

NEWS

NDAD Newsletter #7 - February 2000

Happy New Millennium, or, if you prefer, just Happy New Year, or whatever it is in your calendar. Whatever other debates may rage, this is definitely the first NDAD Newsletter of the year 2000, and we are pleased to report that none of the ghastly consequences associated with that date has been suffered by any of NDAD's computer systems.

This newsletter rounds up major NDAD activities since the Autumn of 1999, which include articles in professional journals and visits to a number of conferences. (Thanks to everybody who helped pull this information together.) Yet further datasets are now available online, new cross-table browsing features have been implemented on the web site and work has progressed on improvements to our procedures for transferring datasets from government departments. We have also welcomed three new members to the team.

[Richard Davis](#)

- **News from Guilford Street:**
 - [System & Project News](#)
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- [Basic Archival Skills Training Day](#) - A report by Linda Heron on the *BASTD* course.
- [Personnel Profile](#) - Peter Garrod, NDAD Assistant Archivist

Project News

New Datasets Online

- The 1963 and 1964 [Primary Births](#) data (CRDA/5) contains statistical data on births in England and Wales.
- [The Survey of Heavy Goods Vehicles](#) (CRDA/14): catalogues now online.
- [Historic Mortality Data](#) (CRDA/20): catalogues now online.

Cross-table browsing

NDAD's software initially only allowed users to view datasets one table at a time. This was not always convenient and made the understanding of complex datasets particularly difficult. In November 1999, we introduced new facilities which allow you to exploit the relationships between elements of a dataset. This allows you to form queries which look at data in more than one table and to view data from multiple tables simultaneously. The facility is available for all newly-introduced datasets and is being retrospectively added to older datasets as time allows.

Quarterly Review

The Quarterly Review Meeting was held with the PRO who were reported to be pleased with the new on-line registration system. Procedures for transfer of records from government departments

are currently under review. This review was planned for at the outset of the service, and discussions will soon be taking place with interested staff within the PRO and government on the future form of the entire transfer process.

Phillimore Prize

Proud as we are of the high standard of catalogues on the web site, NDAD is entering the Competition for the "Best Published Archival Finding Aid". The finding aid submitted is [Historic Mortality](#).

Team appointment

Patricia Sleeman was voted a member of the International panel of the Society of Archivists which aims to forge links and relationships between archival organisations abroad.

UNESCO Thesaurus

ULCC is pleased to announce that a web interface has been created for the UNESCO Thesaurus. This is available at <http://www.ulcc.ac.uk/unesco/>. The web site allows the UNESCO Thesaurus to be browsed alphabetically and hierarchically. The site also includes indexes of preferred terms in English, French and Spanish. Each index shows the equivalents in the other two languages. Links are provided to the introduction (in all three languages) to the 1995 printed edition of the Thesaurus.

Interest in the UNESCO Thesaurus has increased following recent proposals that it should act as a standard for subject access points submitted to the English component of a UK National Archival Network. A seminar on its use was held at the Public Record Office on December 8th. Repositories which are using or experimenting with the use of the UNESCO Thesaurus for indexing purposes include the PRO, the Institute of Education (University of London), the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London), King's College London, and the UK National Digital Archive of Datasets. Our own Peter Garrod gave a paper on NDAD's usage of the Thesaurus at a PRO Conference on 8th December (Ruth Vyse, our former Senior Archivist, also presented a paper at the conference, in her new capacity as Archivist at [Walsall Local History Centre](#)).

The web site has been developed by ULCC pro bono publico with the permission of UNESCO. We hope that it will promote the use of the UNESCO Thesaurus in the archival community and assist those repositories which may wish to evaluate it for indexing purposes. In April 2000 an article written by Peter about our use of the thesaurus will be published in the Journal of the Society of Archivists.

ULCC has applied for funding to develop packaged versions of the thesaurus which can be easily integrated into common cataloguing software by non-IT staff. We will keep you informed via the website and newsletters on progress.

Conferences, Seminars, Visits

Society of Archivists Conference, Dublin

NDAD team members attended the Society of Archivists' conference held in [Trinity College Dublin](#) in September. Articles published in the Irish Region newsletter of the Society of Archivists and the "Irish Archives" Journal had already helped to raise awareness of the project. Kevin Ashley's presentation prompted very positive feedback and general inquiries regarding the preservation of electronic records. The conference also allowed the team to partake of a decent, some would say the best, pint of Guinness to be had in Dublin, in [Mulligans](#) of Poolbeg street.

