift the balance slightly for different people.”²⁸⁴

Natalie Ceeney, however, raised serious concerns about the wisdom of developing a fixed notion of fundamental principles.²⁸⁵ Instead, she believes that the purpose of archives is strongly dependent on context, changing from time to time and institution to institution, and that the most essential attribute needed by the sector is “responsiveness to change, and the ability to adapt.”²⁸⁶ However, one alternative to her view that “There is no definitive, constant role of an archive, nor should we seek one”²⁸⁷ could be said to be the situation existing at present, where the majority of the public have no view of the role of an archive at all. The caveat against inflexibility is welcome. However, it is not necessarily the case that achieving a greater degree of consensus on the underlying purpose of archives would preclude innovation over time in response to societal developments, or would prevent different types of service from setting their own priorities. Hewison, albeit with reference to institutions rather than entire sectors, writes

most negative response in terms of a definitive description of its role and value in modern Britain. There is a lack of understanding about the full range of services it offers.”

²⁸³ *Interview with Vic Gray, 5/2/08.* See also his article ‘Archives and the Tribal Mind’ and his contribution to Williams (ed.), *Archives in the UK and the Government Agenda.*

²⁸⁴ *Interview with John Holden, 31/7/07.*

²⁸⁵ Stating in a 2007 lecture, “I am constantly asked the question ‘but isn’t there a fundamental purpose of an archive?’ with the implicit meaning that this fundamental purpose will give us the answers we’re seeking,” ‘The role of a 21st century National Archive,’ 2.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 14. Examples she cited of this responsiveness to change included the focus on information management and moves towards accessibility and customer service.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

of the importance for cultural organisations of having a clear sense of identity and a focus on their own sustainability, arguing “This does not contradict the need for a cultural organisation to constantly recreate itself, for this too is part of the continuity of the organisation as it develops and grows.”²⁸⁸ It is also possible that a secure sense of purpose may ensure that the sector reinvents itself in response to genuine developments rather than short term trends.

Even amongst those who argue strongly for the need for fundamental principles, however, no clear vision was put forward on how these might be characterised. In this way the responses of my interviewees, in asserting some kind of “*je ne sais quoi*” as regards the real value of archives, correspond to the problem demonstrated in the content analysis of presenting a coherent vision.²⁸⁹ Differing options for the core value of archives included “your place in the world,”²⁹⁰ the actual collections²⁹¹ and the needs of users.²⁹² One suggestion emerging from literature is the notion of the existence of archives representing a broad accountability to the present and future. In the context also of my interview responses, it could perhaps be argued that this concept not only bridges the evidential/cultural dichotomy but may embrace the elusive fundamental principles.²⁹³ However, significant research into this possibility would be necessary before it could be further developed.

Conclusion

A wide range of views on the value of archives to society comes through the opinions expressed in these interviews. There are compelling arguments for the power of archives to make a difference across a wide spectrum of societal needs, whether this value is characterised in different fora in evidential, socio-cultural, instrumental or other terms. However, the views of interviewees largely support data gathered during the content analysis which suggests many outside the profession are not aware of this range.²⁹⁴ The diversity of views on the value of archives may also have contributed to the existing lack of recognition, by making it harder for professionals to agree on a strategic way forward for the sector and therefore increasing the likelihood that advocacy concerned with value will either be attempted unsystematically or not attempted at all.

It could be argued, as a number of interviewees did, that formulating a vision of the value of archives to society which is more than the sum of its parts will lead to the sector

²⁸⁸ Hewison, *Not a Sideshow*, 46.

²⁸⁹ Tyacke, in her introduction to Cox, *Ethics, Accountability and Recordkeeping*, also highlights this issue, “Archivists and records managers generally believe that records are important and that they make a difference in society, although sometimes they seem to waffle about just what this means.” She continues, “If there are so many ways of looking at archives, how can records professionals expect organizational leaders, policymakers and the public to comprehend what it is that they do?”

²⁹⁰ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07.

²⁹¹ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07.

²⁹² *Interview with Roy Clare*, 21/1/08.

²⁹³ Eastwood is one strong proponent of this view, believing that a vision of archives as “arsenals of democratic accountability and continuity” combines the “vying and sometimes clashing” visions of archives as arsenals of history, administration and law. See his chapter in McKemmish and Upward (eds.), *Archival Documents*, 36. See also Gale, ‘Recordkeeping as an Ethical Imperative.’

²⁹⁴ Jonathan Pepler and Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan were two who raised concerns connected to the perceived irrelevance of archives to many people, and the general lack of recognition of their role in daily life.

becoming more self-confident in its own mission and less inclined to mould expressions of this value to the priorities of others – be they MLA, the government or the television watching public. Even if an all-encompassing definition turns out not to be appropriate, it has been recognised in both interviews and literature that a strategy for promoting a compelling sense of public value in other ways should be made a priority. One way to address this may be to consider the likely outcomes of better clarifying through advocacy the range of views on value expressed in these interviews.

Chapter 5: Refining Preferences

This research has suggested that the multi-faceted nature of the value of archives to society is not widely appreciated, and that the archive profession is facing difficulties caused at least in part by inadequacies in advocacy. My aim in this chapter is therefore to investigate potential links between these circumstances with a view to uncovering whether these difficulties could be to some extent alleviated by greater awareness of the diverse benefits enabled by archives. Once again data on these issues has been largely taken from the views of interviewees, supported by the content analysis and other literature. The following account can therefore not be comprehensive in discussing the difficulties facing the sector, or the variety of views held by the public about archives. The focus instead is on those themes predominating in interviews as relevant to future advocacy for the value of archives.

The role of advocacy in the problems facing archives

A number of difficulties faced by the archives sector have already been highlighted in the introduction and content analysis. These included poor visibility by the general public, uncertainties over funding and political representation, and a perceived lack of relevance to wider society resulting in a non-representative user demographic. Writing of the situation in the USA in the 1950s, Schellenberg noted “If the average man on the street were asked why governments establish archival institutions, he would probably ask ‘what are archives and what are archival institutions?’”²⁹⁵ It is questionable whether the answer from the average British person in the street in 2008 would be any different, as the results of a recent survey stated.²⁹⁶ Archives are not alone even within the cultural sector in facing problems connected to image, funding and sense of direction, as the plethora of recent writing on the need for cultural institutions to prove value and achieve long term sustainability demonstrates. However, the problem is made more acute by their relative invisibility.

This situation is clearly not wholly attributable to problems in advocacy, and a number of other significant factors exist which fall largely outside the scope of this study. A variety of historical and structural circumstances have had an impact on the perceived relevance of records and how the profession is viewed and valued. Justin Cavernelis-Frost talks of how “Archives are too small to ever make a mark” and of how, in comparison with museums and libraries, “it’s hard to draw people in generally.”²⁹⁷ From a local authority perspective Bruce Jackson states, “Problems with funding are everywhere, there’s no money in councils for anything. You would expect archives to be suffering even more as they’re comparatively so small.”²⁹⁸

The “good news,” as outlined by Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, is that “we are in a strong position, because archives are a ‘good thing.’ We’re not political in the same way as

²⁹⁵ Schellenberg, *Modern Archives*, 3.

²⁹⁶ “See Usherwood et al., ‘Relevant Repositories of Public Knowledge’, 4. Jonathan Pepler also states “The message isn’t consistently maintained about the role archives can play in government agendas and daily life, the role just isn’t currently recognised,” *Interview*, 25/1/08. Views such as these are also supported by evidence presented in the content analysis from sources such as the *Taking Part* survey.

²⁹⁷ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07.

