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Editorial

Welcome to the 10th edition of NDAD News, which comes just over six years since our first edition in December, 1997. This edition covers news from three main areas. News from NDAD itself carries a report from our recent open day, as well as copies of the presentations given which may prove informative for those who were unable to attend, or may wish to attend any future events. We also describe some of the new releases that have taken place in recent months, as well as giving brief reports on conferences and events at which NDAD was represented.

The Digital Archives Department is also involved in other initiatives relating to digital preservation and online access to information. This newsletter describes three of them: the UKAT project, EVAMP and the Digital Preservation Coalition.

And finally, our staff section contains news of one of the more far-flung visits our staff have undertaken as part of our training work on digital preservation and electronic records management, with a report on Patricia Sleeman's visit to Cuba. (Other countries in which we have been involved in training include Ireland and Estonia.) Patricia also reports on her involvement with the Fair Trade movement. One of the results of this has been to ensure the availability of Fair Trade goods in the vending machines here at ULCC.

We welcome your comments, good or bad, about NDAD News. Use [our feedback form](#) or [email us](#) to let us know what you would like to see in future issues.

Kevin Ashley

Open Day 2004

On February 12th 2004 NDAD held its second ever Open Day, an event open to the general public but attended mainly by departmental records staff and data owners, as well as others with a professional interest in the preservation of digital datasets. Since we held our first Open Day in Spring 2002, the issue of electronic records preservation has shot up the agenda of governmental archives and records management departments. As a result, this event was fully booked and several disappointed people had to be turned away.

Six talks were given by archivists and data specialists on NDAD's staff and by the project's manager Kevin Ashley. The day was programmed to appeal across the board, giving a general introduction to NDAD - as most of those attending have not been involved in the transfer of datasets to NDAD - as well as focussing on the individual stages in the dataset preservation process. Patricia Sleeman spoke on deposit and transfer of datasets (and you can download PDF copies of the slides from [her talk](#); [Peter Garrod's talk](#) concerned the detective work involved in reconstituting missing field descriptions; the evolution of NDAD's cataloguing from the traditional archival standard ISAD(G) to the XML standard for archives, EAD, was the subject of [Jim Jamieson's paper](#); data specialists [Richard Davis](#) and [Mina Creathorn](#) talked about the work they do in reading and extracting the data from its software package in order to save it in a non-proprietary format for preservation purposes. [Kevin Ashley's paper](#) concerned the many secondary uses of the datasets preserved in NDAD.

Open Day 2005?

Another Open Day is planned for early 2005 (or possibly later this year). Learning from the constructive feedback offered by 2004 attendees, the programme will likely consist of an introduction to NDAD followed by more detailed presentations and interactive demonstrations of the website. Although departmental records staff will probably get most out of the day, we also value the contribution of other archive professionals and interested parties. If you would like to attend, email [NDAD Support](#) or join the NDAD [electronic mailing list](#) for up-to-date news. Any regular users of the NDAD site who would be interested in talking about the use they make of the archive are encouraged to [contact us](#).

New datasets online

In the last year, datasets in the following series have gone live:

- [Schools' Census](#) - 12 new datasets (CRDA/13)
- [Learning And Training At Work](#) (CRDA/52) - 2002 survey
- [Earnings Top-Up Scheme](#) (CRDA/48)
- [British Crime Survey](#) (CRDA/2) 1988 and 2000 surveys
- [Judicial Statistics](#) (CRDA/8) - 2000 survey
- [Survey of Heavy Goods Vehicles](#) (CRDA/14) 1998 - 2002 surveys
- [Countryside Information System](#) (CRDA/46)
- [Digest of Museum Statistics](#) (CRDA/12) - final database
- [Public Health Common Data Set](#) (CRDA/24) 1993-5, 1997
- [Learning Partnerships](#) (CRDA/53) 2001-2
- [AIDS Advertising Evaluation](#) (CRDA/35)

Metadata in Digital Preservation

In September 2003, Richard attended the [ERPANET](#) Training Seminar, *Metadata in Digital Preservation*, took place at [Archivschule](#), Marburg, Germany, with speakers from many worldwide digital archive initiatives.

