



Engaging archives with *Inspiring Learning for All*

A report prepared for MLA North West

September 2005

Jocelyn Dodd
Lisanne Gibson
Ceri Jones
Chris Pickford
Gaby Porter

Engaging Archives with *Inspiring Learning for All*

This report has been prepared by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) for the Museums Libraries and Archives Council North West (MLA North West)

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Research team:

Jocelyn Dodd
Lisanne Gibson
Ceri Jones
Chris Pickford
Gaby Porter

Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG)
Department of Museum Studies
105 Princess Road East
Leicester, LE1 7LG
0116 252 3995
jad25@le.ac.uk

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RCMG
Research Centre for
Museums and Galleries



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'Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, awareness, values, ideas, and feelings, or an increase in the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more'

Inspiring Learning for All, MLA 2004.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned from the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries in the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester (RCMG) by MLA North West. The research task was to identify and analyse the challenges and barriers which militate against archives in the North West engaging with *Inspiring Learning for All*, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) framework for enabling learning in its broadest sense in archives, museums, and libraries.

Context of the report:

- In 2004 MLA launched *Inspiring Learning for All* its national framework for accessible learning.
- The archive domain has been identified as an area where there are particular challenges to developing capacity in relation to learning.
- This report will map out and analyse the internal and external challenges and barriers, to the archive domain, which explain its lack of engagement with *Inspiring Learning for All*.

Findings of the report:

- There is very little knowledge or understanding of *Inspiring Learning for All* in the archive domain. In the main it is viewed negatively viewed as something which will increase workloads. The opportunities of engaging with it are not recognised or understood.
- The domain does not consider the facilitation of accessible learning as defined by MLA to be a central function of archives.
- The domain does not operate and define itself on the basis of modern public policy objectives such as social inclusion, cultural diversity, and life long learning, which are the responsibilities of all organisations with a public remit.
- The domain's failure to modernise organisationally, attitudinally, or culturally means that it is very difficult for it to understand or know how to integrate a modern policy agenda such as *Inspiring Learning for All*.
- There is very little research on broad-based learning outcomes in archives; therefore there is no evidence on which to develop strategic initiatives which would educate archive staff and others (including potential partners) about the different kinds of learning they already enable.

- There is no domain wide clearly articulated contemporary vision which informs archive management and development.

Recommendations of the report:

- Our central finding is that in order for the archive domain to engage with contemporary learning agendas fundamental change will be required.
- We have provided a three step way of drawing archives into a change process which is built around contemporary learning agendas and *Inspiring Learning for All* in particular.
 1. **Purpose of archives:** A contemporary vision for archives must be developed. A vision that is modern in that it is focused on providing access to archives to a diversity of users, making the facilitation of accessible learning a central function of archives will enable this change.
 2. **Drivers for change:** external drivers must be identified and used to enable a process of modernisation to occur in the archive domain.
 3. **Strategies for organisational change:** a set of strategies must be identified and used as a motivator for change in archives in the North West.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In April 2005 MLA North West commissioned the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) in the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester to undertake research to identify and analyse the challenges and barriers which militate against archives in the North West engaging with *Inspiring Learning for All*. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) launched *Inspiring Learning for All* in 2004 as a national framework to help museums, libraries and archives transform the learning opportunities they provide.

The impetus to carry out this research emerged when MLA North West commissioned RCMG to facilitate and develop a Learning Advocates' Network in the region. The aim of the Network was to work with a group of people from organisations who were already engaged with *Inspiring Learning for All* and to develop those people as learning advocates for the region. The Learning Advocates' Network was one of the many strategies MLA North West used to roll out and embed *Inspiring Learning for All* in the region. In developing the Learning Advocates Network MLA North West and RCMG were both aware that Archives faced particular challenges in implementing *Inspiring Learning for All*. To ensure they could properly understand the challenges and barriers faced by archives and to support them as effectively as possible MLA North West commissioned this research.

RCMG has a national reputation for excellence in research on learning in archives, libraries and museums. Since 1999 RCMG has conducted research on learning in cultural institutions for a range of clients including ground-breaking national studies for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).¹ RCMG was involved in the development of *Inspiring Learning for All* and specifically responsible for the development of the Generic Learning Outcomes which are used to categorise the impact of users learning. RCMG piloted the Generic Learning Outcomes in archives, libraries and museums (see section 4.2.6 for a discussion of the development of *Inspiring Learning for All* in relation to archives). Thus, RCMG has a record of excellence in research, and specialist knowledge and skills in relation to *Inspiring Learning for All*.

