

**Hunting with the Pack**  
**An Evaluation of the Logjam Project**

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## Introduction

MLA North West established the Logjam project in April 2002 to audit the scale of cataloguing backlogs in repositories in the North West of England. During the 20 months of the project the Project Archivist, Alex Cave, visited 30 repositories. With assistance from repository staff, Alex gathered information on the size, type, cataloguing complexity and cataloguing priority of thousands of collections. This information was analysed in a bespoke database to generate reports:

- On the size of the backlog
- The types of collections that were uncatalogued and their priority for cataloguing
- Where uncatalogued collections could have been candidates for electronic access projects if they had been catalogued
- Most importantly, the number of archivist and para-professional years required to eliminate the backlog.

Each repository received its own detailed report on its holdings. Each repository was also given a copy of the database loaded with its own information for the repository to keep up to date and use. Furthermore, a regional report was produced by MLA North West to highlight the backlog issues facing the region as a whole.

This report evaluates Logjam. It considers the strengths of the project and areas for improvement. The report then goes on to look at how repositories have used the Logjam information to date and how they see themselves using this tool in the future.

This report is partnered by a report evaluating the Logjam Toolkit. It is hoped that the Toolkit can be a standalone methodology for other regional agencies to implement their own Logjam.

## Executive Summary

- 100% of respondents felt Logjam was worthwhile. In particular, being an external and regionally based report gave Logjam credibility and persuasiveness.
- 78% of respondents could not have created the Logjam information by themselves because of its sophistication, the time required and the economies of scale derived from using a single Project Archivist who became highly familiar with the methodology and common problems. There would also have been immense variation in the quality of information if repositories have undertaken the work themselves. Logjam provided consistently high quality information.
- A major strength of Logjam was that it clearly quantified the cataloguing backlogs. This quantification was done for specific collections, individual repositories and the whole of the North West. Consequently the report has immense flexibility as it can be used for individual collections, to develop plans for a repository or for generating regional strategy.
- Logjam was implemented at no cost to the repositories beyond providing initial information about which collections were uncatalogued to the Project Archivist. Thus the participants gained a large database of information and vital analysis for free.
- Respondents found the opportunity to compare their own services with others very useful as they could then illustrate to their managers that service issues were endemic across the sector and not the result of inefficiencies in their own service.

- 93% of respondents found the methodology appropriate in general.
- A key factor in the success of the project was the use of the Project Archivist who brought strong personal qualities such as project management, ICT skills and interpersonal skills as well as developing a strong understanding of applying the methodology. She was strongly supported by the Regional Development Officer, which ensured a well-executed and strongly promoted project.
- 70% felt the results were generally accurate. Several respondents said that the Logjam confirmed other findings such as previous calculations or Best Value Reviews. Only 4 respondents thought cataloguing times had been underestimated but even this group found the results were useful and would work with them.
- For a few repositories issues arose because there was not enough time to deal with their whole backlog (Lancashire Record Office), the methodology was for paper media (excluding photographic material) or the collections had an international importance whereas Logjam concentrated on national, regional and local importance (Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives). However, only a small number of repositories had these concerns and even then they still felt that Logjam was a very valuable project that they would use.
- Logjam has not had any impact on daily work of 59% of respondents due to other pressing demands and existing plans. However, it had worked to focus respondents' minds on cataloguing backlogs. For the vast majority of respondents Logjam is seen as a 'long-term tool' that will be used for many years to come even if it has not been immediately pressed into use.
- Only three repositories said Logjam had assisted them in gaining more resources for cataloguing and only 7 repositories had allocated more staff time to cataloguing.
- Logjam has particularly highlighted the scale of the work required to fulfil obligations under the Freedom of Information Act. Some said that it had been more thorough in highlighting which collections are affected by this legislation than they would have managed themselves.
- In general the response from management has been interest from line managers but there has been a muted response from senior managers often because lack of resources prevents an active response. This lack of response also raises concerns about the opportunities and abilities that archivists have for communicating with and influencing senior management.
- The primary uses of Logjam for respondents in the long-term will be to seek more funding, prioritize cataloguing and support Freedom of Information compliance.
- It is the opinion of the author and the respondents that the Logjam recommendations can only be implemented through a regional (or even national) strategy of obtaining resources and conducting cataloguing programmes. Many respondents doubted whether they would ever get any more resources internally as funding was already stretched to the limit without any sign of this situation changing. Furthermore, a regional response would bring out the interrelatedness of the region's collections and ensure a truly coherent solution to the cataloguing problem.
- Logjam is a long-term project of which the reporting is only the first stage. It should be closely monitored and nurtured to ensure the best results and monitor the true success of this project.