²⁹⁸ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07.

health or education: the battle is therefore half won so it just becomes about explanation.”²⁹⁹ This view of archives as a good thing is supported by the results of contingent valuation studies mentioned in chapter four. The opinion of a number of my interviewees was also that the main problem area is not the inability of services to please users, but the massive ignorance and under-valuing of what they offer across different audiences. Justin Cavernelis-Frost spoke of the “need to come up with something new to interest government” as a “real problem.”³⁰⁰ Pat Thane referred to problems engaging the media, who she claims “think archives are just about leisure.”³⁰¹ Vic Gray believed that “It’s hard for us to battle against our image: the connection between the image and our relevance is hard to get across.”³⁰² This chapter will examine the views of my interviewees on the extent to which a limited awareness of the contribution of archives to society has existed, as well as some of the potential causes. Consideration will also be given to whether addressing this situation could make a significant contribution to some of the issues outlined which impact negatively on the profession. The key issue to examine further is whether increasing awareness of the breadth of the societal contribution of archives would be the critical factor, or whether in fact the significant improvements would be around other issues, such as to whom the profession prioritises advocacy and the methods it uses to get its message across.

Public Choice and Public Value

A number of my interviewees believed that a limited view of the potential uses and values of archives is being presented to the public. Jonathan Pepler explains, “There is definitely an issue with people not understanding the range of what we have,” before going on to state “The main problem we face is lack of awareness among the public of how they could benefit from what we do.”³⁰³ Pat Thane concurs, saying, “Archivists have missed a trick by not capitalising on how much important information is only accessible through archives.”³⁰⁴ Despite her impassioned proclamations on the need to prioritise the information management aspect of recordkeeping over the cultural heritage aspect, Natalie Ceeney stated “Archives have different values to different people, and that’s fine... it doesn’t matter that everyone has different views. What’s important is that archivists have lost sight of the need to show their different sides.”³⁰⁵ Referring to ongoing debates over the purpose of archives, Brien Brothman quoted the American archival commentator Ken Thibodeau as warning a group of archivists “You’d better be sure what your niche is,” explaining “This is a crucial issue: how we define ourselves can leave us very vulnerable.”³⁰⁶ Part of my aim is to uncover whether archivists have failed to promote some aspects of the archives offer to the extent they have promoted others, thus forcing the profession into a niche and leaving it vulnerable.

²⁹⁹ *Interview with Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan*, 29/1/08. Finch agrees, noting, “To the extent that the public understands that archives exist to be used for reasons that affect their lives, property, civic well-being, and political influence, the public will be disposed to support and encourage archives,” *Advocating Archives*, 1.

³⁰⁰ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07.

³⁰¹ *Interview with Pat Thane*, 27/11/07.

³⁰² *Interview with Vic Gray*, 5/2/08. Roy Clare also spoke about “archive” being a “barrier word” with the public, *Interview*, 21/1/08.

³⁰³ *Interview with Jonathan Pepler*, 25/1/08.

³⁰⁴ *Interview with Pat Thane*, 27/11/07.

³⁰⁵ *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07. Roy Clare agreed with this assessment, saying, “Archivists are not show-offs: they need to show as well as store,” *Interview*, 21/1/08.

³⁰⁶ *Interview with Brien Brothman*, 29/8/07. Although employed by the Rhode Island State Archives, Brothman was interviewed in a personal capacity.

Further data from the interviews, and from literature, supports the need to raise awareness of a wider range of uses of archives. Pat Thane stated, “The need is to widen the notion of to whom archives are relevant,”³⁰⁷ echoing Ian Wilson’s reminder of the need to “recognize the breadth and diversity of our clientele – not just those who come through the doors.”³⁰⁸ Vic Gray suggested that some archivists in the past have tried to “work against the dustiness” of their image by prioritising, and highlighting in advocacy, the “whizz-bang stuff” such as educational outreach or IT projects. He concludes, however, that “these are important things, but they haven’t shaken off the image yet,” leading to his hypothesis that a more sustained approach would be required in order to attract a wider cross-section of a public who he believes are “surprisingly articulate about value to society.”³⁰⁹

In connection with the need to broaden the public perception of the archives offer, John Holden makes the point that “part of public value is about giving choices.”³¹⁰ It has already been noted that high levels of intrinsic value are associated with engagement in archives activity, which has perhaps in some quarters masked the need to improve the scope of advocacy. In the context of the broader cultural sector, the concept of refined preferences has been described as “a way of overcoming the often ill-conceived and even maligned notions of the public,” by seeking a broader awareness of what the public want from a sector or service and ensuring that they are equipped with the understanding to respond to the message that sector or service wishes to portray of its own value.³¹¹ This is particularly appropriate in an archives context, where engaging users is a priority but there has been doubt expressed that potential users understand the full scope of what engagement with archives can enable.³¹² It could be argued that if the Public Value of archives is to stand up to scrutiny, with a wide cross-section of citizens prepared, hypothetically or otherwise, to give something up in return for archive services,³¹³ the problem highlighted by a number of recent studies of the public’s lack of understanding of what archives are will need to be addressed as a priority.³¹⁴

³⁰⁷ Interview with Pat Thane, 27/11/07.

³⁰⁸ Writing in Blouin and Rosenberg (eds.), *Archives, Documentation and Institutions of Social Memory*, 338. This need for a focus on engaging wider audiences was made explicitly in the *Report of the Archives Task Force*, which stated “Long term sustainability will come from engaging as many people as possible with the archival heritage whether for leisure, learning, personal development, business use or community activism,” MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, 21.

³⁰⁹ Interview with Vic Gray, 5/2/08.

³¹⁰ Interview with John Holden, 31/7/07. Hewison quotes Ricardo Blaug as arguing that Public Value “is not just a question of an organisation being responsive to perceived public desires, but of entering into a creative relationship with the public”, *Not a Sideshow*, 46. Horton notes in ‘Social capital, government policy and public value’, 510, that archives have done well to engage with government agendas, but what’s really needed is to show the outcomes of engagement by the public, “For archives services themselves, such activities cast new emphasis on the need to educate the public and politicians about the nature of archives and the role of the service in the twenty-first century.”

³¹¹ For further details see the contribution of the Work Foundation to *Capturing the Public Value of Heritage*, 25.

³¹² As Simon Matty has said, “...for the public to give an accurate view of their preferences it is necessary to ensure that they have as much information as they need and enough of an understanding to be able comfortably to express a view,” Matty, *Making the Case*, 14. See also the recent Jura Consultants study into the value placed in Bolton’s museum, libraries and archives by local residents and Usherwood et al., ‘Relevant Repositories of Public Knowledge.’

³¹³ See Kelly et al., *Creating Public Value*, 4.

³¹⁴ With specific reference to public value, Horton writes, “If the question of demonstrating “value” becomes removed from the instrumental field and enters the intrinsic, where the focus is on levels of

Limited Views of the Value of Archives: some examples

There has been some disagreement over the issue of shortcomings in professional advocacy: whilst some commentators believe that the archives sector has isolated itself in an unhelpfully narrow niche, others favour the interpretation that it has chosen to focus on areas with the greatest popular appeal. Bruce Jackson was one who suggested that the profession has simply “repositioned our arguments to suit our core activities. The use of archives has changed over time, so we’ve refocused our arguments to reflect that.”³¹⁵ One example of this change of use is family and recreational history, where advocacy has clearly evolved in tandem with user demands since the time when archives were largely perceived as the domain of academic historians.³¹⁶ Now, as the content analysis shows, recreational history, or personal heritage, is perceived to be the most prominent use of archives in the public’s consciousness. However, the focus on recreational history demonstrated by data from outreach attempts like the Archives Awareness Campaign has already raised questions – and disagreement – about the wisdom of promoting to excess a use of archives which may also have limited appeal. Bruce Jackson believed that the perceived strong focus in some areas on the recreational use of archives has not deterred other members of the public who may as a result not value or even wish to use archives as they might if other aspects were better promoted.³¹⁷ Natalie Ceeney, however, strongly disagreed, saying “Lots of people do see archives in a heritage niche, and we’ve had to fight hard to make sure TNA isn’t seen like that. We definitely need to address the overshadowing of other areas by things like AAC.”³¹⁸ Suggesting reasons behind this sometimes seemingly opportunistic focus on the heritage niche, the conjecture of Justin Cavernelis-Frost was that, “The Government isn’t interested in archives, and the heritage angle is easy for ordinary people to get a handle on.”³¹⁹

The risk, from an advocacy perspective, is perceived to be allowing archives to be associated predominantly with leisure when the genealogy and TV history bandwagon moves on to something else. Although the personal heritage trend has been noted by government in connection with instrumental outcomes such as the local government wellbeing agenda and genealogical tourism, the likelihood is that policymakers will only give limited support to a service viewed predominantly in leisure terms. This highlights the wider issue, noted by John Holden, of the need to distinguish between popular and populist appeal when considering a strategy for advocacy.³²⁰ This is perhaps something that has been overlooked amid excitement over the rising numbers of recreational users of archives. The suggestion is that it will become increasingly important through

personal engagement with archives, the issue of domain profile will become critical,” ‘Social Capital, Government Policy and Public Value,’ 509.