1.2 The archive domain's response to *Inspiring Learning for All*

MLA North West was concerned that archives were not capitalising on the opportunities presented to them by *Inspiring Learning for All*. There had been a low attendance from archive staff at both national and regional launches of *Inspiring Learning for All*. Many in the archive domain voiced

¹ See the RCMG web site for further information, including copies of reports, for other projects undertaken, <http://www.le.ac.uk/ms/rcmg/rcmg.htm>.

anxiety that they had insufficient capacity to implement this new initiative. The focus of this research is to map out and analyse both the internal and external *challenges* and *barriers* to the archive domain which explain its lack of engagement with *Inspiring Learning for All*. The function of this report is therefore not to present a series of case studies which illustrate best practice, but to identify and analyse the dimensions of a *problem*, namely the archive domain's lack of engagement with *Inspiring Learning for All*. This report's analysis of the dimensions of this problem and its recommendations will provide MLA North West with a tool for change and development.

This issue is not specific to the North West; nationally the archive domain has been identified as an area where there are particular challenges to developing capacity in relation to learning.² To date no research has investigated the barriers and challenges experienced by the archive domain in embracing *Inspiring Learning for All*. Thus, this project's findings, while specific to the North West, have national relevance.

Archives are valuable institutions, containing historical materials that enable us to understand our past and present, and which inform the future. Archival resources also enable accountability in the governance of the public, business, health and community sectors. It is clear that they have a role to play in formal and informal learning, and can impact significantly upon peoples' lives. However, the archive domain has been slow to confidently embrace the potential role they can play and could develop in facilitating learning experiences for a broad-based constituency.

1.3 Conclusion

The relationship between archives and *Inspiring Learning for All* is problematic. Whilst archives play a significant role in supporting and enabling self-directed learning, archives as a domain have been slow to engage with *Inspiring Learning for All* and with broad definitions of learning. There are many factors both external and internal to consider in identifying why this is so.

This research investigates and provides robust evidence of a variety of factors which influence the relationship between the archive domain and *Inspiring Learning for All*. The identification and exploration of these factors will allow MLA North West to reflect on the best way to develop effective strategies to support archives.

² Archives Task Force, 2004, *Listening to the past, speaking to the future, report of the Archives Task Force*, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

SECTION TWO: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This research should be seen in the broader context of current trends for archives and policy. This section outlines the key factors which currently influence the archive domain and MLA North West's policies and programmes on learning. Issues of national significance are followed by those of regional relevance; details of *Inspiring Learning for All* and the MLA North West's approach to this in archives in the region are outlined.

2.2 Recent growth and development of the archive domain nationally

The appeal of archives to the general public, as well as academics and professionals, has grown enormously in the last fifty years— in the last 10 years alone there has been a 52% increase in the number of archive users in archives run by local authorities.³ Most of this explosion is a result of the burgeoning interest in family, local and community history, helped by the Internet and media such as television. Market & Opinion Research International (MORI) estimates that over 75% of the UK population expressed an interest in history in 2002.⁴

Potentially there is an even larger demand for archive services but it is a demand that:

'many archives can hardly meet... an ever-expanding list of priorities for archive services, growing demand from active groups and individuals and a latent demand of unknown (but large) proportions that could, if met, help to achieve key government targets for social inclusion and learning'.⁵

For the Archives Task Force, commissioned by MLA to examine the state of archives currently and devise a strategy for their future, the ability of archives to meet these demands will determine their survival in the future. The Task Force's vision is 'an archival heritage unlocked and made open to all citizens in a way that engages them and empowers them to use archives for personal, community, social and economic benefit.'⁶

2.3 Challenges for the archive domain nationally

Over the last ten years there has been a substantial increase in the use of archives.⁷ However, archive users are notably homogeneous and are not representative of the wider population. In archives run by local authorities

³ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Action for Archives*, <http://www.mla.gov.uk/action/archives/00archives.asp>, accessed 10/08/05.

⁴ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Action for Archives*, accessed 10/08/05.

⁵ Archives Task Force, 2004, p18.

⁶ Archives Task Force, 2004, p6.

⁷ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Action for Archives*, accessed 10/08/05.

during 2001/2002, 58.5% of archive users were aged 55 or over while only 5% were aged below 24 and even more notably 98% of users were white.⁸

The Archives Task Force discovered serious under-investment in the nations' archives including inadequate and physically inaccessible buildings, poor public facilities, large backlogs of uncatalogued (and therefore inaccessible) collections⁹, poor opportunities for staff development, and limited capacity for outreach and education activities.¹⁰ For instance, of the 1249 people employed in local authority archives in England and Wales in 2002, 15.5 were education officers, that is, less than 2%.¹¹

2.4 Archives in the North West

The North West is the third largest region in the UK (after London and the South East) with a population of 6.7 million. There are over 40 major public, special and business archives in the North West, and a further 100 institutions with archival holdings.¹² Archives in the North West are diverse. They cover a wide range of collections, most of which are owned by public bodies and are made available to all members of the public, free of charge. Local Authorities are the largest group of archive services in the region but there are also archives managed by national museum services, business archives and academic archives. The region also has specialist media archives and increasing numbers of organisation and community-based archives.¹³ These archives employ 160 staff. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Report for 2002/3 showed that local authority Archive services in the North West had one of the worst staffing profiles in the country, both in terms of staff to population ratio and in relation to holdings.¹⁴

2.5 Archive users in the North West

In 2003-2004 the North West's archives had 176,840 visitors and a further 112,345 enquiries.¹⁵ The profile of archive visitors in the North West is similar to that of the national profile. In 2004 the majority of users were aged between 55 and 64; 98.6% of these users were white.¹⁶ Thus, numbers of

⁸ Oxborrow-Cowan, E., undated, *Education and lifelong learning in the archives sector: A position statement for MLA North West*, p13.