## Methodology

In February and March 2004 all but one of the repositories that participated in Logjam were interviewed by telephone. These repositories are listed in Appendix 1. The questionnaire used is included in Appendix 2. The Project Archivist, Alex Cave, was also interviewed as she had the experience of the operation of the project for the whole of the North West. The core nature of the responses has been summarised in Appendix 3. This report brings out the detail and rationale of those responses.

## Findings

### 1. General opinions on Logjam

When asked if participants found Logjam worthwhile the answer was a resounding 'Yes'. All the participants said it was worthwhile and the reasons for their overwhelming support were very consistent.

#### *Quantifying a problem for the first time*

Undeniably, the core value of Logjam was that it very clearly quantified what is a major problem for the archive profession. 67% of respondents said that having the backlog issues quantified was a major strength of the report.

Participants all knew that cataloguing was a major problem. However, before Logjam many had simply never had the data to demonstrate the sheer scale of the issues. Suddenly, in a very short period of time with limited input from themselves, repositories could pinpoint uncatalogued collections, demonstrate the priority value of collections and, most importantly, clearly state how many man years were required to deal with these collections and with what level of professional skill (qualified archivist or unqualified para-professional). This was often the first time total backlogs had been quantified. Furthermore, this data could be used at whatever level was required be it the individual collection, the needs of the repository or as an issue for the whole of the North West.

The sophisticated matrix of data that Logjam delivered to participants has thus armed them with an array of statistics and analyses that they can take to stakeholders. In perhaps 75% of responses this data was described as a 'weapon' or 'ammunition'. It's a fight for resources in the heritage sector and Logjam has given participants a vital method of attack (or defence?).

The project also provided the archivists with a means of understanding on an objective basis the issues they faced and developing practices to deal with them. For many of the participants Logjam is and will be key management tool. "It is always useful to have a problem quantified to some external standards so that you are not making undue assumptions".

#### *Having the impact of a regional initiative*

A major strength of Logjam was the fact that it was taken up on a regional basis. 59% of respondents cited this as a valuable aspect of Logjam for several reasons.

Firstly, it just gave the report more weight. The whole is definitely greater than the sum of the parts. Being regional gives the report credibility and was seen as more likely to be taken seriously than if repositories had produced such reports by individually.

Secondly, it provided an important scale of comparison for individual repositories. 22% of respondents commented that finally they could show to their managers that the issues they faced were ones that were endemic across the region rather than symptoms of inefficiencies within that particular archive. It is unlikely that repositories could have countered the inefficiencies argument in any other way.

Thirdly, a regional report provides the opportunity for individual repositories to compare themselves against comparator organizations. At the time of this evaluation the regional report had not been publicly issued (repositories just had their individual reports) so respondents were very keen to know when this report would be available. The ability to compare provides evidence of common problems, supports the argument for more resources where problems are particularly marked and provides the basis for acknowledging where an archive has performed particularly well.

Fourthly, the regional aspect meant that a wide range of repositories was included be it in size, subject area or collection type. The regional report was a fair reflection of the variety of repositories within the North West.

### ***An objective and external audit***

Another reason for the strong support for Logjam was the fact that it was conducted by an independent and external body. 41% of those interviewed specifically identified impartiality and external reporting as key factors in making Logjam a potentially very persuasive report.

The impartiality of the information gives the reader a sense of confidence in the figures. For many respondents it also meant that it was someone other than the archivist (or equivalent) explaining to senior management the nature and extent of the problem. This in turn gave the archivists' own protestations about cataloguing problems more weight because the report demonstrated that it was not merely staff 'whingeing' but a genuine problem.

### ***Without Logjam there would not have been this vital information and analysis***

Respondents were certainly agreed that Logjam was worthwhile. Moreover, the vast majority (78%) also stated that they would never have been able to generate the information themselves. Some commented that they would not have been able to develop such a sophisticated methodology. But all explained that there was simply no possible way that they would have found the staff time to devote to either creating the methodology, gathering the data or conducting the analysis. It was invaluable to have a project archivist take on this work. Some participants found the discipline of the project forced them to focus on identifying uncatalogued material, something they would not have done without Logjam due to competing demands such as running a public service. One archive noted that it would have done such an audit for particular parts of its holdings for a specific bid but would never have surveyed all its collections purely to create management information as Logjam had done.

