



ALN Skill Up session: Special Collections and Archives

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and Alex Mitchell (University of Salford)
Co-Chairs of the Special Interest Group





Fran Robinson

My career path...

- Disabled student in-class support (FE College)
- Research Degree Administrator (University)
- Programmes Officer (University)
- Information Assistant (University)
- Subject Librarian for Humanities (current role)
- University Archivist (current role)

Alex Mitchell

My career path...

- PhD in History (spent a lot of time using archives!)
- Archives Project Officer (University)
- Archivist (private company/business)
- Archivist (University – current role)



University of Lancashire set-up

University of Lancashire

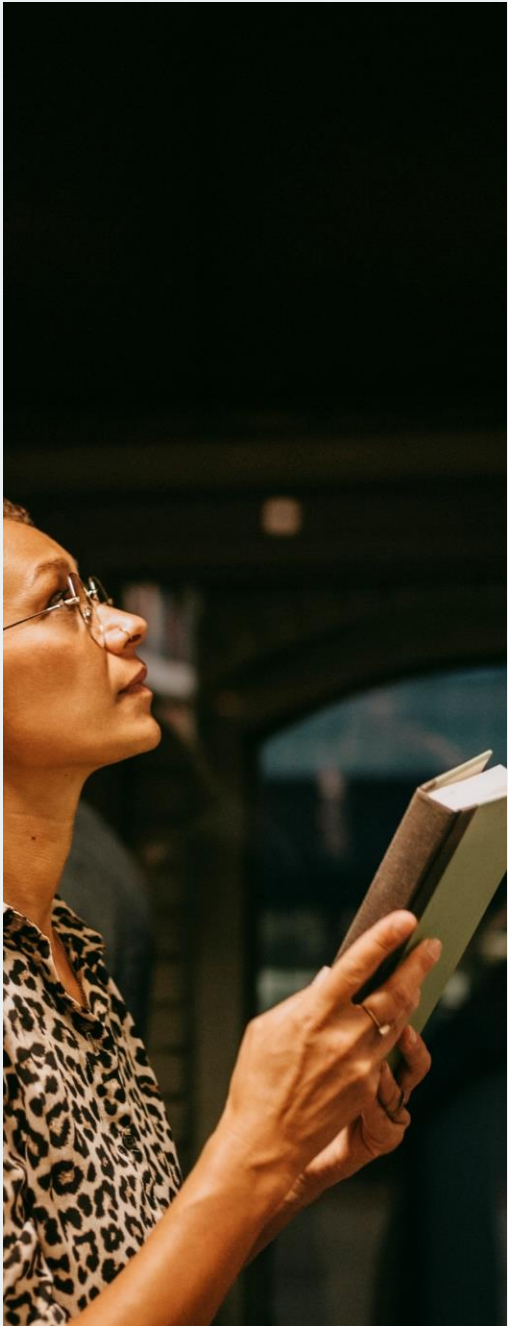
- 0.5 FTE (it's me!)
- Physical space contains Special Collections (donated and curated) and University Archive with space to view the material with the collection on library shelves
- Collection contains mainly books but some objects and ephemera, photographs, paintings and lantern slides
- Space located outside of the library in the SU building
- Have access to Treventus book scanning robot in the library and scanner/visualiser in the Special Collections space
- Digitised content available through [CLoK](#) (university repository) and [JSTOR](#). Catalogued items available through Alma/Primo.



University of Salford set-up

- 1 FTE - it's me!
- Part of the Content and Business Team in Library. Helped by Senior Information Assistants
- Search Room and Archive Store not physically in the Library
- Hold university archives and collections relating to brass bands, local writers/playwrights, canals, railways and politics
- **Catalogues on Epexio**
- Curated digital collections on Salford Digital Archives
- Some digitised content also available through [JSTOR](#)





What archivists do

Appraisal and Acquisition

We make decisions about what material to preserve in the archive to support future research, teaching and learning. These decisions are based on assessing the value of records and collections which may already be within our organisation or be coming to us from external sources.

Arrangement and Description

Collections are catalogued and finding aids created and updated. The collections are also added to national repositories to increase access, such as Archives Hub.

Preservation Strategies

Physical and digital preservation strategies are implemented including leading on policies and advocating for the service.

Access and Outreach

We facilitate access to collections through exhibitions (in person and online), education, and engagement activities for both internal staff and students and the wider community.