Themes covered included: identifying the purposes for which metadata was required (discovery, administration, preservation); the use and value of public metadata schemas, such as Dublin Core and MODS; methods of automating the collection of metadata; options for storing metadata.

Many approaches are based on the concept of a "digital object" with which metadata is associated. Digital objects share common metadata requirements, but also have distinct needs according to their class, be they text, graphics, data, web sites or multimedia. Some systems described at the seminar have chosen to store objects and metadata in XML files; others keep digital objects in filestore, and use XML and databases to store associated metadata (this is NDAD's approach).

Another major topic of discussion was the need to develop interoperable metadata, using published standards to achieve common semantics and solutions independent of platform, media or operating system. XML-based approaches in particular are enabling automated sharing of data and metadata over the web, regardless of individual hardware/software preferences, and emerging standards for web services, such as SOAP, offer a lot of potential to develop these systems further.

The seminar was superbly organised by ERPANET and the Archivschule, and everyone involved greatly enjoyed the opportunity to visit this beautiful old town and walk in the footsteps of the Brothers Grimm, even if that did mean climbing some very steep hills.

... continued

PDF versions of the presentations and further information about metadata issues are available on the [ERPANET web site](#).

Richard Davis

Records Management in Government

The annual [RMG conference](#) was held in Liverpool at the end of October 2003. Project Manager Kevin Ashley represented NDAD at the conference, a focus of which was the new Freedom Of Information Act 2004 and its effect on records management.

Practical Experiences in Digital Preservation

Kevin Ashley and Jim Jamieson attended this conference hosted by The International Council of Archives Committee on Information Technology in conjunction with TNA, held on the 2-4 April 2003 at Kew. The event showcased a new digital system for storing and retrieving electronic records created by government departments, with a date for inclusion set for 2004. For more information see TNA's [Digital Preservation](#) department.

Long-Term Preservation of Databases

This workshop, hosted by [ERPANET](#) at the Swiss Federal Archives, Berne on the 9-11 April 2003 was attended by Patricia Sleeman and Kevin Ashley. Kevin gave a presentation on NDAD's experiences of preserving databases as records. NDAD was cited often during the workshop as an example of best practice, particularly in our understanding and treatment of contextual information relating to databases.

NDAD is operated by the Digital Archives department of the [University of London Computer Centre](#). Here's what else we've been up to ...

Digital Preservation Coalition

As part of its wider role in preserving digital materials, ULCC is a full member of the [Digital Preservation Coalition](#), a coalition of bodies in the UK including The National Archives, The British Library, The National Libraries of Scotland and Wales, JISC, the e-science core programme and the Data Archive at Essex. The coalition exists as an advocacy body and to coordinate efforts nationally and internationally in digital preservation; its mission and goals are explained more fully on its website.

Amongst its more successful activities have been its programme of forums, which have brought together speakers from a wide variety of backgrounds to share experience and knowledge in many areas of digital preservation. ULCC has also contributed to a recent programme of workshops designed to assist staff in member institutions to identify the issues of concern to them and to take the steps necessary to get their organisation to address its own digital preservation problems, alone or in concert with others.

Forums are free to members, but open to all for a modest fee. The international forum, taking place in London on June 23rd, will follow the presentation of the first Digital Preservation Award sponsored by the DPC as part of the Pilgrim Trust Conservation Awards. If your organisation is already a member of the DPC, why not see if you can take advantage of the events it organises? If your organisation is not currently a member, but you would like to explore the possibility, visit the 'Membership' section of the site and contact the DPC Coordinator, Maggie Jones.

Digital Preservation Coalition Forum

Richard Davis attended the DPC forum at TNA in Kew in September 2003. At the event TNA launched their [Web Archive](#) as well as offering a preview of the [PRONOM](#) system. PRONOM is a database which intends to offer definitive technical information about file formats, including different versions of proprietary formats such as MS Word as well as open formats such as XML. It is likely to find much wider applicability outside TNA, and NDAD will be contributing information from its own file format registries as well as looking to find ways to make use of PRONOM's information in future.