Some respondents also noted that, quite apart from the fact that it would not have been possible to get all these repositories to create this data themselves, if repositories had undertaken individual Logjam-type projects there would have been immense variation in the quality and content of the information. A regional approach with a project board produced the same data across repositories to a similar level of quality and in an efficient manner.

The use of a Project Archivist meant expertise in the nature and application of methodology was developed in a key person. This ensured a very efficient process that, as the project developed, could accommodate many of the issues faced during the project. Alex Cave developed a strong understanding of likely problems that would arise and could often quickly address them. Her region-wide experience could then be bought out in the resulting Logjam report. Without the Project Archivist this detailed regional overview would not have been developed.

### ***No cost to participants***

Just one interviewee noted that Logjam was at no cost to the repositories beyond staff time collating lists of uncatalogued material and providing support to the Project Archivist. Presumably this factor was important in persuading so many organizations to participate.

## **2. Suitability of the methodology**

### ***An appropriate and efficient process***

Participating repositories on the whole found the methodology suitable for the purpose of the project and given the nature of their holdings. 93% felt that overall the methodology was sound. 'This methodology is an achievement that should be celebrated' - Vincent McKernan, Greater Manchester County Archivist. Many of the repositories doubted they could have created the methodology themselves. 'I was content to leave the methodology to the knowledge and experience of the Logjam team' - Aidan Jones, Area Archivist, Barrow Record Office.

It was widely recognized that it was always going to be difficult to create a methodology where 'one size fits all' and that inconsistencies were inevitable. For most the Logjam approach seemed to be the best solution.

Several respondents commented on the speed and efficiency with which the Project Archivist worked. It was clear that the methodology had been carefully thought through. Furthermore, as the Project Archivist built up her experience she could work swiftly and quickly incorporate repository-specific issues.

It should be noted that it was the responsibility of each repository to provide the Project Archivist with a list of uncatalogued collections over one linear metre, which she then assessed with the Logjam methodology. Very occasionally there were comments about certain types of collections that were not included, particularly ones with very old-fashioned catalogues, which in reality needed recataloguing. In such cases it was not the Logjam team who excluded these collections but the repositories themselves through their choice of uncatalogued collections. Clearly the lesson here is clearly spelling out to participants, possibly several times, the importance of correctly choosing collections for surveying.

### ***Minimum size of collections***

In general respondents were very happy with the cut-off minimum size of one linear metre. It was recognized that to include smaller collections would have created an unwieldy amount of data and most respondents felt they could already deal with collections under one linear metre from existing resources. However, some respondents felt that there ought to be some inclusion of smaller collections simply because they would have an impact on the overall figures. Perhaps figures for collections under 1 linear metre could have been extrapolated on a statistical basis.



Five repositories had many small collections under one linear metre and thus felt that the minimum collection size a drawback for their particular repository. One of these repositories emphasized that the Project Archivist accommodated this issue for this particular repository by amalgamating smaller collections to create artificial collections so they could be covered by Logjam.

Only one repository issued concern about the use of linear measurements. This respondent described the linear approach as 'flawed' and felt that a cubic measurement was a more realistic gauge of a collection's size. However, given most repositories measure their collections in linear metres the linear approach was the most practical given the timescale and size of the Logjam project.

### ***Other Media***

Whilst recognizing the need to have a straightforward methodology, several repositories said that they would have favoured inclusion of photographic material. In each case the repository had large photographic holdings. In particular cases the Project Archivist did highlight particularly significant photographic collections. One respondent suggested that they might themselves develop the Logjam methodology to assess their own photographic holdings.

The North West Film Archive took part but in so doing provided all of the information itself on its film and video holdings, which have different cataloguing criteria to the paper-based material for which Logjam was designed. Perhaps developing methodology for non-paper media will be the next stage for Logjam. Indeed, if the Logjam ethos pervades in the long-term then surely development of measurements for electronic records will also be necessary.

### ***Estimation of cataloguing times***

Opinions about cataloguing times estimated by Logjam were all very pragmatic. All respondents recognized it how difficult it is to estimate cataloguing times given the sheer diversity of collections and their varying complexity. Four repositories felt that certain collections' cataloguing times were 'a bit optimistic' but said that they provided a useful baseline.