³¹⁵ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, “Family history has democratised the archives user base: people have hugely grown in confidence as they’ve engaged, and developed new skills.” The AAC evaluation outlined in the content analysis clearly shows the positive effects of increased understanding of archives amongst those who have engaged in activities as a result of outreach aimed at recreational users.

³¹⁷ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07.

³¹⁸ *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07.

³¹⁹ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07.

³²⁰ *Interview with John Holden*, 31/7/07. Holden noted, “There is a difference between increasing value in popular opinion and being populist in terms of attracting numbers of visitors.”

advocacy to stress concepts of personal heritage, a sense of self and the impact on communities as components of the value of recreational engagement.³²¹

The contribution of archives to understanding our cultural heritage is another area which has received a good deal of attention, even leading to criticism in some quarters that it is dominating the professional agenda.³²² This has particularly been the case since the central and local government focus on the communities agenda. However, there is concern that this attention has not necessarily equated to promoting a sufficiently broad vision of what archives can contribute to communities long term, as opposed to a more instrumental vision based on immediate outcomes. As with personal heritage, the belief was expressed by interviewees that more could be made in advocacy of the impacts on individuals.³²³ Justin Cavernelis-Frost explained, “People always say history is written by the winners – but archives tell both sides of the story. We need to get that across to people who don’t think archives are relevant to them.”³²⁴ Vic Gray spoke of the “purity of fascination” of those who engage with community archives, an area which is still believed to be neglected by the wider profession.³²⁵ Recent writing on the impact on communities of exploring their histories and telling their own stories suggests that it can be a tremendously powerful experience.³²⁶ Moreover, there is scope for communities to be made much better aware of the potential afforded by records to safeguard their rights as well as to celebrate their memories, an area which has arguably been entirely overlooked.³²⁷ More research into these areas will be needed, with the aim of obtaining proof of the long-term community impacts enabled by archives. Such proof could then be usefully promoted to the profession as well as to wider audiences.³²⁸

A further issue arising from discussions over the limited understanding of the role of archives is the place of records management in advocacy and in the public consciousness. At an organisational level, particularly within local authorities, there have been

³²¹ Jonathan Pepler’s explanation of how future AAC activity will be run in conjunction with ongoing NCA advocacy work, rather than as a separate event, is an example of how this issue has already been recognised and is starting to change.

³²² For example, in my interview with Natalie Ceeney.

³²³ This belief is also voiced in sectoral policy documents such as the NCA’s *Response* to the DCLG’s Commission on Integration and Cohesion which states, 5, “The NCA would like to encourage all...to ensure that their documentary legacy is preserved and cared for, to help give their members the feeling of being part of something bigger than themselves, that will last beyond their involvement and possibly their lifetimes. This in turn makes their endeavours feel more permanent and their impact on their communities more secure, leading to a virtuous circle promoting more integration and cohesion within the community.”

³²⁴ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07.

³²⁵ *Interview with Vic Gray*, 5/2/08. He describes the profession as feeling “threatened” by the concept of community archives, and “turning their backs on the possibility of greater engagement.” Andrew Flinn notes that “...very little discussion on any of the changes with regard to developments in social history, community history and identity, or the need for more representative archives has appeared in the UK professional literature,” ‘Community Histories, Community Archives,’ 162.

³²⁶ See Flinn, ‘Community Histories, Community Archives,’ 166.

³²⁷ As noted in the NCA’s *Response* to the DCLG’s Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 4, “...the documentation that is deposited in archives by law offers the most direct and honest method of understanding what people in positions of power have done and why. If this record is not cared for in the most professional manner, we have failed in our democratic duty to be transparent in our business and decision-making, which in turn may engender feelings of mistrust, suspicion, segregation and tension: the very feelings this Commission is attempting to reduce.”

³²⁸ Suggested by the mere 29% of archivists responding to the survey on the impact of the HLF on the archives profession who saw the value of archives in strengthening family and community identity, compared to 54% of users in the 2006 PSQG *Survey*.

increasing splits between the two and it is the lack of such a joined-up approach that has been criticised as helping to keep archives in a narrow, leisure-focussed niche.³²⁹ Natalie Ceeney, for example, believes that “By divorcing records management and archives, local authorities are condemning themselves,”³³⁰ a view also supported by literature.³³¹ With reference to advocacy for records management, and the consequent public understanding of its role, Vic Gray suggests “The continuum/ life cycle message just isn’t sexy. It’s a difficult concept to peddle.”³³² However, the tendency for archives and records management to be pigeonholed into separate roles in advocacy can lead to confusion on the part of the public that records equate to “useful” evidence, archives to “interesting” history, a misconception which has arguably undermined attempts to prove the value of archives to wider audiences.³³³

The general scepticism in some quarters about focussing on the “useful”, or evidential value of records in connection with human rights issues in a UK context has already been noted. However, the view was expressed firmly by Natalie Ceeney that archivists “need to move away from cultural heritage. Archivists are missing a massive trick by only talking about cultural heritage.”³³⁴ Several respondents also expressed the belief that the contribution to society of archives as evidence has not been sufficiently fully researched and explored. Justin Cavernelis-Frost, for example, stated “We’ve never had to reconstruct our history, we’ve also trusted our leaders by and large. We’ve got complacent about evidence and about our past and recorded information about it.”³³⁵ The point has also been made in literature that issues of recordkeeping and accountability are indeed viewed as important by the public, but are rarely linked to the archives and

³²⁹ Bruce Jackson explains, “Many county archivists have let information and records management go because they don’t have the resources to support it...IT have now won the battle for records management: we’ll never win it back,” *Interview*, 15/11/07.

³³⁰ *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07.

³³¹ Steve Bailey writes of the short-sightedness of many archivists in failing to address current issues connected to digital preservation, “There is a bizarre paradox emerging whereby just at the time that our message has never been so important, so it has never seemed so irrelevant, nor been so unpopular,” ‘Taking the Road Less Travelled By,’ 121. Pederson writes in McKemmish et al., *Archives: record keeping in society*, 59, of the “cycle of impoverishment” whereby a distinction between making and keeping records leads to the marginalization of archives services once divorced from corporate decision-making. She explains, “Often archival programs are lumped together with cash-strapped museums, historical societies, libraries and galleries as not-for-profit ‘culture and heritage’ bodies competing for decreasing public and philanthropic dollars.”

³³² *Interview with Vic Gray*, 5/2/08.

³³³ In the NCA’s *Consultation Response to the Archives Task Force*, for example, electronic records management is listed as “central to the democratic function” of organisations, archives as “firing people’s imagination,” 2. The misunderstanding of the broader role of archives is noted by Usherwood et al., ‘Relevant Repositories of Public Knowledge’, 28, “Respondents expressed some confusion over the role of an archive service in understanding contemporary concerns, and noted that this may become a secondary use further to visiting such services for other, more recreational purposes.”

³³⁴ *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07.