UK Archival Thesaurus

This is a joint project involving ULCC and the [National Archives](#) (formerly the Public Record Office) to create a subject thesaurus for the UK archival sector, to be known as the UK Archival Thesaurus (UKAT). UKAT will provide archives with a common terminology for subject indexing, which will facilitate cross-searching by subject of archive collections. It will be based around the [UNESCO Thesaurus](#) (hosted by ULCC on behalf of UNESCO), which has already been adopted by a number of archives and projects, including several in which ULCC has been involved ([AIM25](#), [CASBAH](#) and [MUNDUS](#)).

ULCC (the lead partner) has received a grant of about £50k from the [Heritage Lottery Fund](#). The project will have a full-time editor (funded for 13 months) who will be based within the Digital Archives Department. Discussions are underway with [English Heritage](#) over the secondment of one of their staff to act as editor.

Peter Garrod

EVAMP

EVAMP is a European Commission project, funded under the [e-TEN programme](#), which builds on the work carried out by a previous project called EVA - the [European Visual Archive](#). EVA is a searchable website of digitised photographs from archives in Europe, with the pilot site including pictures from Antwerp City Archives and the London Metropolitan Archives.

[EVAMP](#) is what is known as a market validation project. The intent is to see whether or not EVA is a service which other archives in Europe would want to use, and whether or not people would use it to find and/or order photographs. We want to find out if changes to the EVA system would make it easier to use, and whether or not the way the pictures are described is helpful.

Tamsin Bookey, Kate Bradford, Patricia Sleeman and Silvia Arango-Docio spent Autumn 2003 visiting archives and photographic repositories across Europe to assess their interest in contributing to and potential compatibility with the existing EVA system. While the bulk of ULCC's contribution has been made, the EVAMP project will be ongoing for another six months.

Kevin Ashley

Managing electronic records in Cuba

In November 2003 I stepped out of a plane into a warm tropical night in Havana, Cuba. Meeting me was Ra I Rodriguez, a conservator from the Archives division of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment in Cuba. I was there with a colleague to give a 4 day course on the management of electronic records. The Cuban government had decided that they needed to take action in relation to managing their electronic records as they felt that urgent work was needed in the area. As relationships have deteriorated with the European Union to the extent that Cuba receives no funding from the EU, they have had to look elsewhere for money. As a result the [Social Science Research Council](#), a New York-based NGO, funded the trip, paying for our travel and accommodation expenses.

The approach we took was to follow the life-cycle of a record, i.e. all records have a beginning, middle and end. We described the challenges and solutions at each stage for managing records in electronic format. We emphasised that good electronic records management is impossible to achieve without good records management in place.

The class consisted of 52 students who had been selected from many various parts of the Cuban Civil Service. They included archivists, information specialists, librarians, records managers, IT specialists and a nuclear scientist! We taught for 6 hours a day and the Cubans were a very receptive audience so often we had lengthy discussions regarding issues such the definition of the 'record' which can mean completely different things to different professions, as we have found out ourselves at NDAD. Expecting some Soviet-type operating system we were surprised to discover that Microsoft has the monopoly in Cuba, used at least by all of the students in our class. I am happy to report that there are no McDonalds in Havana and neither are there the ubiquitous Coca-Cola vending machines.

After the course I also visited the Ministry of Natural Resources to give them some advice regarding their archives. There I saw a wide range of holdings relating to the natural resources of Cuba, from 19th century documents to a top of the range GIS system (ArchInfo). This particular ministry was very interested in the work of NDAD and I think began to appreciate that their electronic resources could be as valuable as their traditional archives.

Cuba itself was a fascinating country. To me in many ways it's like a snapshot of a bygone era, but in other ways it is an example of what happens to a country which resists interference and foreign intervention, depending on your view of its political system. Rumour has it that McDonalds have already earmarked future sites in Havana for setting up shop once Fidel Castro and the present socialist system is gone. It was interesting to hear my Estonian colleague speak Russian with some of our students who had studied in the former Soviet Union.