One comment that arose several times was that the cataloguing times were based on a full working year without time out (e.g. putting catalogues onto computer, leave, sickness, other duties) and without identifying the importance of have sufficient resources other than staff, notably space. Clearly, the figures are under ideal conditions but they do at least provide a clear indication of the general scale of resources that would be required.

### ***Working with different types of repository***

As the comments above have highlighted, Logjam had to incorporate many different types of repositories in terms of size of collections and staff, subject matter, media, organizational purpose and parent body. What did emerge was that in general the methodology was the best that could be achieved given the sheer breadth of collections and organizations being analyzed. Where the methodology faced difficulties was where the organization was an extreme case of a particular element of the types of repository just listed.

This was clearly demonstrated with the Film Archive, which held two types of media (moving image media i.e. film and video) that are very specialised in their needs and

were not the target medium for Logjam (paper). As described above, the Film Archive itself worked hard to ensure it could fit in to Logjam.

Another example of extremes was the Lancashire Record Office (LRO). In this case the sheer size of the backlog meant that Logjam could only sample the backlog (with the assistance of the LRO). Inevitably sampling raises issues of whether the sample was representative, given the extensive variability in different collections' cataloguing needs, and how results can be extrapolated from this sample. Extrapolations were not made under Logjam as the aim of Logjam was to present only figures that were derived directly from analysing actual collections and thus were the most reliable that could be calculated in the time frame. Consequently Logjam may exclude a cataloguing time of, say, 90 years for the LRO collections. However, this was not in itself a weakness of the methodology but a reflection of the limited time scale under which Logjam was carried out. LRO estimates that all the collections could have been surveyed in a period of about 10 weeks, as opposed to the 2 weeks that were actually spent at LRO. It should be noted in the report on the LRO it is clearly explained that the Lancashire collections were sampled.

Individual emphases were also bought out with the Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives. Here the majority of the collections actually have international and national significance. Logjam concentrated on the regional, and to a lesser extent national, significance thus excluding this international dimension. Furthermore, being a university archive, it did not have access to para-professional staff. Para-professional staff are an important element in Logjam for calculating staff time to catalogue collections. However, this repository, like the Film Archive, recognized that Logjam was an important stage in addressing key archival issues and wanted to be part of the process. Consequently, the University worked with the project despite these drawbacks.

And this is the interesting factor that came through all the responses. Whatever reservations repositories may have had with Logjam the resounding feeling was that they had to be involved. Why? Well, perhaps Marion Hewitt, Acting Director of the North West Film Archive, best sums this up. For Marion to be part of a larger effort was very important to promoting the Film Archive and its needs, and to work and be seen to work with colleagues across the North West. For her this was 'hunting with the pack'. If the archive sector is to track down its prey of more resources it is likely to have far more success if it works together rather than each repository striking out on its own (which assumes that a repository has the capability to go it alone).

### **3. Accuracy of the Logjam findings**

70% of repositories considered that the resulting figures (such as cataloguing times, types of staff, size of backlog) were reasonably accurate. Some felt that the answers proved their own calculations or findings arising from Best Value Reviews. 9 respondents said that they had not actually had a chance to test the level of accuracy, as they had not been able to undertake cataloguing since receiving their Logjam report.

Four repositories felt that the cataloguing times were an underestimate, often due to the idiosyncratic nature of their collections. However, all commented that this is a very difficult figure to forecast correctly. One repository said it would present its report to its senior management with the proviso that cataloguing times were slightly underestimated. Many commented that they could not actually test the accuracy of the figures against the reality of dealing with collections simply because they had not got around to cataloguing the backlogs listed in their Logjam Report.

As noted above, several archives commented that the calculation of the cataloguing times was over optimistic because it did not include operational issues such as leave, sickness or interruptions. Again, it would be suitable to extrapolate the figures using statistically sound methods to incorporate such matters.

One archive, which was run by a librarian, strongly welcomed Logjam. Because the staff were not themselves a qualified archivist and they did not have access to archival staff they were very grateful to have the expertise of the Project Archivist. For them the results were very valuable because they provided a level of accuracy and reliability in the calculation methodology that this repository did not feel it could have achieved by itself. Incidentally, this archive also enjoyed just having the Project Archivist on site so they could discuss collections from an informed archival perspective.

#### **4. Impact of Logjam on the daily work of repositories**

One respondent described Logjam as a 'long-term tool'. This has been clearly demonstrated in the effect of Logjam on repositories daily work to date. At the time of this evaluation Logjam had only just been completed. As a consequence a large proportion (59%) of the repositories had not incorporated Logjam into their daily work as priorities and work plans had already been set, such as moving premises and changes in key personnel. At this point in time the major role of Logjam is to influence future planning (see below).