Digital Resources in the Humanities Conference

In September, members of the NDAD team attended the [DRH/AHC](#) conference at King's College, London. NDAD took the opportunity to mount a display and presentation as part of the conference exhibition, as well as presenting a paper on the influence of computing on the history of government in the UK. Our newly-designed display attracted quite a few interested delegates to the NDAD stand.

Essex Data Archive, Essex University

Kevin Ashley attended "Framing the future: painting a digital landscape for social science resources" at the Essex Data Archive on October 4th and 5th.

Records Management in Government conference

On October 11th 1999, NDAD staff attended the PRO's annual conference for Departmental Records Officers, at Carden Park in Cheshire. One of the developments promoted by the PRO was a new training course for Records Managers called *rm3*. Sir Richard Wilson, Permanent Secretary to the Cabinet Office, gave a speech at the conference and he agreed to further discussions with the PRO concerning Records Management in Government.

PRO Visit to NDAD

Dominic Clarke, new to the [EROS](#) project, visited NDAD on November 11th to talk to Kevin.

DLM-99

In October, NDAD staff attended [DLM Forum '99](#) in Brussels, the second forum hosted by the European Commission to examine the general problem of digital records, from active records management through preservation and public access. The first forum, held in December 1996, was extremely useful in bringing together experts from many fields in computing, government, private industry and archives. Although useful guidelines were produced as a result, progress in some areas has not been as rapid as many would like, and there was clear pressure on the commission from attendees to press forward in implementing recommendations. Nonetheless, many useful and informative presentations were given by people from all over Europe and beyond. NDAD's Kevin Ashley gave a brief talk on costing models for digital archives.

Visit from Luciana Duranti, Prima InterPARES

Dr Luciana Duranti, project director of [InterPARES](#), visited NDAD on October 20th. A lively discussion took place after which Dr Duranti gave a presentation about this important worldwide research project at UCL.

Encoded Archival Description - European Users' Day

NDAD members attended and participated in the EAD European Users Day held at the Public Record Office on October 27th. There was a good international turn-out. The latest developments using EAD in Europe as well as the particular challenges facing us here were discussed and put to members of the EAD Working Group who are responsible for EAD development, issues and recommendations. A brief summary of the day will be published in the boletín de ACAL, (Asociación de Archiveros de Castilla-León) written by Patricia.

Visit of archive students from Aberystwyth and UCL

Archive students from [Aberystwyth](#) came to visit on December 9th: Jim Jamieson, Peter and Kevin talked to them about digital records in general and NDAD in particular. On January 27th students from UCL [SLAIS](#) were similarly inducted by Jim, Peter and Richard.

Articles in other publications

- Irish Archives Journal, Vol. 6, no 1, 1999
- Society of Archivists Irish Region newsletter Summer 1999
- Government Statisticians Newsletter, "Status", Newsletter for the GSS, November 1999 #

↑ Staff

Arrivals

Jim Jamieson, Senior Archivist, trained as an archivist at [UCNW Bangor](#) having previously worked as an archive assistant at [Nottinghamshire Archives](#). He then worked for [West Yorkshire Archive Service](#) (WYAS), whose website was created & edited by him, mainly based in Leeds. In the year before leaving WYAS he was responsible for implementing a cataloguing conversion project funded by HLF and for introducing [CALM 2000](#). Having moved from Yorkshire to Essex he's had to reluctantly trade in his cloth cap & whippet in order to qualify as a "southerner".

Alison Heatherington, assistant data specialist from Burnham, Bucks studied [Classics](#) at UCL, and then did an MA in Computer Applications for History, at the [Institute of Historical Research](#), in Senate House. In the past year, she has returned from travelling in [New Zealand](#), and then worked for several months doing data analysis for a market research company called NelsonHall. Her interests include archaeology, environmental conservation, and she plays the piano, and sings in a choir.


AnneMarie McCaughey, assistant data specialist, comes from a village called [Clogher](#) which is near the border in [Co.Tyrone](#), (famous for its [Sperrins](#)) in Northern Ireland. She moved to London at [Halloween](#) of last year and had been temping before joining NDAD in January. Before moving to London she was at [Queens University Belfast](#) for a total of four years. There she completed a BSc in Applied Mathematics, and more recently has been doing a Masters called Computational Science. She enjoys reading Irish authors such as the McCourt brothers and says that she is now actively seeking hobbies...