³³⁵ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07. He went on to explain, “If people actually felt they had rights that were being taken away, there would be an outcry.” Jonathan Pepler also agreed there was greater scope to highlight the sense of empowerment enabled by recordkeeping, saying “Personal records and freedoms depend on careful management of records, so they’re kept safe, and available when you need them,” *Interview*, 25/1/08. See also Cox and Wallace, “every citizen who relies on the sanctity of recordkeeping systems and the integrity of individual records within those systems, especially systems of government, the contents of which are fundamental to entitling citizens to benefits, rights and privileges, ought never cavalierly to take the incorruptibility of the system for granted,” *Archives and the Public Good*, 10.

records management profession precisely on account of failings in advocacy.³³⁶ However, Vic Gray questioned the benefits of correcting this perception, saying, “Information management in the public perception is as abstruse as archives. You’re still the background boffin! I’m not convinced a focus on evidence would change things dramatically: it could lead to the public equating us with auditors!”³³⁷

These varying viewpoints at least suggest the need for more research into the evidential uses of records and the possibilities for promoting these uses as part of sustained advocacy attempts. Success would possibly depend on focussing arguments to support the case for accountability on a UK context, rather than importing evidence of value from very different and less relevant scenarios, for example from repressive regimes overseas. This might eventually lead to archives and records being used more by pressure groups campaigning on local issues such as land use, or highlighted more frequently in the media in the course of debates on issues such as ID cards.³³⁸ It has also perhaps been the case that the focus of debate and particularly literature on human rights and FoI has led, in some quarters, to a narrow interpretation of “evidential” which has overshadowed the important uses of archives for research into science, medicine, history, politics and a range of other disciplines. These uses have a direct impact on individuals and communities, and could be far better promoted in a variety of contexts.³³⁹

Conclusion

Data from interviews, literature and content analysis has all highlighted problems for the image and visibility of archives, with a large proportion of users, non-users, professionals and policymakers struggling with defining and understanding its true purpose. It is perhaps possible to conclude that lack of awareness of the full extent of what the sector could achieve is, at least to some degree, a factor in the problems it still faces.³⁴⁰ This research suggests that a clear vision of societal value will need to be more widely agreed, promoted and understood to guarantee respect, esteem and funding. In terms of a way to achieve this, one suggestion emanating from my data collection was the idea of working towards a consensus which might link together conceptually the elements of value which have been successfully promoted as separate entities. Referring to this need for greater cohesion, Vic Gray said, “There are so many different views of why archives are important to society and trying to stick them together doesn’t add up to a coherent picture

³³⁶ Writing of the North Wales child abuse scandal, Helen Forde states, “I was assured recently that at least one local authority there was now undertaking very careful record-keeping in its Social Services Department, but nevertheless this did not appear to be in any way related to the archive department and it was not clear if any professional records managers were involved,” ‘We Must Remember Our Past,’ 120. Cox and Wallace, writing of recordkeeping scandals in the press, note “The challenge with these newspaper stories is that often the significance of records is poorly explained and the role of archivists and other records professionals is absent. The importance of records and recordkeeping systems must be set forth by those who best understand them, namely archivists and records managers...,” *Archives and the Public Good*, 7.

³³⁷ *Interview with Vic Gray*, 5/2/08.

³³⁸ This idea was actually recognised in the Archives Task Force report, 21, which highlighted “community activism” as one use of archives which might engage new audiences.

³³⁹ Pat Thane gives the example of a researcher on the history of immigration working at TNA, who uncovered significant new information relating to the relatively recent history of certain immigrant communities in the UK, *Interview*, 27/11/07.

³⁴⁰ This is certainly suggested by statistics such as the *Taking Part* survey, which show 83% of non-users believing archives have no interest or use for them.

for people. It's like turning the pages of one of those books with different heads and bodies. It should come down to what is the common core, the bedrock, and is that something we can get across?"³⁴¹ There is also the suggestion of Cox and Wallace that the entire notion of advocacy needs to be revolutionised, away from attempting to interest the public in using records and towards encouraging them to understand and support the reasons why they are created and kept.³⁴²

However, even if agreement could be reached on the archival *raison d'être*, such a concept would be no simple vision to promote to the public or policymakers. Nevertheless, it could be argued that agreeing on a coherent vision as a profession would be of value in itself. Although opposed to the notion of one enduring set of principles underpinning the importance of recordkeeping across society, Natalie Ceeney was keen to stress the need for entities operating within the sector to work together to produce a united voice to advocate effectively on behalf of the whole.³⁴³ There was also reassuring agreement that different bodies need to work more closely together, despite the disagreements over which aspects of the value of archives it is most important to highlight and expand on in future advocacy.³⁴⁴ The view that further research into this area should be a priority, regardless of eventual success, was held by several interviewees.³⁴⁵ Working in partnership in this way would, it was generally agreed, not only help to move the sector towards the position of strength and confidence spoken of by John Holden, from which its core message could be adapted for different audiences, but perhaps ultimately ensure its survival.

However, despite the potential which exists to broaden the focus of advocacy, this research has also suggested overwhelmingly that the problems outlined connected to projecting a coherent positive image are down to a network of complex factors. Failure to promote the full range of the ways in which archives benefit wider society emerged from my interviews as just one, and it is therefore important that it is not viewed as a panacea. Vic Gray, for example, stated, "The main problems facing the sector are both long and short term. Obviously money is one, but long term we have no concise mission statement, too many archive organisations which are divided and weak, so many opportunities for expansion that we don't know which direction to go in, and our self-confidence based on self-perception."³⁴⁶ Clearly a full investigation into these issues lies outside the scope of this study. However, the views expressed by interviewees suggest overwhelmingly that

³⁴¹ *Interview with Vic Gray*, 5/2/08. Jonathan Pepler agreed, saying "The wider, more subtle messages need to be got across, and we need to agree what those are. Whatever messages we get across must be applicable across the board," *Interview*, 25/1/08.

³⁴² "Archivists and records managers need to move well beyond their traditional notion of advocacy in which the public and policymakers gain an appreciation for archives and records to making them understand and support the essential reason that records are created, how they need to be maintained and what makes them significant," *Archives and the Public Good*, 8. Vic Gray makes a similar point in in 'Archives and the Tribal Mind,' 126.

³⁴³ "Working together is the answer to the question of what we need to do to get taken more seriously," *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07.

³⁴⁴ Roy Clare and Natalie Ceeney both spoke of the plans of MLA and TNA to work together on a new UK archives strategy, *Interview*, 21/1/08. Speaking of the NCA's role in advocacy in conjunction with other bodies, Jonathan Pepler described the aspiration "to have a single, clear message" as part of an attempt to "pull the sector together," *Interview*, 25/1/08.

³⁴⁵ Including Pat Thane, who suggested, "Regardless of whether archives are small, or under-resourced or whatever, it's vital to at least try to change things," *Interview*, 27/11/07.

³⁴⁶ *Interview with Vic Gray*, 5/2/08.

some of the causes underlying the haphazard nature of the sector's own strategic sense of purpose need to be considered.

Chapter 6: New Directions for the Archives Sector

The main aims of this research have been to investigate perceptions of the value of archives to society from within and outside the sector, and whether that value would be more widely recognised if elements which may have been neglected in advocacy were better promoted. The findings seem to suggest, however, that improving recognition to the extent of improving existing problems which beset the sector is not just about raising awareness of value, but doing so in a strategic and sustainable way. A number of issues emerged from the data collection which seemed to underpin perceived successes and deficiencies in how the sector defines and presents its message. These included lack of confidence in an archival vision and mission, uncertainties over how to articulate it, inherent problems in the structure of profession, the capabilities of professionals and lack of evidence to support meaningful advocacy.

Consideration of these areas of perceived deficiency led to consideration of the need for further research into issues which the sector may need to be aware of and responsive to within the relatively near future. This was not originally a part of my research plan, and it is clear that many of the issues involved – such as whether professional organisations are weak or whether the “wrong” people are attracted to a career in archives - are comprehensive research topics in themselves. My aim in this chapter is therefore to highlight some of the views expressed to me in interviews, without attempting a large amount of additional commentary such as might follow in future research projects.