For a desperate few there was doubt if they could ever apply the Logjam findings. The sheer demand for public service and the lack of resources, especially staff, to meet these resources ensured that back-stage activities such as cataloguing simply would not be addressed in the foreseeable future.

However, where the report has been put to use it has been to organise cataloguing activity in terms of allocating staff time, including professional, para-professional and volunteers, and deciding which collections to catalogue. Many commented that Logjam had brought the cataloguing issue to the fore of their thinking and given them the incentive to assess ways of addressing the backlog. It has also highlighted individual collection priorities of which repositories may have not been fully aware before. 'Logjam has given definite signposts' – David Bowcock, Assistant County Archivist, Cumbria. In such cases, even where the repository was going to address cataloguing backlogs regardless of whether Logjam had taken place, Logjam has played role by providing highly detailed and accurate information which has, or will, inform cataloguing strategies.

Logjam has been particularly important in highlighting which collections are covered by the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and thus require immediate attention on legal grounds. For a few Logjam even increased the urgency of dealing with FOI-related collections. It clarified the work required of which they were not always aware. Respondents often said that they would not have been able to identify these collections in such a thorough manner by themselves. So Logjam has already assisted these repositories by clearly flagging up such collections, in a very short time and with minimal input from repositories. Undoubtedly some repositories simply could not have identified these collections comprehensively without diverting staff away from pressing demands such as public service.

One very interesting case is that of Bolton Archives and Local Studies. Here both the Archive and Museum service participated in Logjam. This has promoted awareness of archive documentation issues and helped them to be seen alongside those also affecting Museums. As a result of Logjam and

initiatives in the Museum, the Archivist has produced a documentation strategy outlining the resources required to eliminate the cataloguing backlog. Plans are now in progress to seek funding to extend existing Museum projects to include archive collections and for future joint projects. Logjam has not only raised the profile of the archive service; it has further justified the Best Value decision to employ an Assistant Archivist and it has produced clear evidence that joint working is mutually beneficial.

## **5. Impact of Logjam on gaining more resources for cataloguing**

Securing more resources for cataloguing is, of course, the major recommendation of Logjam. Unfortunately, for the majority (70%) of respondents no more resources were forthcoming. Occasionally this was because the Logjam report had not been introduced into the reporting structure so senior management and those controlling resources were not aware of the report's findings. However, there was a depressingly pervasive picture of services that are already stretched to limit providing a public service, with no chance of attending to cataloguing backlogs and no likelihood of further resources from internal sources. This failure to secure extra internal resources is clearly a malaise across the archive sector rather than a failure in the quality or relevance of Logjam.

However, there were three clear examples where the Logjam Report supported the argument for more resources, in one case another member of staff and in the other funding to prepare several collections for moving. In each case Logjam supported the case made for these resources in other processes such as the Best Value Review. So Logjam can complement other information sources and provide more weight in the fight for more funding.

When questioned further seven repositories explained that they had reallocated or were planning to reallocate a portion of staff time to undertaking cataloguing. This highlighted the effect of Logjam in raising the importance of backlogs in the psyche of repository managers and altering their priorities. One repository said it was actively seeking new funding for cataloguing a collection highlighted as having a high FOI priority by Logjam.

For some archive services Logjam provided a steer towards which collections had a priority need for cataloguing without altering the resources given to cataloguing. Here, clearly, Logjam provided these services with the data and analysis to direct their cataloguing resources to the highest priority collections and thus use these resources in the most effective manner possible.

## **6. Response of senior managers to the Logjam report**

The response of senior managers to varied greatly and inevitably displayed the culture of the individual organizations.

In a significant proportion of repositories there was a marked pattern. The immediate line manager above the archive service manager would be enthusiastic about the report and welcome the findings as providing concrete evidence of a long-standing issue. 37% of respondents described their line manager as enthusiastic and 26% of line managers were described as finding the report useful. 15% of line managers were described as non-committal. However, the response of the management above the line manager was at best non-committal and often one of complete silence! 26% of respondents said that either their line manager or senior management had not made any response to the report.

Four respondents explained that their senior management team had not yet commented because the Logjam Report had either not been reported to them or had only just been fed into the reporting process. This indicates that getting the report into the political process can be time-consuming in itself.