⁹ Archive staff challenge the prevalent view that uncatalogued material is inaccessible, as most archives will make uncatalogued material available on enquiry. One interviewee was annoyed at what s/he perceived as the inference of the *Logjam* report that 'what isn't catalogued isn't available'. See MLA North West, undated, *Logjam: An audit of uncatalogued collections in the North West*, MLA North West.

¹⁰ Oxborrow-Cowan, p48.

¹¹ Archives Task Force, 2004, p71.

¹² North West Regional Archive Council with MLA North West, 2004, *Action all Areas: Review and update of the North West Regional Archive Strategy*, MLA North West, p6-7.

¹³ North West Regional Archive Council with MLA North West, 2004, p6.

¹⁴ Jackson, B., 2003, 'CIPFA Commentary 2002/2003', January.

¹⁵ North West Regional Archive Council with MLA North West, 2004, p6-7.

¹⁶ Working Heritage Limited, 2005, *Audience development plan for archives in the North West*, February, p20.

users who are young people or from black or ethnic communities are very low compared to the total population. In addition, the average age of users is rising in the North West.¹⁷

In common with the national profile, in 2004 the majority of local authority archive users in the North West described themselves as visiting archives for leisure and recreation with only 16% describing themselves as attending for formal educational purposes.¹⁸ While formal education may not be the intent of most visits to archives; nevertheless, 86% of visitors nationally describe their visit as 'a useful and enjoyable learning experience'.¹⁹ 65.9% of users nationally say that 'archives contribute to society by providing opportunities for learning'.²⁰ In 2004 75% of users in the North West were researching family history.²¹

The provision of educational services in archives in the North West is slightly worse than the national profile in that none of its archives has a dedicated education or learning officer.

2.6 Inspiring Learning for All

In 2004, after three years of development, MLA launched *Inspiring Learning for All* its national framework for accessible learning. Its aim is 'to help all those working in the sector to transform the learning services they provide'.²² *Inspiring Learning for All*:

- 'ensures people from all walks of life have access to learning experiences in museums, libraries and archives
- promotes brain-friendly, collaborative learning
- describes an inclusive learning organisation
- describes the process and approaches that support learning, and
- explains how organisations can demonstrate their impact on learning'.²³

Inspiring Learning for All adopts a broad definition of learning as follows:

'Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve the development or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, awareness, values, ideas, and feelings, or an increase

¹⁷ North West Regional Archive Council with MLA North West, 2004, p22.

¹⁸ North West Regional Archive Council with MLA North West, 2004, p22.

¹⁹ Matty, S., 2004, *Overview of data in the Museums, Libraries and Archives Sector*, Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, , p79.

²⁰ Matty, 2004, p79.

²¹ Working Heritage Limited, 2005, p21.

²² Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Inspiring Learning for All*, 2004, p1.

²³ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Inspiring Learning for All*, 2004, p3.

in the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more'.²⁴

Every experience in an archive, library or museum has the potential to encourage learning. Learning takes place when someone is stimulated, motivated or inspired and undergoes some kind of personal change. Thus, *Inspiring Learning for All* 'asks archives, libraries and museums to look beyond the formal learning context and to assess the impact they have on their informal learners and visitors. In many cases these comprise the majority of their users'.²⁵

'Accessible learning' is central to this broad-based understanding of learning. MLA states that 'museums, archives and libraries must be accessible to everyone if they are to provide learning opportunities for all. Learning and access should therefore be examined together rather than in isolation'.²⁶ The central factor in the successful facilitation of accessible learning is

'a commitment to putting the needs of users first and working in consultation with them to overcome the barriers they encounter as necessary... It means working with people to establish what they want from museums, archives and libraries, involving them in deciding what we collect or buy and how we arrange, display or interpret it and ensuring that this process is itself accessible to all who wish to participate'.²⁷

Inspiring Learning for All is above all a user focused framework which seeks to facilitate the archive, library and museum sector in enabling their users to experience broad-based learning outcomes and also to diversify their users.

2.7 MLA North West's current approach to *Inspiring Learning for All*

MLA North West provided the following statement which describes its strategy for the launch of *Inspiring Learning for All* in the region:

'The *Inspiring Learning for All* framework was launched some months later in the North West than in other regions, owing to the relative 'youth' of MLA North West as a regional agency. Thus, MLA North West was able to benefit from the experiences gained by other agencies; some reported that *Inspiring Learning for All* training events

²⁴ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Inspiring Learning for All*, <http://www.mla.gov.uk/action/learnacc/00insplearn.asp>, accessed 06/09/05.