Patricia Sleeman, Archivist



It's time to play - and pay - fair!

Do you know where that cup of coffee on your desk comes from? Do you know how many hands the beans have passed through, what conditions the coffee farmers live in? What is the real price of the food and drink we consume?

Coffee is the world's second most valuable market commodity after petrol. Since 1994 the price of coffee on the world market has dropped by 67%. This has had a devastating affect on the lives of small farmers because the prices they receive are less than the production costs. Fair trade guarantees a fixed price for producers regardless of market fluctuations which enables them to invest in their farms and improve the living conditions of their families and communities.

At the end of July 2001 I went as part of a group to Nicaragua to work on farms involved in fair trade, picking coffee and helping with the growing of sesame seeds, making cheese, growing vegetables, building, gathering firewood.

Working in Nicaragua taught me to think more about my cup of coffee. Fair Trade can make a huge difference for some people, but what is really needed is fairer rules for everyone.

Ian M. Fraser, a member of a study tour to Nicaragua, noted that he '... saw fair trade schemes from a fresh angle. They are life-giving ... They cut through exploitation, bypass constipated bureaucracies and middlemen and put in the hands of the producers new possibilities for making a life for themselves, their families, their communities.'



A Fair Trade producer and her grand-daughter Carmen lending a hand.

Patricia Sleeman, Archivist

Link: [Fairtrade Foundation](#)

Fair Trade tea & coffee morning

On December 10th 2003 some twenty people attended a Fair Trade tea and coffee morning in the Blue Room at 20 Guilford St for a talk and slide show given by Patricia. Fair Trade coffee, tea, biscuits and chocolate were available and the profit from their sale has been sent to the Fair Trade Foundation.

Most of us have probably been aware for some time of the burgeoning chains of coffee bars in this country. We have probably seen at least one article on the struggle for survival of small coffee and cocoa producers in far-flung parts of the world in the face of huge falls in prices on the world commodities market. We may now and again buy Fair Trade products if we happen to be in the Oxfam shop or choose Caf Direct coffee from a supermarket or cosmetics from Body Shop. We may feel as far removed from the companies who make the profit from the coffee and chocolate trades as we are from the countries who produce the raw materials. Patricia has actually been there, seen it and indeed bought the T-shirt and therein lies the power of what she has to say. All of us who listened to her are now forever only one degree of separation from the little girl and her grandmother in the final and hopeful picture she showed us (see left).

We all now know we can help immediately by buying the high quality products bearing the Fair Trade symbol wherever we have that choice. We don't have to go any further than our own organisation or local shop to ask them to supply Fair Trade products to be a part of spreading the message ourselves. We also know that Fair Trade food and drink taste good!

Angela Mott, Data Specialist

Patricia is giving a talk about her experiences in Nicaragua and Fair Trade at Senate House on Friday 12th March. [Mail her](#) for more details.

Fair Trade chocolate is now available in the vending machine at 20 Guilford St, due to popular demand by staff. London Deanery, the building's major tenants who are responsible for catering in the building are currently considering the switch to Fair Trade tea and coffee.

More links:

[Convert your workplace](#)

[Traidcraft](#)

[Twin Trading](#)

[Catholic Institute for International Relations \(British Volunteer Programme in Nicaragua\)](#)

Work placement

Rena Akhadova, a postgraduate student at UCL's [School of Library and Information Studies](#), completed her one month placement with NDAD in early 2003, during which time she helped to convert documentation catalogue files as part of our ongoing system developments. Rena then returned to her MA course on Electronic Publishing with the unenviable task of writing a lengthy thesis. Hopefully we've given her plenty to write about!

Goodbye

In spring 2003 we said goodbye to data specialist **Alison Heatherington** who left us to spend a year in New Zealand and Australia travelling and doing voluntary conservation work. She's since been back to visit us and show us her vast collection of photos!

Hello

The Digital Archives Department welcomes **Miguel Faleiro Rodrigues** who joined the team in July 2003. Miguel combines his role of Scanning Technician with a PhD in Art History at [Goldsmith's College](#).