Interestingly, three archives said that Logjam had provided the vehicle for placing the issue of cataloguing on the senior management meeting agenda.

The respondents generally exhibited unsurprised frustration at the reaction (or lack of it) by senior management. Time and again the feeling was that senior management felt it was just another resourcing problem and that it would just be thrown on the pile with all the other resource problems. This reaction was not necessarily ignorance of archival needs but simply recognition of the sheer impossibility of finding more funding. One respondent described their line manager as demonstrating 'weary acceptance' of the Logjam findings. The clear message was that the vast majority of organizations simply do not, and probably never will, have the internal means to comprehensively and systematically address the cataloguing backlogs. Only external funding will overcome such problems.

One respondent explained that they would not be reporting Logjam to their senior management. Their concern was that the senior management team was simply the wrong place to report on such issues in these organizations. Operational concerns such as cataloguing backlogs were for the archive service managers to deal with and were not an issue for the management team above.

Clearly these responses raise serious concerns about the opportunities and abilities that archivists have for communicating with and influencing their senior managers. Despite the serious nature of Logjam's findings, senior management often did not respond and few management teams have taken action on the basis of Logjam. Cataloguing backlogs are not just an operational irritation. Cataloguing is at the heart of providing future access and services. Without properly catalogued collections the services will not be able to support the demands of users let alone enable their organizations comply with government policy, performance indicators or Data Protection and FOI legislation, amongst others. In such organizations for the potential of Logjam to be fulfilled its findings must be fed through alternative, probably external, channels.

## **7. How the Logjam report will be used in the future by repositories**

The individual Logjam reports provided repositories with a variety of potential future uses. As well as keeping the data up to date (as requested by the Logjam team so that the project can be reviewed in five years time, Logjam will support operational and strategic activity.

Operationally Logjam will provide the basis for prioritizing cataloguing (63%), organizing staff duties (11%) and supporting FOI activity (48%). Strategically Logjam provides the basis for developing service plans, development plans and cataloguing strategies. 30% of respondents identified these strategic activities as a future use of the report. Logjam is now informing repositories about incorporating cataloguing into their strategic thinking.

Inevitably one of the highest responses was using Logjam to seek more resources either from internal or external sources, including putting in collaborative bids for funding (52%). Hopefully the regional Logjam Report will provide a basis for

identifying potential collaborative bids and serve as an argument in funding bids for more resources.

However, Logjam will also be used to support other needs peculiar to individual repositories. Two repositories were facing a merger so Logjam would be used to explore the ramification of a joint service. Another archivist was confident that they could use Logjam to improve the general state of the service. Finally, one repository explained that they hoped to extend the Logjam methodology to other types of collections not covered in the original survey because the results had proved so useful and they wanted a comprehensive picture of the state of collections.

A strong message that came out was that the Logjam findings were very much a long-term strategic tool. The value of this project could only be measured over several years and any assessment of Logjam's impact to date would provide an inevitably incomplete picture of the true worth of the project.

## 8. Other comments on the project

All respondents were asked if they had anything to add to the questions that had been set by the interviewer. The aim of this section was to let the respondents freely comment on the project and bring out any issues which they considered important but had not yet been covered. Interestingly, there were basically three answers.

Firstly, most reiterated how useful they had found the project. This was a survey that needed to be carried out. The methodology employed was practical and relevant and the resulting reports have provided important data for managing archive services at a multiplicity of levels from allocating staff time to developing long-term strategies.

Secondly, there was much praise for the Project Archivist, Alex Cave. It was clear that Alex brought several invaluable qualities to the project. Firstly, she had the technological and analytical skills to develop a reasonably sophisticated yet practical methodology with the support of the Project Board. Secondly, the combination of her professional knowledge and the experience gained from surveying all the repositories ensured she had a strong ability to judge situations so that she could work in the most efficient manner and accommodate anomalies. Thirdly, as a person she was very personable and self-supporting. Many repositories commented on what a pleasure it was to work with Alex and how little effort they had to put in to supporting her work once they had provided lists of uncatalogued collections. Finally, Alex was very strongly supported by the Regional Archive Development Officer, Janice Tullock (née Taylor). Together they provided a powerful team for advocating the project and making it a reality.

Finally, there was a constant pleading in the responses for a regional solution to the issues thrown up by Logjam. Virtually all the respondents acknowledged that they would not be able to address the resource implications of the reports from internal funds. North West archive services have no further resources now or in the foreseeable future to deal with the problems and neither do their parent organizations. External funding was seen as the only option. Consequently, respondents strongly hoped that a regionally based solution would be found as they felt that this was the only way that a request for more resources would have enough impact to be successful. Furthermore, many felt that a regional cataloguing team would be a practical and fair solution.