²⁵ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Inspiring Learning for All*, <http://www.mla.gov.uk/action/learnacc/00insplearn.asp>, accessed 06/09/05.

²⁶ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Inspiring Learning for All*, <http://www.mla.gov.uk/action/learnacc/00insplearn.asp>, accessed 06/09/05.

²⁷ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Inspiring Learning for All*, <http://www.mla.gov.uk/action/learnacc/00insplearn.asp>, accessed 06/09/05.

were poorly attended, whereas others could not run enough events to satisfy demand. MLA North West therefore decided to take a different, more pragmatic approach to its launch and roll-out of *Inspiring Learning for All*, running sessions and events in response to specific requests, and linking these to existing work and initiatives'.²⁸

With regard to the archive domain, *Inspiring Learning for All* links to the following MLA North West initiatives and activities:²⁹

- *Access All Areas*— a project to increase access to archives through cataloguing and audience development. This project follows on from *Logjam*³⁰ and workforce development programmes, which focused on collections, management, leadership, and audience development. An outcome of this project was the *Audience Development Plan for Archives in the North West* (2005) by Working Heritage Limited. This report emphasised the benefits for archives linking with *Inspiring Learning for All* arguing that it would encourage them to broaden the ways in which they facilitated learning opportunities in order to engage with new and diverse users.³¹
- *Action all Areas, Building on Success: Review and update of the North West Regional Archive Strategy*³²— this strategy was launched by the North West Regional Archive Council and MLA North West in 2004 and incorporates some aims which may begin to encourage archives to engage with MLA's learning agenda. The strategy is a review and update of the North West Regional Archive Council's previous strategy for archives in the region, *Forward Together: North West Regional Archive Strategy, 2001-2004*.³³
- *Further Together, Building on Success: Review and update of the North West Regional Archive Strategy*³⁴—North West Regional Archive Council and MLA North West are currently developing a new regional archive strategy which, it is hoped, will actively incorporate

²⁸ From statement provided by MLA North West Learning and Access Officer, Nicola Siminson, dated 02/08/05.

²⁹ From interview with MLA North West Learning and Access Officer, Nicola Siminson, conducted on 20/05/05.

³⁰ See MLA North West, undated, *Logjam: An Audit of Uncatalogued Collections in the North West*, MLA North West.

³¹ Working Heritage Limited, 2005.

³² North West Regional Archive Council with MLA North West, 2004, *Action all Areas, Building on Success: Review and update of the North West Regional Archive Strategy*, MLA North West.

³³ North West Regional Archive Council, 2001, *Forward Together: North West Regional Archive Strategy, 2001-2004*, North West Regional Archive Council.

³⁴ North West Regional Archive Council with MLA North West, 2005, *Further Together, Building on Success: Review and update of the North West Regional Archive Strategy*, (unpublished draft).

Inspiring Learning for All and make the facilitation of accessible learning a central function for archives in the region.

- 'Cultural Entitlement Programme' (linked to DCMS Strategic Commissioning)
Additional funding has been secured for this which has enabled the programme's extension to archives as well as museums. This will fund discrete initiatives to enable schools to have access to cultural opportunities, particularly those who have not previously accessed cultural resources. This programme is being evaluated nationally using *Inspiring Learning for All*.

MLA North West launched an archive strategy in association with North West Regional Archive Council in 2004 and is currently working on another strategy to be launched this year. It is MLA North West's aim to actively incorporate *Inspiring Learning for All* into this new strategy in order to make the facilitation of accessible learning a central function for archives in the region. MLA North West is also seeking to integrate *Inspiring Learning for All* into a variety of its policies and programmes for archives.

2.8 Conclusion

While the numbers of archive users have increased dramatically, especially over the last ten years, there has not been a parallel increase in the funding and staffing of archives. The introduction of *Inspiring Learning for All* in this context is not seen as an opportunity for the sector. Rather it is viewed as something which will further increase workloads. *Inspiring Learning for All* is designed to encourage more people to use archives (by diversifying the user base) and yet archive staff believe they cannot appropriately deal with the user numbers they currently have. *Inspiring Learning for All* is an ideal tool to facilitate, manage and structure the modernisation of archives in ways which will allow them to better deal with the increased amounts of users they currently have and to diversify that user base. *Inspiring Learning for All* is an opportunity for the archive domain.

SECTION THREE: PURPOSE AND DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 Introduction

This research project was commissioned by MLA North West in April 2005 to investigate the barriers to engaging with *Inspiring Learning for All* experienced by the archive domain. To carry out this research RCMG brought together a research team who had a range of pertinent skills and expertise, including practical and management experience of the archives sector, knowledge of learning in cultural organisations, of *Inspiring Learning for All*, and a variety of research skills:

Jocelyn Dodd, Deputy Director, RCMG

Jocelyn has extensive experience of learning particularly in museums as an educator, at a strategic management level, as well as in research. She has worked with libraries and archives in the areas of learning and inclusion. Jocelyn was involved in the conceptual development of the Generic Learning Outcomes and their use in many research projects.