Basic Archive Skills Training Day (BASTD)

Linda Heron, NDAD Archives Assistant

I attended the Basic Archive Skills Training Day (BASTD) a one-day Introductory Course hosted by Margaret Crockett and Janet Foster. The course was aimed at people working in an archival environment but who have no formal qualifications and would therefore benefit from a basic understanding of the principles of archives management. The day comprised of five talks focussing on the main areas of archives and records management. Each session allowed for questions at the end and for discussion throughout the day. These were accompanied by a comprehensive set of notes.

Links in this Article

 [School of Oriental and African Studies](#)

 [University of Liverpool](#)

 [Audata Ltd](#)

Basic preservation, storage & handling

The first talk was on basic preservation, storage & handling of archives given by Janet Foster, an archives consultant. Janet discussed the environmental issues involved in maintaining an archive free from natural causes of destruction such as heat, humidity or light to human causes such as theft or poor handling of the documents. We looked into the various methods of prevention that could be taken to limit the damage done to the archive such as the different types of packaging used, the design of the storage area including type of shelving and document cleaning.

Reading rooms

Rosemary Seton from the [School of Oriental and African Studies](#) described how to set up a reading room. She covered issues relating to the size of area needed for the reading room, the location, design and facilities required for users of the service. This was a very detailed talk on the design and specification of setting up a reading room to the point of giving exact measurements for table heights and room dimensions. This was clearly taken from Rosemary's own experience.

Archival description

Margaret Procter from the [University of Liverpool](#) gave an introduction to archival description. We looked at the purpose of archival description, why an object needs to be described and how to describe it. Margaret explained the issues behind archival description using examples such as what does a clay pipe found in your back garden tell you about the history of the site of your house and how a company's archives are created to fulfil a business function. This helped explain in more practical terms the theory behind archival description rather than looking at technical terms from a book. We looked at the mechanics of description and creating multi-layered and structured descriptions. It was explained that the skill of archival description lies in the archivist's ability to provide descriptive data which meet the need of every kind of enquiry and enquirer.

Records management

Margaret Crockett of [Audata Ltd](#) then gave an overview of Records Management. We examined the relationship of the records management profession with other areas within the information management world especially that of the Archivist. We covered the definitions of records management and looked at the separate elements of a comprehensive records management programme.

Computers in archives

Geoffrey Yeo a freelance archivist and records manager discussed automation and the use of IT in archives. Geoffrey discussed the advantages and disadvantages of setting up an automated archive. We looked at the problems that faced companies who set up such systems in the past 10 and 20 years and the problems that they face now with the rapid development in Information Technology. We looked at the various uses of IT in the archival world and how best to implement these tools to benefit companies in the long term. We discussed the requirements for setting up an electronic archive from the initial costing to the training of staff in using the system. We looked at the types of software available for archives and the ISAD(G) standards that need to be observed when implementing and maintaining these systems.

I found the day very useful and interesting from the point of view of someone working in the world of archives and without the relevant qualifications. I found the last discussion on IT in archives particularly interesting as it helped me to understand how my colleagues at NDAD make decisions on archiving electronic data. I would recommend this course to anyone who is in the same position as myself.

For more information on this course and other courses run by the BASTD, contact Margaret Crockett and Janet Foster:

E-mail: BASTD@hotmail.com

Telephone: 020 8806 8631

Fax: 020 7502 6522

Address: *BASTD
May Cottage
1 Fountayne Road
London
N16 7EB*

Personnel Profile

Peter Garrod is one of the NDAD team's Assistant Archivists. Peter has worked with many of NDAD's datasets, liaising with Departmental Record Officers and PRO Client Managers, as well as making invaluable contributions to NDAD's internal procedures, ensuring systems follow archival standards as closely as possible.



I suppose I should start by explaining that I was born and brought up not in the UK but in the island of [Bermuda](#), one of the UK's last remaining overseas territories. My dad emigrated to Bermuda from England in the early 1960s to work in the Bermuda Police and met and married a local girl, so I have family in both Bermuda and the UK. Although Bermuda is still British in many ways, it is also very oriented towards the United States. My background and experience (and I suspect, my outlook) therefore tend to be fairly trans-Atlantic.