Key areas of expertise

Collections Development

Appraisal

Physical Conservation and collections care

Digital Preservation and digitisation

Metadata and Cataloguing

Copyright

Workshop development for various audiences

Bidding for grants

Policy development





Digital systems for Archiving

Content Management Systems

Systems like AtoM and ArchivesSpace help catalog, track, and provide access to archival collections efficiently. Not all organisations will have an Archives-specific CMS, some will just use the LMS available. Understanding metadata and effective archival cataloguing systems are a bonus

Digitisation Equipment

Items such as photographs and some bound material may be digitised in-house by the archivist. Other more specialist, fragile or legacy media may need to be sent to an external company to digitise. Digitisation throws up another aspect...copyright!

Digital Repositories

Archivists may be involved in designing bespoke systems for digitisation projects or adding to existing solutions.

Using existing digital systems – DIY approaches

Whilst there are lots of options for "best practice" sometimes, making a start is the most important thing. Capturing institutional records where they are created can be useful, e.g. using a Sharepoint site or Teams space.

Collaboration opportunities

Join the ALN Special Interest Group!

The group meets 3x a year to discuss issues, share experiences and learn from each other. The group is informal and includes both archive professionals and librarians.

Informally with members of the ALN group

Join the Archives-NRA Jiscmail

Organised by the National Archives this UK-wide group is a great place to ask advice and where jobs, training opportunities and grants are shared.

Start within your own organisation first

Would you be able to volunteer or shadow staff in the Special Collections or Archives? University of Lancashire trialling an 'Archive Club' for 2 hours per month within Library and IT services.



Advice from the SIG

- Follow your passion
- The importance of building networks within the profession
- Reach out to people in the post to ask questions and find out how they got into the job
- Build relationships within your organisation – find archive champions
- Don't be afraid to ask questions – there's no such thing as a silly one 😊
- If you can volunteer aim to get a variety of experience in different sectors to find what aspects you like
- Be creative
- Use every experience as a storytelling opportunity
 - e.g. not just scanning documents but making {x} collection more accessible, ensuring standards adhered to including copyright legislation.
- Develop time management skills and an understanding (if only basic) of different aspects of the job as you may end up working as a lone archivist.
- Celebrate the small wins!

Resources and professional development

Training and Networking

Key conferences to look out for include ARA (this has been getting more expensive in recent years) and DCDC and look out for any sessions from members of the group at the annual ALN conference.

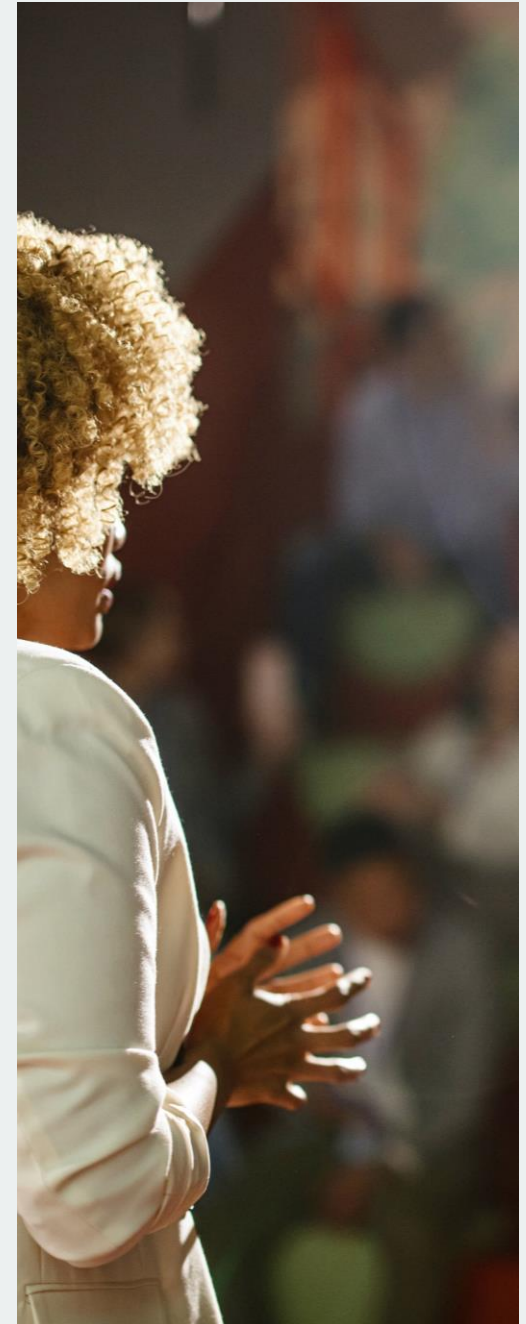
Many free webinars

There are many webinars on topics from the basics of archiving to how to collect specific types of institutional records and many things in between.

Training from The National Archives

They have a range of guidance available on their website and have recently created guidance for anyone new to the sector.

[Check out our Archive Basics Guidance](#)



Questions?

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