Dr. Lisanne Gibson, Lecturer and Researcher, RCMG

Lisanne has recently joined RCMG. She has six years postdoctoral experience working as a researcher in cultural policy research centres in Australia, Britain and the United States. She brings a specialist understanding of cultural policy particularly in relation to cultural institutions and questions of access and cultural and social diversity.

Ceri Jones, Research Assistant, RCMG

Ceri has been a Research Assistant with RCMG since 2002 when she joined the Centre to support the piloting of the Generic Learning Outcomes developed by RCMG as part of MLA's *Inspiring Learning for All* framework. Since then she has been part of the research team investigating diverse subjects such as cross-domain learning and the social value of museums, archives and libraries.

Chris Pickford, Consultant

Chris has extensive experience working in the archives domain as a senior archive professional and as a consultant. He has also been actively involved in data collection in the domain. He was part of the original research team who developed and piloted the Generic Learning Outcomes. He is an advocate for learning in the archives domain.

Gaby Porter, Consultant

Gaby has extensive experience of the museums domain, as a curator, manager and consultant. She is actively involved in change management across the museum, library and archive domains. She worked for MLA on the development and implementation of *Inspiring Learning for All*.

3.2 The dimensions of the research project

This research was designed to investigate the challenges and barriers to engaging with *Inspiring Learning for All* experienced by the archive domain. In investigating these challenges and barriers we considered both external factors and internal factors related to archives and archive staff. Themes included:

1. Exploring the meaning of 'learning' to archives staff:
 - making connections between archives' work and learning agendas
 - probing perceptions of learning
 - exploring whether archive staff value the social role of archives.

2. Exploring the actual and perceived barriers, challenges and issues that discourage the archive domain from engaging fully with *Inspiring Learning for All*:
 - is the presentation of *Inspiring Learning for All* seen as relevant to the archive domain?
 - 'traditional' views of the archivist's role which understand the archivist as a custodian of rather than a mediator for archival material
 - the community's perceptions of archives, their role in society and contribution to learning
 - issues of capacity and resources
 - lack of research/debate about learning in the archive domain.

The research questions were:

1. **What challenges and barriers do archives in the North West have in embracing *Inspiring Learning for All*?**

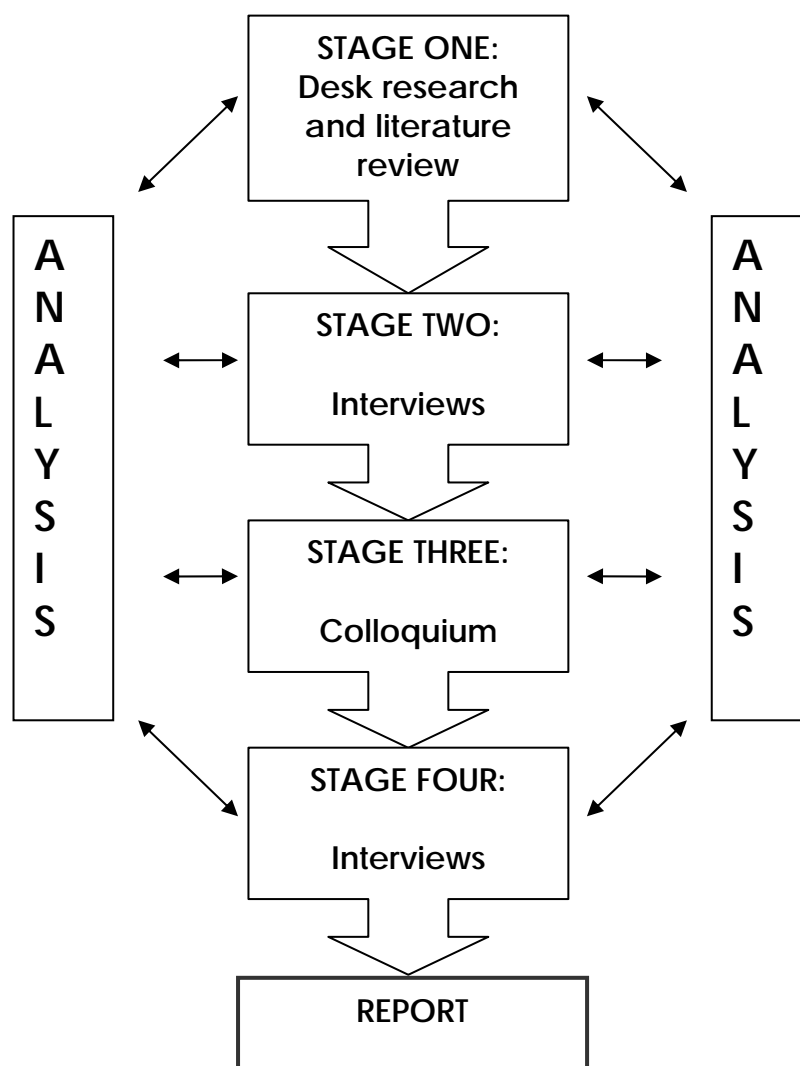
2. **How can MLA North West best support the development of *Inspiring Learning for All* in archives?**