Shortcomings of existing advocacy

One issue highlighted in the content analysis was a lack of real coherence in the sector’s attempts to prove its wider value to the public through a strategic programme of advocacy. Instead, the emerging impression, further corroborated in interviews, was one of unsystematic promotion of messages regarding the value of archives and to the failure of the sector to lobby in the most effective ways. Jonathan Pepler, referring to the rationale behind the NCA’s decision to appoint a Head of Public Affairs, said, “Efforts up until now have been a one-off, not a consistent programme of developing a range of contacts.”³⁴⁷ This appointment, and the formation of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Archives, are intended to remedy the previous lack of effective influence on people in a strategic position to advance the needs of the sector. It is also believed by a number of interviewees that the funding problems which beset the sector could be ameliorated by a consistent and effective programme of advocacy.³⁴⁸ Although this issue is now being addressed at a strategic, sector-wide level, it could still potentially be undermined by lack of resources being cited at a regional or organisational level as a reason to place a low priority on advocacy.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ *Interview with Jonathan Pepler, 25/1/08.*

³⁴⁸ Roy Clare confirmed that, from an MLA perspective at least, areas of the archive function delivering impacts would be well resourced. On the contrary, he warned “I’m fed up with people moaning about parity for archives,” *Interview, 21/1/08.* Bruce Jackson also noted, “We’ve got to find a way to get resources without it looking like we’re whinging,” *Interview, 15/11/07.*

³⁴⁹ As shown by results of the survey into the impact of the HLF on the archive profession, where advocacy was ranked as the lowest spending priority for a publicly funded archive.

A number of interviewees also highlighted the perceived tendency of the archive sector to be reactive rather than proactive in attempts at promotional activity such as Archives Awareness Campaign, despite the success of such attempts at growing the user base. Vic Gray suggested, with reference to the achievements of archivists in capitalising on the success of the BBC's *Who Do You Think You Are?*, "you can't blame archivists for the tendency to jump on whatever bus is passing that would take us to a better place."³⁵⁰ However, he continues, "We need to take advantage of opportunities, but with a strategy... groups should look at campaigns, but be positive, not driven by reaction to political circumstances."³⁵¹ Pat Thane, an instrumental force behind the *History and Policy* website,³⁵² a decisive step forward in promoting the role of history in contemporary politics and society, believes that the archive profession needs to find similar methods of highlighting its own importance.³⁵³ The process of refining public preferences could potentially be advanced by better strategic promotion of the sector's own vision of ways in which archival functions and activities add value by meeting areas of public need.

Lack of a confident vision and mission

Data emerging from interviews suggested also that convincing others of the value of archives is not just about getting advocacy right. Self-confidence and a clear sense of purpose are features characterised as pre-requisites for this process of shaping public value.³⁵⁴ They were, however, felt by many to be somewhat lacking from the archive sector, the feeling of Justin Cavernelis-Frost that "Archivists do lack self-confidence – they have no self-worth or clear vision" being typical of views expressed.³⁵⁵ The suggestion was that the sector's tendency to shy away from difficult questions such as what its mission is and how that mission should be articulated is responsible for the lack of coherence on the message to be promoted about the value of archives. As Natalie Ceeney commented, "There's no mission for the archives profession... you've got to proactively seek out a vision, or else others will do it for you."³⁵⁶ Pat Thane also felt strongly on this issue, saying, "Archives are too easily swayed by other people's sense of mission. The idea of a sense of mission needs to be plugged into archive training, and knowledge of wider issues needs to be heightened."³⁵⁷ In the context of demonstrating public value, Hewison's writing on the need for an organisation to have "a secure sense of its own place and purpose" could arguably be applied equally to a sector.³⁵⁸ John

³⁵⁰ Interview with Vic Gray, 5/2/08.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

³⁵² <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/>

³⁵³ Shown by statements including "Archivists need to make a bigger noise" and "Archivists need to make it clear that they are showing the media, policymakers etc how important they are, in the same way as *History and Policy* is trying to do for historians. It boils down to communication," Interview with Pat Thane, 27/11/07.

³⁵⁴ Michael Kaiser, President of the John F. Kennedy Centre for the Performing Arts, spoke to Clore Fellows in some detail in September 2006 about the importance of vision and mission, saying "Vision equals the core purpose: why do we exist?"

³⁵⁵ Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost, 18/9/07, speaking in a personal capacity.

³⁵⁶ Interview with Natalie Ceeney, 28/11/07. Vic Gray agreed, saying, "...that broader vision isn't coherent and accessible. It comes back to our mission and how we articulate it," Interview, 5/2/08. Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan's view was that "We don't struggle within ourselves for a sense of mission, but we do to others. The profession *feel* a vision, but won't do anything with it." She continued, "We are a reactive, conservative profession, not a visioning profession," Interview, 29/1/08.

³⁵⁷ Interview with Pat Thane, 27/11/07.

³⁵⁸ Hewison, *Not a Sideshow*, 46.

Holden supported the view that “mission creep” was a potential problem for the archives sector if steps to establish this secure sense of purpose were not taken independently of the priorities of other bodies and sectors.³⁵⁹

Lack of leadership

The perceived lack of a coherent vision or mission for the future of the archives sector was partially attributed by some to failings in leadership within the profession, and archivists’ “inability to think strategically,” in the words of Roy Clare.³⁶⁰ The opinion was expressed that one manifestation of this is a tendency to concentrate on the survival of the profession rather than on looking forwards and outwards to the value the sector can add to wider society.³⁶¹ The 2003 study into the archives, records management and conservation workforce, which formed an annex to the Archives Task Force report, included a section on leadership which contained the views of a cross-section of the profession. Several of those cited echoed the views of my interviewees that the profession was suffering from a lack of its own strategic sense of direction.³⁶² Bruce Jackson emphasised this as a problem, to the extent where he believes that “even if we did get a pot of money from MLA, we’d have no coherent strategy for how we’d spend it.”³⁶³ This, if true, is clearly a serious problem for a sector which frequently cites lack of resources as one of its main challenges. Natalie Ceeney also believes that leadership should be a key focus for the sector, asserting, “The notion of leadership is key, but archives has no professional leadership.”³⁶⁴

Structural problems within the sector

Leadership at the level of professional organisations operating within the archives sector was also highlighted as a problem area. Natalie Ceeney noted that in the context of strategic leadership “professional bodies don’t do the profession any favours”³⁶⁵ and Jonathan Pepler cited the structure of the sector as a priority for future research, saying, “There are too many bodies floating around: we need to be showing a coherent picture to the outside world.”³⁶⁶ The issue of confusion over the areas of responsibility of different professional bodies, and its impact on the ability of the sector to demonstrate a unified

³⁵⁹ *Interview with John Holden*, 31/7/07.

³⁶⁰ *Interview with Roy Clare*, 21/1/08. Michael Kaiser stressed in his lecture on leadership to Clore Fellows that “leadership is about sticking to the mission.”

³⁶¹ “The profession needs to be adding value, not refuelling itself,” *Interview with Roy Clare*, 21/1/08.

³⁶² One respondent stated, 125, “I think that Resource is pushing the profession rather than the profession leading itself...I am not sure that the profession has actually got a plan and a strategy of where it wants to be with it...being dictated to by government policies...” MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, Annex G, available at http://www.mla.gov.uk/resources/assets//A/atf_annex_g_pdf_5492.pdf

³⁶³ *Interview with Bruce Jackson*, 15/11/07, speaking in a personal capacity.

³⁶⁴ *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07. Views on the importance of leadership highlighted in Annex G of the Archives Task Force report included, “Leaving aside the debate about whether the potential is there, leadership development needs to be pushed within the sector. This will enable archives professionals to take on more senior roles and influence ‘from the top.’ This will have knock on effects in terms of profile raising, career choice, and retention as people see that there is scope to progress to a higher level,” 140. See also Crockett, ‘CPD and the Hallmarks of Professionalism,’ 136, “There is a perception that the profession lacks leadership – but no clear indication whether the cause was thought to be lack of people with leadership attributes or because people with leadership potential were not being developed as leaders.”

³⁶⁵ *Interview with Natalie Ceeney*, 28/11/07.