In terms of formal education, I was educated at [Saltus Grammar School](#) in Bermuda from the ages of 5 to 17, and then went to [Brown University](#) in Providence, Rhode Island, USA. I chose Brown because it is one of the better Ivy League colleges and has a particularly good History department (I'd long since decided that I wanted to major in History for my BA). I chose to focus on medieval, Renaissance and Reformation Europe; however, the curriculum at Brown is deliberately eclectic, so I did a number of courses outside of these areas (and outside the discipline of History). In my third year I went to the [University of Glasgow](#) on a Brown-sponsored "junior year abroad" programme. After graduating with my BA in 1989, I went to the [University of Chicago](#) where I enrolled in a History Ph.D. programme. After my first year - at the end of which I received my MA - I decided to take a year off and go back to Bermuda (by then I was getting fed up with full-time education!). When I went back to Chicago a year later my interests had shifted - as a result of the work I'd done at the Bermuda Archives in the interim (see below) - from the medieval and Renaissance period to early modern English history and the history of colonial America. I was particularly interested in the transplantation of English folkways to America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in comparing the colonial societies that grew up in Chesapeake Bay and Massachusetts Bay with the English colonies that arose in the Caribbean and Bermuda. My career plans were also shifting (again as a result of my year in Bermuda) from academic teaching to work in archives. When I finally decided that I wanted to be an archivist rather than an academic, I realised that there was little point in remaining in a Ph.D. programme which would take 3 or 4 more years to complete. I therefore left Chicago at the end of my second year (in 1992) to enrol in the Archive Studies course at the [School of Library, Archive and Information Studies, University College London](#) (see below).

My first experience of archives came in 1989 when I took a summer job working in the Bermuda Archives. This mainly involved cataloguing the Archives' backlog of records relating to Anglican churches. Although it didn't lead me at the time to consider archives as a career, I found the hands-on work with documents fascinating, as most of my undergraduate courses had employed published historical sources and historical scholarship rather than originals. In my year off from the University of

Links in this Article

-  [Bermuda On-line](#)
-  [Saltus Grammar School](#)
-  [Brown University](#)
-  [Glasgow University](#)
-  [University of Chicago](#)
-  [Public Record Office](#)
-  [Dorset Archives Service](#)



Chicago I went back to the Bermuda Archives, this time to catalogue some of their rich collection of seventeenth-century material (Bermuda was settled in 1612, making it one of the earliest English colonies in America). This experience not only caused my academic interests to shift but also led me to seriously consider archives as a career. It seemed to be a way of continuing my interest in history, without becoming involved in teaching (with which I was becoming disillusioned). The head archivist in Bermuda recommended the Archive Studies course at UCL, and my own family connections inclined me towards moving to the UK. I therefore applied and was accepted into the UCL course in 1992, when I'd finally decided to leave Chicago.

Now for the professional resumé. Since completing my archival training in 1993, I've worked for a number of organisations in the UK (returning to Bermuda was never a realistic option as the Bermuda Archives only employs two professional staff). My employers have included the Greater London Record Office (now London Metropolitan Archives), the [Public Record Office](#), the [Dorset Archives Service](#), and (since January 1998) UK NDAD. This has given me a good mix of experience in archive repositories at local and national levels, and has exposed me to a broad range of archival tasks (appraisal, outreach, public services, cataloguing etc). Like many archivists, I've found that over time the motivation behind my interest in archives has changed. What started out as an interest in archives because of the insight they provide into a particular historical period, has grown into an interest in the record-keeping process, how it can be improved, and how we can ensure that valuable information is not lost over time. In other words, I have developed an interest in archival science rather than simply seeing archives as a means to an end.1

At the end of the day, the core of what one does as an archivist is preservation: ensuring that vital records of the past and of the present survive so that they can be used today and in the future. The main challenge facing archivists today is not preserving the legacy of paper record keeping - though this will always be important - but rather, ensuring that documents which are "born digital" are preserved in digital formats and in a way that places them in a meaningful context. This is a new area for most archivists and one in which we lack expertise. What I like about my work at NDAD - and what attracted me to the job in the first place - is dealing with these challenges. At the moment NDAD is one of only a handful of repositories in the UK which are actively preserving digital materials using the methodology of traditional archival science. I hope that what we are doing - at least in the area of datasets - will act as an example to other archivists when they are ready and able to go down this route.

Outside of work, I enjoy country walking, exercise and conservation work. My wife Sarah is also an archivist, so we are able to "bounce" ideas off each other regarding our respective jobs (which is an asset, as neither of us works for particularly large organisations).