3.3 The approach to the research

The research was organised in four distinct but interdependent stages. The findings of each stage provided the basis for the particular development of the following stage of the research. The four research stages were:

1. desk research and literature review
2. in depth interviews with archive staff who would provide a range of perspectives on learning in archives
3. a colloquium which would 'test' the findings of the desk research and interviews
4. a final set of interviews with senior archive staff on the current priorities for the archive domain.

The research process can be represented graphically in the following way:



Thus, each stage of the research was developed in relation to the findings of the prior. This meant that each stage of the research was carefully planned and checked in relation to the findings of previous stages.

The research questions required us to establish the *topography* of the archive domain in order to understand the challenges and barriers which explain the domain's lack of engagement with *Inspiring Learning for All*. Ethnographic research methods have been established as the best way to understand the *topography*, or formal and informal relationships and dimensions of a particular *milieux* or domain. There is an advanced discussion concerning the adaptation of ethnographic research methods to the study of cultural organisations and practitioners.³⁵ In summary, it is

³⁵ See for instance Shorthose, J., 2004 'Nottingham's de facto Cultural Quarter: The Lace Market, Independents and a Convivial Ecology', *Cities of Quarters* in D. Bell and M. Jayne, eds., Ashgate, London; Gell, A., 1998, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*, Oxford

argued that ethnographic study is ideally suited to the analysis of cultural organisations and domains as it is deliberately open-ended and inherently geared towards allowing the research agenda to develop in response to ongoing fieldwork. It is this flexibility and responsiveness which enables the ethnographic researcher to best characterise the cultural and social dimensions of a particular domain in ways not possible using quantitative research methods. Thus ethnographic research follows a qualitative research methodology.

Qualitative research is based on interpretive philosophies,³⁶ where the focus is on understanding specific events in specific settings. It is recognised that there are multiple interpretations of events and diverse responses to social settings, and thus, interpretive research has a particular concern with the meanings accorded to situations— it seeks to understand what Mason calls ‘intellectual puzzles’.³⁷ While there are many forms of qualitative research, all have in common an emphasis on holistic understanding of events in their contexts, and a concern with meanings and actions.

Three key aspects of the processes of qualitative research are description (context, processes, intentions, events, multiple meanings); classification (breaking up the data, categorising it, and reassembling it through appropriate conceptualisation); and connections (finding patterns in the data, linking the evidence to broader themes, patterns or theories). Grounded theory allows concepts to emerge from the data— it is (to a degree) open-ended (but not atheoretical). Research processes proceed through progressive focusing— as the context, actors and issues within the context become familiar, themes begin to emerge, and the research puzzles are progressively refined to enable a close look in a narrow (but possibly previously unidentified) compass.

3.3.1 STAGE ONE: Desk research and literature review

Our investigation into the relationship between contemporary learning agendas and the archive domain commenced by sourcing literature on learning and archives. We found that there is very little literature which discusses learning and archives. We could find no published research reporting on either qualitative or quantitative studies of broad-based learning in archives in the UK. Indeed, there is very little published material which discusses archives and learning at all.

University Press, Oxford; and, Du Gay, P. (ed.) 1997, *Production of Culture/ Cultures of Production*, Sage/ Open University Press, London.

³⁶ Glesne, C. and Peshkin, A., 1992, *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*, Longman.

³⁷ Mason, J., 1996, *Qualitative Researching*, Sage.

In order to understand better the context of archives in the UK we reviewed the available literature, including the 'grey literature'³⁸— government and consultancy reports and quantitative studies on the archive domain. In addition we reviewed the report of the Archive Task Force completed in 2004 which is a comprehensive report that provided us with up to date quantitative and qualitative findings on archives and archive staff in the UK.

Finally, we reviewed recent reports and other material which provided us with an up-to-date picture of the archive domain in the North West. These sources include unpublished consultancy reports commissioned in the last two years.

Please see appendix eleven for a full list of all references consulted.

As a result of this desk research we were able to identify the main structures of the *topography* of the archive domain. We identified a number of trends which form the basis of challenges and barriers to archives engaging with broad-based learning stemming from:

- organisational matters
- attitudinal issues
- understandings of learning
- understandings of the domains users
- lack of evaluations and impact studies
- perceived problems with the *Inspiring Learning for All* framework
- issues concerning the training of archive staff.

3.3.2 STAGE TWO: Interviews

The next stage of the research involved testing the findings of the desk research and literature review. We needed to ensure that the issues we identified in the primary and secondary literature as forming the basis of the challenges for the archive domain engaging with contemporary learning agendas were substantiated by archive staff in the North West. In order to do this we conducted nine in-depth, semi-structured interviews with archivists and related staff from a range of archives across the North West.