³⁶⁶ *Interview with Jonathan Pepler*, 25/1/08.

sense of its own purpose, was also raised in literature.³⁶⁷ The diverse national institutions and government departments with elements of responsibility for archives were also mentioned in the context of the perceived absence of an overall sense of direction for the sector. Justin Cavernelis-Frost summarised these concerns, saying “there’s a split between MLA - archives as a cultural construct - and TNA – information policy and evidence for public authorities. The problem is that these dual priorities tend to break down notions of the intrinsic value.”³⁶⁸ There has also been a tendency for the political and institutional priorities of individual organisations to be promoted in preference to any kind of strategy for the sector as a whole.³⁶⁹ Over the last decade, this has exacerbated the situation whereby cultural trends such as the rising popularity of heritage and legislative changes such as the advent of FoI have both raised the profile of archives and records, but separately.

A related issue emerging from discussions over the structure of the sector has been concerns over some consequences for archives of inclusion within the MLA’s remit.³⁷⁰ The clear benefits of being part of a larger structure were unanimously agreed, but the implied complete alignment of priorities with museums and libraries, and to some extent with the wider cultural sector, was felt to partially obscure the importance of the recordkeeping function.³⁷¹ There is also concern that under guidance from MLA, archivists who are unpractised with advocacy have blindly followed new agendas such as focussing on instrumental outcomes or recreational history. As commentators have pointed out, there is a very real danger in shaping and promoting concepts of the value of archives which are too closely aligned to government priorities subject to rapid change.³⁷² An example of this is the evidence now emerging to suggest that the decade long culture of instrumentality for the arts and heritage is being re-evaluated at a governmental

³⁶⁷ Including Annex G of the Archives Task Force report, 136, “It is of paramount importance that the sector establishes and makes clear which organisations are taking responsibility for key issues, what their remit is and how they relate to other organisations. If the sector is to develop, and meet the challenges which it is facing, it is vital that organisations co-operate and take responsibility for co-ordinating movement in an agreed direction.” Sarah Tyacke, in the foreword to Cox, *Ethics, Accountability and Recordkeeping*, xviii, wrote, “...the various practitioners in the records and archives field see themselves as doing different things from others in the same field and prefer to band together in particular groups for their own professional purposes. In doing this they can lose sight of the bigger picture, and even ignore their ultimate purpose.”

³⁶⁸ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07.

³⁶⁹ The stated priority of MLA to focus on areas which museums, libraries and archives share in common has already been documented, leading to a focus on “information provision,” according to Roy Clare, *Interview*, 21/1/08. This contrasts directly with TNA, whose priority is to focus on issues connected to information management and government trust. The same scenario can be glimpsed with reference to local authorities, and a focus on instrumental outcomes in some areas caused by political imperatives.

³⁷⁰ It was also noted in Usherwood et al., ‘Relevant Repositories of Public Knowledge’, 63, that the MLA structure is not always well understood by users, “When discussing the public perceptions of museums, libraries and archives and their relevant role and value, many focus group respondents struggled with the concept of treating the three organisations as a whole and challenged the concept of a ‘commonality of purpose’ between the three domains with the ways in which they perceive and use the different sectors.”

³⁷¹ This assumed alignment is suggested both by the priorities set out in MLA documents and sources such as the *Taking Part* survey. Disquiet over the predominance of the “cultural” mission for archives was voiced by interviewees and in literature.

³⁷² A point made by Proctor in ‘Professional Agenda and the Public Policy Agenda’, 25, “The evolution of policy can leave practitioners always ‘catching up’, or appearing not to map their activities to the latest initiative or given objectives – apparent discrepancies with possible significant consequences for local-level funding.”

level.³⁷³ Although these issues have all surfaced here from an advocacy perspective, they are clearly part of wider structural problems which fall outside the scope of this study. Some work is already underway to address these, such as the expanded role NCA intends to take with government and by MLA and TNA continuing to work together.³⁷⁴

The need for innovation in research and evidence

A possible lack of creativity on the part of the archive sector has already been noted in the ways in which messages regarding its value are promoted. The belief of several interviewees was that a significant underlying factor in this is the lack of robust evidence on the impacts of archives, a result of the lack of a research culture throughout the profession. Justin Cavernelis-Frost suggested, “Research in archives is bad...the profession isn’t a powerhouse of debate, and that’s the problem.”³⁷⁵ Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan agreed, referring to Judith Etherton’s powerful article on the importance of family history research to people suffering the effects of family breakdown, “We’re lacking an evidence base. We need more evidence like this for the human touch, rather than learning skills or meeting new people through the use of archives. That’s more powerful. We say we think archives are important, but lack the evidence to prove it: if you get evidence right you can get advocacy right.”³⁷⁶

These views support the theory that a strategy for obtaining evidence on the value to individuals of the varied uses of archives might enable more innovative outreach work aimed at a wider cross-section of the population. The challenge for the future, which does not yet appear to have been addressed, will be to become more creative in considering what current non-users may require from archives.³⁷⁷ There is also the need for consideration of how research data is used. The content analysis featured a range of surveys and collections of data commissioned by different bodies, with no evidence of a strategy to use them in implementing change across the wider sector. Ideally, research commissioned by PSQG, DCMS, MLA and other bodies would be utilised collectively in future advocacy and strategic decision-making, fulfilling Holden’s description of “better evidence” as “not just data, but knowledge that people can act on.”³⁷⁸

³⁷³ See for example James Purnell’s July 2007 speech on *Culture in the Next Ten Years*.

³⁷⁴ NCA’s aim for future advocacy work is “building up networks of the right people, so we can contact them when critical things occur,” *Interview with Jonathan Pepler, 25/1/08*. Both Roy Clare and Natalie Ceeney spoke in interviews about their collaboration and desire to achieve aims of mutual benefit to their organisations, such as the forthcoming UK Archives Strategy.

³⁷⁵ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost, 18/9/07*. He continued “The vision that MLA takes to people needs to be based on evidence, not on what people want from archives or what we think they should want. But evidence can be flawed and is often self-generated.”

³⁷⁶ *Interview with Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, 29/1/08*. She goes on to list “gathering of relevant evidence” as the top priority for future research in archives.

³⁷⁷ The need to engage new audiences is mentioned as a priority in both MLA and NCA publications, but the focus tends to be on the need to attract different types of users – the socially excluded, learners, those working with community archives – rather than on the important outcomes which access to archives could enable for people who cannot so easily be placed into neatly labelled groups. This is supported by Pat Thane’s assertion that “access by key groups of people seems to be the main driver” for activity within the sector, *Interview, 27/11/07*. Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan spoke in some detail about the importance of trialling “more abstract” forms of market research to uncover what users and non-users really require from engagement with archives. This might include issues such as *why* people might want to use a particular type of information, rather than the “empirical” methods currently favoured by archivists, *Interview, 29/1/08*.

³⁷⁸ Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value*, 19.

Shortcomings of archivists and prospective archivists

An issue raised in the majority of interviews is that promoting the value of archives is not something which can be left to leaders and strategic bodies, but instead has to be a priority for the whole profession. A number of respondents felt that the attitudes and priorities of individual archivists were a threat to attempts to improve the sector's visibility and image.³⁷⁹ Justin Cavernelis-Frost went so far as to suggest, in the context of a perceived unwillingness of archivists to engage in partnership working, that "the sustainability of the profession is under threat anyway, from the type of staff and their lack of ambitions."³⁸⁰ Roy Clare believed that whilst some archivists are very good at taking an outward facing view of their role, "they don't tend to surface – and often end up leaving the profession anyway."³⁸¹ A related point is the perceived dominant interest of many professionals in collections rather than users. Although some literature suggests this is beginning to change,³⁸² Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan noted that "archives don't push political buttons," explaining that users, potential users and policymakers are interested in what users can get from collections rather than the collections themselves.³⁸³

Ian Wilson, Government Archivist of Canada, described archivists as "the quintessential knowledge workers" as a result of the range of skills and competencies they possess, outlined in an article in 2000.³⁸⁴ Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan was one respondent who queried the accuracy of this description to UK archivists, stating, "Archivists lack a wider range of management skills, and therefore the ability to assess what they're doing and put it across."³⁸⁵ The motivation of many for entering the profession was also cited, particularly through responses to the Archives Task Force workforce study, as a factor in skills gaps which might impact on their ability to look outwards and influence others. Comments included "...a straw poll taken here suggests that historical and antiquarian sensibility is still an important factor in attracting entrants to the archive profession."³⁸⁶

These perceived shortcomings were believed to have a direct impact on the ability of many archivists to envision and articulate persuasively the value to society of what they do. Vic Gray was one interviewee who suggested that archivists often possessed a

³⁷⁹ This view is also highlighted in literature, as Cox writes, "Archivists spend considerable time releasing tension by laughing about how they, their institutions and their work are misunderstood by the public... Archivists also usually stop laughing about such matters when their programs' funding is cut, their positions eliminated, or their independence weakened because the people paying their salaries do not understand what archives are about or what archivists do," *Ethics, Accountability and Recordkeeping*, 231.