## 9. The view from the top – the findings of the Project Archivist

As part of this evaluation the Project Archivist, Alex Cave, was also interviewed because she could provide a unique overview of the Logjam project.

She believed that there was no other way in which the Logjam information could have been generated. It would certainly have been an impossible undertaking for many repositories, particularly the smaller ones. She felt the methodology overall was sound although she did encounter issues dealing with particularly large collections.

Alex also reiterated the need for a regional-wide response to the cataloguing problems that Logjam identified. Her opinion, however, was not purely based on the political need for services to band together when seeking resources. It had a strong archival rationale. During her work on Logjam Alex had come to realize that so many collections were interrelated even though they were in different locations. Only a regional initiative could bring out the connections between the collections spread across the North West. Working regionally would bring out the full potential of collections for users and support them in effectively searching for what they required.

Alex also felt that the regional working would also have the side-benefits of introducing archive services to more co-operative working and provide the basis for other necessary regional initiatives such as conservation surveys.

Finally, Alex commented on how much she had enjoyed the project and the very warm welcome she had received from participants.

## Conclusions

In terms of its planning and execution Logjam was a success. In just 14 months 30 repositories were surveyed and reported upon. Logjam generated relevant and mostly accurate information that provides the basis for strategic and operational decision-making at both the repository and regional level. It brought the region's archivists together and showed that MLA North West takes fundamental issues in collections care very seriously.

However, the great success of the project has been to quantify and describe the issues around the improving the accessibility of the North West's collections through cataloguing. Arising from this several key themes have emerged which this evaluation has highlighted.

Firstly, within the methodology there may be scope to develop statistically sound extrapolation techniques to refine the Logjam technique so that it can accommodate practical concerns. The original timescale of Logjam precluded a full survey of the largest backlogs that existed at the Lancashire Record Office. Furthermore, not all repositories in the North West participated in the survey. Thirdly, all those collections excluded from Logjam because they were below one linear metre will themselves require significant cataloguing resources. Finally, particular types of media were excluded from the survey, notably photographic material. Each of these factors would have had an impact on the final figures. Therefore, if it were possible to develop extrapolation techniques this would obviously enable Logjam to cover those areas which had to be excluded in the original project. However, whether such extrapolation techniques could be developed is not clear given the sheer number of variables involved in any such calculation.

Secondly, persuading management above the archive service to be aware of and act on the Logjam findings is proving difficult for those running services. Logjam has really made this problem explicit, as its very purpose was to raise some of the issues archives face. Often the archive service is not politically strong enough to draw serious attention to the project. This must surely be a role for regional and national agencies to act as external influences on management teams. Such agencies can highlight the impact of good cataloguing on service provision and build cataloguing into the standards expected of cultural service providers. They can raise the importance of cataloguing to areas that are important to senior management but over which archivists have little involvement.

Finally, it is clear that the resolution of the Logjam issues lies at a regional or even national level, not at the repository level. Just as Full Disclosure has recognized the need for a co-ordinated and properly funded approach to putting heritage information on-line, so cataloguing can only be properly organized and resourced by the heritage sector acting together from the government department and funding agencies down to the individual archivist.

All this indicates that Logjam is truly a long-term process of which the report generation is only the first stage. Logjam needs to be carefully monitored and nurtured over the coming years to maximise its success and properly evaluate its worth.

In summary, Logjam has been a notable success and strongly supported by all those who took part. It has clearly identifies the issues surrounding cataloguing backlogs and galvanised professional support for a concerted effort to resolve this issues. However, for the cataloguing backlogs in the North West to be properly addressed will require serious resourcing and political will. This is where Logjam must now go.