³⁸ Grey literature is commonly defined as any documentary material that is not commercially published and is typically composed of technical reports, working papers, business documents, and conference proceedings.

The interview schedule was designed on the basis of the desk research. A selection of research questions were developed on the basis of the research and intensive discussion amongst the research team. These questions were designed to progress the research by eliciting responses which would further characterise the domain's understanding and attitudes towards accessible learning in general and *Inspiring learning for All* in particular.

To enable the progressive and informed development of the research a very careful selection process was used to choose the interviewees. This careful selection process involved using our understanding of the *topography* of the domain, as established by the desk research, to identify classifications of subject positions within the domain. This process allowed us to establish the types of people it would be most productive for us to interview on the basis of being representative of a particular subject position. These were defined as:

Classification:
People who are engaged with <i>Inspiring Learning for All</i> .
People who are not engaged with <i>Inspiring Learning for All</i> .
People from the Learning Advocate Network in the North West.
People with a regional focus (not necessarily the North West).
Representatives of archives managed by different forms of governance e.g. business, local authority.
Representatives of different geographical locations e.g. rural or urban.
Representatives of different sized archives e.g. small or large.
Representative of MLA North West.
Representative of Society of Archivists.
Representative of trainers of archive staff.

Interviewing people from this diversity of viewpoints enabled us to further understand the variety of issues at stake for the archives domain in relation to *Inspiring Learning for All*.

See appendix one for a list of interviewees and their classification and appendix two for a list of interviewees and their contact details.

As stated previously interview questions were developed in order to encompass the main themes of the research. The list of interview questions is attached at appendix three.

3.3.3 STAGE THREE: The colloquium

As a crucial part of the research process, a colloquium was organised for 29 June 2005. The colloquium had five purposes:

1. as a further step in the analysis of the research findings
2. as a 'test' of the research findings from the first and second stages of the research, that is, the desk research and interviews
3. to expose the research findings to discussion and review
4. to open up the analysis of the research findings to expert perspectives and to alternative interpretation, and;
5. to share the research findings with a small group of archive external professionals who would have knowledge and experiences of archives and learning and who would be able to think innovatively about our findings and the challenges for archives in relation to learning.

Colloquium participants consisted of a selection of specially chosen archive and non-archive professionals from around the country. As with the interviewees, participants to the colloquium were selected on the basis of being representative of a number of positions. It was our intention to select a group who were at the cutting edge of learning and archive practice. We chose people who were representative of the following positions:

Classification:
Training provision within university and professional contexts.
Knowledge and understanding of the learning agenda outside the museums, libraries and archives sector.
Experienced archive staff who have been involved with challenging the traditional ideas and role of archives in relation to users' needs.
Experience of education in archives.
Strategic overview of the museums, libraries and archives sector.
Experience of bidding for and managing external funding which increases capacity.
In-depth understanding of inclusion agendas.
Experience using archive material from an accessible learning perspective.

Please see appendix four for a list of colloquium participants and contact details, appendix five for the table of participants and their classification, appendix six for the colloquium agenda and appendix seven for the PowerPoint presentation delivered at the colloquium.

3.3.4 STAGE FOUR: Final interviews

We hoped that the participants we selected for the colloquium would be able to present us with the latest 'blue skies' thinking in the archive domain. Appendix ten lists the vision for the future which was developed by this group.

While the desk research we undertook showed us that accessible learning is not on the archive domain's agenda nationally, and the colloquium confirmed this too, we undertook a final set of interviews to further investigate the current priorities for archives to understand where learning fitted in. Three senior local authority archivists from outside the North West region were contacted to answer the following questions:

1. What do you see as immediate priorities for your archive services?
2. What do you see as the current short- to medium-term priorities for the archive domain?
3. Which aspects of the wider public service agenda do you currently see as most relevant for archives to contribute to and/or benefit from?

Please see appendix nine for the responses to these questions.

The findings of research stage 1, the desk research and research stage 2, the interviews, were confirmed in research stage 3, the colloquium. We intended the colloquium to generate innovative ideas and creative solutions to the issues involved with the archive domain's lack of engagement with *Inspiring Learning for All*. In the event the colloquium further accentuated our findings that the archive domain is dominated by a negative attitude to *Inspiring Learning for All* and contemporary learning agendas. We undertook research stage 4, a final set of interviews with senior archive staff, as a final test of this finding. This set of interviews confirmed the findings of each stage of the research. The interviews confirmed what our research had already found, that the barriers to *Inspiring Learning for All* are fundamental to the organisational culture and structure of the archive domain.

3.4 Conclusion

This research project was to identify and analyse the challenges and barriers experienced by the archive domain in its engagement with

Inspiring Learning for All. Throughout the four interlinked stages of the research we found the same conclusions; that the domain does not consider the facilitation of accessible learning as defined by MLA as a central function of archives. The next section will present in detail the findings of the research.