³⁸⁰ *Interview with Justin Cavernelis-Frost*, 18/9/07, speaking in a personal capacity.

³⁸¹ *Interview with Roy Clare*, 21/1/08. Bruce Jackson concurred, saying, "Lots of archivists are very bad at enunciating what we do. We're not good at blowing our own trumpets," *Interview*, 15/11/07.

³⁸² Horton and Spence write of "...the relatively recent shift in focus of the archival 'raison d'être' from the collections themselves to user needs and aspirations..." *Shaping the Economic and Social Impact of Archives*, 59.

³⁸³ *Interview with Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan*, 29/1/08. Vic Gray agreed, writing, "We find it much easier to talk about processes, what we do and how we do it, than we do about why we do it and why it is significant," *Archives and the Tribal Mind*, 125.

³⁸⁴ Wilson, 'Information, Knowledge and the Role of Archives,' 33.

³⁸⁵ *Interview with Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan*, 29/1/08. She continued, "Archivists are not radical people – they lack the means to do radical things. We need a massive mixing of archive skills with other skill bases."

³⁸⁶ MLA, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, Annex G, 28-33. This section also contains statistics on "factors that attract people to the archive sector." 35% of questionnaire respondents cited an interest in history and a further 27% an interest in the work.

personal mission, rather than a societal one, saying, “My feeling is that archivists still have a personal mission, a desire to turn chaos into order. People don’t necessarily recognise the possibility of connection to wider society, or engagement with the community. I’ve seen particularly with trainees that these ideas are often new to them, an afterthought.”³⁸⁷ This point of view is supported by the results of the survey of professionals undertaken in the context of research into the impact of the HLF on the archives sector. If a range of views on the societal value of archives really is diminishing in recently qualified generations of archivists this could be deeply worrying. One senior archivist in a local authority told me that she believes many recent entrants to the profession, if they do have a concept of societal value, have a tendency to equate it with the instrumental approach to proving the benefits of archives. She attributes this trend to a pervasive lack of confidence and fear of falling user numbers within organisations.³⁸⁸ It is possible that further research on a larger scale into where archivists see the value of archives may yield worthwhile results. In the long term there is also the possibility that greater emphasis at a strategic level on the value of archives to society would eventually have an impact throughout the sector and indeed on those choosing to work in it.³⁸⁹

Conclusion

The issues raised in this chapter, albeit very much in summary form, were – strikingly - the subject of almost overwhelming agreement from interviewees. All those I spoke to believed that the need to clarify the value of archives to a wider public was a matter of crucial importance, especially focussing on elements of that value which were perceived to have been neglected in the past. It is unclear, however, how far this would result in a radically changed view of the value of archives held by the public and policymakers. The views of interviewees confirm that leadership, self-belief and the ability to see the bigger picture all need to be addressed in addition to a strategy for advocacy, and in fact that merely expanding the focus of advocacy would be something of a pointless exercise to embark upon with some of these issues unchanged. It is encouraging that a number of the issues mentioned here have already been addressed, most notably by the work of the NCA in leading on professional advocacy as a priority, and it is clearly too soon to measure the impact of these developments. Further debate and research are now needed into these areas, and there is then a greater chance that attempts to promote a wider vision of the value of archives to a wider audience, as part of an established programme of advocacy, will be successful.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ *Interview with Vic Gray*, 5/2/08. See also his writing in Williams (ed.), *Archives in the UK and the Government Agenda*, 38. Brien Brothman spoke of archivists as being “unwilling to engage in the philosophy behind how we do what we do,” *Interview*, 29/8/07, and Bruce Jackson also highlighted problems with engagement, but in the context of professional activities, saying “The strategic vision has gone, due to exhaustion on the same few people,” *Interview*, 15/11/07. Brown and Davis-Brown in ‘The Making of Memory’ make the implicit suggestion that archivists, amongst others, hide behind a convenient smokescreen of best practice to mask and avoid complicated engagement with the inherently political nature of what they do.

³⁸⁸ Deborah Tritton: 2 February 2007.

³⁸⁹ The problem of a perceived personal mission for archivists was also raised by Cook, ‘Archival Science and Postmodernism,’ 19, “Archives are not a private playground where professional staff can indulge their interest in history. . . . or, equally, their inclinations to be part of the public policy and information infrastructures of their jurisdictions; archives are a sacred public trust of preserving society’s memories that must be widely shared.”

³⁹⁰ As Cox writes, “In an era of constantly shifting social, cultural, economic, political, and technological building blocks, archivists and records managers need to re-evaluate and re-affirm the substance of their professional and societal mandates. Instead, at least to date, these records professionals have appeared

Conclusion

My focus in this study was how the UK archives sector advocates for the value of archives to society. Despite limiting its scope to exploring the topic, seeking the views of others and making suggestions for future research, it still turned out to be a substantial and ambitious undertaking. The concept of value to society is a complex one, which it has been impossible to address comprehensively. The research methods utilised here, of content analysis followed by depth interviews with a small number of respondents, have been relatively limited in their scope and provide only an introduction to the topic. However, I believe enough data has emerged to show this as a worthwhile area of investigation to be developed in future. Information and examples gathered during the research process proved the wide-ranging impact of archives on people's lives beyond doubt. The content analysis enabled a snapshot of the current and recent position as regards advocating societal value and some glimpses into how that value is perceived. The interviews provided significant additional insight into where the value of archives might lie and how it could be demonstrated. Moreover, they resulted in individuals experienced in the archives and allied fields sharing their views on the wider issues affecting the sector and the associated implications for proving its importance.

This research project has seen a significant change of emphasis, away from an intended main focus on the evidential uses and value of archives and how these have arguably been overlooked to date to the sector's detriment. I still believe firmly that this topic is an important one, which needs more investigation in a UK context. However, it was first necessary to assess how important others perceived this issue to be, and in fact other areas connected to how the sector defines and presents itself emerged as being more so. During the last ten years we can see in literature and policy documents that considerable progress has been made as the concept of value to society and the need for the profession to look outside itself has begun to permeate the sector. Now that the link between archives and societal value has been established, at least in some quarters, there can be optimism that we will see further progress towards getting that message across to a wider public. However, the fact that so many are still ignorant of much of what can be achieved through the use of archives shows that the focus of this study, and indeed of the sector itself, on advocacy has been a necessary one.

Recommendations for further study

The notion that the archives sector is lacking the necessary research and evidence base to drive forward developments was raised in a number of interviews as well as being my own experience. Suggestions from interviewees for ways to improve this situation were numerous: my attempt here is to list and briefly expand on some of the main ones which emerged relevant to the concept of advocating for the value of archives to society.

- Perhaps the most important, and overarching need was perceived to be an in-depth consideration of what data is needed in order to decide how best to implement improvements within the sector. For example, what evidence is lacking on ways in which people engage with archive services, how might data which is already collected on use, non-use and perceived value be improved, and how might systems

uncertain, divided, and, at times, even confused. Strong leadership, clear thinking, precise writing, and excellent research are needed to turn matters around," *Ethics, Accountability and Recordkeeping*, 19.

be designed for data collection which are meaningful across a range of research objectives. Kelly, Mulgan and Muers note, “In most areas there are still considerable gaps in our understanding of how to create value through outcomes: either we have limited knowledge of what causes an outcome, or even if we do have a reasonable sense of the causes, we understand little about the effectiveness of different policy levers.”³⁹¹ For the archives sector, I would argue that obtaining data to prove causation and effectiveness is even more problematic. Addressing this would in turn almost certainly generate further priority research topics.