## Appendix 1 - Evaluation Participants

- Alex Cave – Logjam Project Archivist
- Bolton Archive and Local Studies Service
- Bury Archives Service
- Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies
- Chetham's Library
- Cumbria Archive Service, Barrow
- Cumbria Archive Service, Kendal
- Cumbria Archive Service, Whitehaven
- Cumbria Archive Service, Carlisle
- Greater Manchester County Record Office
- Knowsley Archives
- Lancashire Record Office
- Liverpool and Merseyside Record Office
- Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives
- Manchester Archives and Local Studies
- Manchester University – John Rylands University Library of Manchester
- Manchester University – Labour History and Archive Study Centre
- Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester
- National Museums Liverpool
- North Sefton Local Studies Library
- North West Film Archive
- Oldham Local Studies and Archives
- South Sefton Local Studies Library
- St Helens Local Studies and Archives
- Stockport Archives Service
- Tameside Local Studies Library
- Unilever
- Wirral Archive Service

Total number of participants including Project Archivist: 28

Note: Rochdale Local Studies Library was not interviewed because the responsible staff member was on long-term leave.

## Appendix 2 Evaluation Questionnaire

Office:	
Interviewee:	Job title
Date and time:	
1. Generally did you find the whole project worthwhile? Could they have had this information without Logjam?	
2. Did you find the methodology suitable given the purpose of Logjam and the nature of your collections? (I would be particularly interested in their opinions on the minimum collection size of 1 linear shelf metre, definition of an uncatalogued collection, method of estimating cataloguing times).	
3. Did you find the Logjam results accurate and useful? Give reasons.	
4. How has Logjam impacted on the daily work of your repository? (Issues such as prioritizing cataloguing, allocating resources and strategic planning)	
5. Has Logjam resulted in more resources or reallocation of resources for cataloguing?	
6. How has your line manager/organization reacted to the Logjam information?	
7. How do you see your repository using Logjam in the future?	
8. Any other comments.	
9. May I directly quote you in the report?	

### Appendix 3 - Summary of Results

*Note: Respondents were encouraged to answer the questionnaire very freely. Some gave no answer at all for a particular issue and other respondents often gave more than one answer to each question. Consequently, the number of responses for a particular question may well total more or less than the number of interviewees. Furthermore, a similar answer may appear against several questions. In the body of the report this double counting has been removed.*

*This summary does not include all comments given by interviewees. These are bought out in the body of this report.*

*The responses of the Project Archivist, Alex Cave, are not included in this summary.*

#### Question 1. Was the project worthwhile and could you have generated the Logjam information yourself?

<i>Response</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>% of respondents</i>
Yes the project was worthwhile	27	100
There was value in the project being regionally based	16	59
Logjam quantified the outstanding issue of cataloguing backlogs	18	67
Logjam's impartiality was important	3	11
It was important to have an external report on the backlog situation	8	30
The repository could not have generated the logjam information by itself	21	78
It was useful to have a comparison with other offices	6	22

#### Question 2. Did you find the methodology suitable?

<i>Response</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>% of respondents</i>
Yes, the methodology was generally suitable	25	93
One linear metre was too large a cut off point	5	19
Cataloguing time was underestimated	4	15

#### Question 3. Did you find the Logjam results accurate and useful?

<i>Response</i>	<i>Response</i>	<i>Response</i>
Yes, the results were accurate	19	70
The cataloguing times were too low	4	15
Unable to comment on	9	33

accuracy as have yet to work with the Logjam findings		
Yes, it was a useful report	17	63

**Question 4. How as Logjam impacted on the daily work of your repository?**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>% of respondents</i>
It has not had any impact yet	16	59
Been used to prioritize cataloguing work	17	63
Ensuring Freedom of Information compliance	13	48
Developing a cataloguing strategy	8	30
Identifying specific candidates for funding bids	3	11

**Question 5. Has Logjam resulted in more resources or a reallocation of resources for cataloguing?**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>% of respondents</i>
Yes, there have been more resources partly as a result of Logjam	3	11
There has been a reallocation of staff time	7	26
There have not been any more resources or reallocation of resources	19	70

**Question 6. How has your line manager/organization reacted to the Logjam information?**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>% of respondents</i>
My line manager was enthusiastic	10	37
My senior manager/management was enthusiastic	2	7
My line manager/senior manager has not given any response	7	26
Logjam has not yet been reported to senior management	4	15
Too early to comment	1	4
Line manager found the report useful	7	26
Line manager interested by non-committal	4	15
Logjam was the mechanism for getting	3	11

backlogs on to the agenda for a senior management meeting		
Not suitable for reporting to senior management	1	4

**Question 7. How do you see your repository using Logjam in the future?**

<i>Response</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>% of respondents</i>
Will seek more resources for cataloguing either internally or externally	14	52
Develop cataloguing strategies	8	30
Prioritizing cataloguing	17	63
Organizing staff time/duties	8	30
Promoting the report	3	11
Supporting FOI activities	13	48

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