- Public Value has been briefly explored in this study as a way into discussions on the value of archives, but no attempt has been made to design a model for measuring the Public Value of archives along the lines of Holden’s and Hewison’s attempts for the wider cultural sector. One possibility for future research may be the applicability of adapting existing models for articulating value to the archive sector and organisations within it.³⁹² Further investigation would be necessary to ascertain how effective this would really be, in terms of demonstrating the value created by archives in a way which would translate easily into advocacy aimed at the general public. Writing from Cox, Cook, Gale and others examined as part of this study has focused on the ethical dimension of recordkeeping: whether societal value in its ethical sense can be represented by the more scientific terms of Public Value, with its emphasis on consultation, criteria and accountability, would need to be explored. The concept of refining preferences is a particularly interesting one, and Hewison notes that it “demands genuine public consultation and user participation on the one hand, and good communications and educational initiatives on the other.”³⁹³ The applicability of this as a means of balancing the needs of existing archives users with the need to demonstrate the relevance of the sector to non-users is certainly worthy of further research.
- Attempts were made throughout this study to characterise the different values of archives, such as evidential and socio-cultural. This was done by representing notions of value which emerged from literature and interviews, and it is therefore very likely that these characterisations contained anomalies and inconsistencies, and that others were omitted. More research is needed to define aspects of the value of archives and determine the societal impacts they produce and how these are perceived by the public. This might include addressing the difficult question of the fundamental principles underpinning the value of archives, whether and how these might be characterised and promoted to a wider audience.
- Brief mention was made in chapter six of the perceived areas of weakness in the archives sector which emerged from interviews. Detailed investigation of the extent and impact of these weaknesses and how they might be addressed fell outside the scope of this study. Further research will therefore be needed into these areas to ascertain which ones are having the greatest impact on the ability of the sector to move forward, both in general terms and in terms of the extent to which they might be hindering professional advocacy. The attitudes of archive professionals towards the value of archives flagged up in the research into the impact of the HLF is perhaps one particularly interesting example which stands out as a possibility for a future strand of work.

³⁹¹ Kelly et al., *Creating Public Value*, 16.

³⁹² See Holden, *Capturing Cultural Value*, 52, for a summary of the steps organisations should take to “articulate the broad themes of value that they wish to encourage and create.”

³⁹³ Hewison, *Not a Sideshow*, 47.

- Finally, there has been no space in this study for comparison, with the situation as regards advocating for societal value in other countries or other sectors. It has been mentioned during examination of the literature that questions over the value of archives have been raised worldwide, but that there are differences in how the various tensions have developed and been addressed. Research would be particularly valuable into which country's professionals have reconciled issues of value most successfully in order to present a coherent picture to the public, and how their efforts might be emulated. It would be particularly interesting to examine the situation in countries where archives are less aligned with the cultural heritage sector and the concept of evidential value is therefore more prominent. Comparison with other disciplines and sectors would also be worthwhile. Some mention has been made throughout of the wider UK cultural sector and how it addresses the need to define and demonstrate value. However, issues of public value and effective advocacy are important across sectors and organisations, and have certainly become prominent across the rest of the public sector as the literature shows. An investigation into which sectors have addressed these issues most successfully could possibly generate examples of best practice from which the archives sector could learn.

McKemmish writes “Records have multiple purposes in terms of their value to an individual, organization or society. They are vehicles of communication and interaction, facilitators of decision-making, enablers of continuity, consistency and effectiveness in human action, memory stores, repositories of experience, evidence of rights and obligations.”³⁹⁴ To professionals who concur that the value the recordkeeping sector can add is wide-ranging, and that it should be recognised and resourced accordingly, it is frustrating to witness the more limited vision of the sector often reaching the public, the “sense of archives as part of the heritage industry, with added pressure to transform them into tourist attractions”, in the words of Cox.³⁹⁵ Archives clearly have valuable uses for heritage purposes, but the sustainability of the sector arguably depends on their other valuable uses reaching the public's consciousness. Whether it is characterised as refining preferences, or simply as improving advocacy, it is important that all who have the potential to benefit from the existence of archives are aware of what they can enable. Holden and Jones write of institutions in the MLA sector, “Their ultimate purpose is to create public value by giving users the means to articulate and navigate the society that they make up.”³⁹⁶ The message needs to be more widely understood that for archives this assessment is true in the broadest sense, that they can engender and support democracy, a sense of place, and cultural understanding.

The questions I set out to answer in this study centred on whether widening the focus of the sector's advocacy would result in greater appreciation of its public value. It is an area for which it would be difficult to gain conclusive proof, but the preliminary data gathered here suggests that changes should definitely be attempted. Moreover, with the recent professional focus on advocacy, and the will that exists to see the sector moving forward in demonstrating value, a timely moment may have been reached to try something new in addressing these issues. As Jonathan Pepler notes, “We've only recently been trying to

³⁹⁴ McKemmish et al., *Archives: recordkeeping in society*, 15.

³⁹⁵ Cox, *Ethics, Accountability and Recordkeeping*, 239.

³⁹⁶ Holden and Jones, *Knowledge and Inspiration*, 8.

raise our profile: it's too early to give up the fight."³⁹⁷ More important even than the message we project outwards regarding our value, however, is how we define and articulate it, and the extent to which we collectively believe in it. Vic Gray suggests that "Perhaps, after all, with all the millstones of structural legacy we have around our necks, the greatest and heaviest legacy we carry as a group is that of our own limited expectations of what we can contribute and what we should aim for."³⁹⁸ Greater professional self-confidence and a sense of mission may be the key to expanding these limited expectations, and therefore the critical factor in ensuring the success of moves to improve the perception of archives in the eyes of the public.

³⁹⁷ *Interview with Jonathan Pepler, 25/1/08.*

³⁹⁸ *Writing in Williams (ed.), Archives in the UK and the Government Agenda, 37.*

Appendix 1: List of Interviewees and dates interviewed

John Holden, Head of Culture, Demos	31 July 2007
Brien Brothman, Archivist, Rhode Island State Archives	28 August 2007
Justin Cavernelis-Frost, Head of Archives Policy, MLA	18 September 2007
Bruce Jackson, Chair, Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government	11 November 2007
Pat Thane, Director, Centre for Contemporary British History, University of London	27 November 2007
Natalie Ceeney, Chief Executive, The National Archives	28 November 2007
Roy Clare, Chief Executive, MLA	21 January 2008
Jonathan Pepler, Chair, National Council on Archives	25 January 2008
Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, Press and Publicity Officer, National Council on Archives	29 January 2008
Vic Grey, former MLA board member & Vice-Chair, Archives Task Force	5 February 2008

Appendix 2: Interview Question Guide

- In what ways do you believe archives contribute to society?
- How well do you think the importance of archives to society is understood?
- How effectively do you think the archives sector gets its mission across?
- What do you believe is the main problem/s facing the archives sector?
- Do you believe the archives sector has a problem with leadership?
- What would archivists have to do to get taken more seriously by policymakers, and overturn the problems often quoted with regard to funding and image?
- How far do you think there's a degree of inevitability in a profession as small as archives being undervalued and under-resourced?
- Do you think a change of focus in advocacy could be the answer to the problems of poor image, lack of funding, lack of respect?
- Are archives and records management destined to split? What do you think the implications of any such split might be, particularly in advocacy terms?
- How relevant do you believe the evidential value of archives to be in a UK context?
- Why do you think only 40% of archivists (compared to 33% of users) strongly agreed in a recent survey that archives held a value in supporting citizens' rights?
- This study is largely a scoping exercise. Do you have a view on where it could go next and the value of pursuing the topic?

The above questions were generic to most interviews, although rephrased depending on the background of each interviewee. Additional questions were designed to take advantage of each interviewee's own professional context and area of expertise.

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