SECTION FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Despite the exciting opportunities presented by engagement with *Inspiring Learning for All*, such as facilitating access for new users, broadening learning outcomes, and addressing social inclusion agendas, as we have seen the archive domain in the North West is not engaging with contemporary learning agendas. The archive specialist and consultant Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan identified some of the reasons for this lack of engagement in a report on archives in the North West:

- archives lack the capacity to undertake new developments in learning or education due to issues such as lack of space, time and staff, and broad-based skills
- the cultural context of the archive domain is internally focused and lacking confidence in relation to its role in the facilitation of life long learning
- there is a lack of recognition from other public bodies— schools and Local Education Authorities, for example— of the value of involvement with the learning resources and opportunities present in archives
- the archive domain lacks an understanding of learning initiatives, policies and structures, so are failing to capitalise on new opportunities for funding
- internal policies tend to dominate thinking in the archive domain— ‘external policies such as *Inspiring Learning for All* will only have an effect if they have fed into external policies elsewhere... or come with funding’.³⁹

In common with Oxborrow-Cowan, we found that the majority of archive staff do not regard education and learning as a key role for their domain. Archive staff believe cataloguing and preservation are their core responsibilities. However, there is a lack of staff to undertake these ‘core’ tasks. Therefore archive staff believe that if ‘new’ responsibilities, such as learning related tasks, are undertaken then cataloguing and preservation will suffer. As one interviewee put it: ‘There is a dilemma for record offices, the core activity is preservation, but for current priorities some staff would willingly embrace *Inspiring Learning for All*’.

However, just as for museums and libraries, the collection function is never complete; does this mean that facilitating access to the collection must always be a lesser priority? As has occurred in the museum and library domains, archives must develop strategic responses which enable them to continue with their collection function but at the same time increase and facilitate broader access to their services. The Archives Task Force stated clearly that the ‘requirements to preserve and look after the historical

³⁹ Oxborrow-Cowan, p8.

record need to be *balanced* with the overwhelming benefits of *increased access*' (italics added).⁴⁰ The demands of the former must not be allowed to outweigh the latter as is currently the case.

4.2 What challenges and barriers do archives in the North West have in embracing *Inspiring Learning for All*?

As will be seen, the majority of archive staff we interviewed demonstrated a lack of engagement with *Inspiring Learning for All*. In addition some interviewees also had and demonstrated very little knowledge or awareness of it and its relevance to the archive domain. It was clear that in the main there is very little motivation to make use of it. Overwhelmingly, archive staff cited 'lack of capacity' as the biggest single barrier to engagement with *Inspiring Learning for All*. Our research noted the significant underinvestment in the archives domain, which has also been identified in national reports, such as the Archives Task Force report; we note the resulting pressures on capacity. However, we also identified a great many other characteristics of the archive domain, which we argue are central to the domain's piecemeal engagement with learning agendas and *Inspiring Learning for All*. Following is a discussion of the key factors, structural and cultural, which we consider fundamental to the archive domain's failure to engage with *Inspiring Learning for All*.

Where possible we have tried to give examples of attitudes from a range of perspectives, although at other times we have given examples of the dominant viewpoint.

4.2.1 Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from organisational issues

a. Archives have a limited capacity due to shortage of staff:

Without exception, archive staff cited limited capacity as the primary reason for their difficulties with *Inspiring Learning for All*. As we have noted, most archives are under-sized, under-funded and under-staffed. Moreover, local authority archives in the North West have the second worst staff-to-holding ratio in the country.⁴¹ A number of interviewees stated that while they wanted to do more to facilitate learning outcomes, to do so would be to neglect other tasks. For instance, one archivist who is the only staff member in the archive said that s/he did not go out to schools because s/he did not think s/he could respond to the demand such visits might elicit.

The problem here is not just the lack of capacity but also that most archive staff believe their core activity is cataloguing and preservation and that this should take precedence over all other roles. One interviewee stated that but for current priorities some staff would willingly embrace *Inspiring Learning for All*, as a valuable 'added value' service. However, the

⁴⁰ Archives Task Force, 2004, p16.

⁴¹ Jackson, 2003.

interviewee also reiterated that for others there is a concern that taking on other tasks will mean there is less time for cataloguing which they see as their most important task. S/he argued that this was actually a philosophical question for archive staff— 'for some cataloguing and preservation matters most but for others it is about maintaining sensible balances and covering all duties' .

In one of the most extreme cases, one archivist told us that visitors to the archive were actually discouraged as it is 'easier for us to provide the information' . This archivist stated that they would not normally allow the same visitor to be in the archive for more than 3 or 4 days in a row. While this was an extreme case, this was not the only archivist who expressed ambivalence towards the presence of users in the archive, and as we will see at 4.2.4 this was especially the case for users who were understood as 'recreational' users.

b. Archives have a limited capacity due to having no Education Officers:

Of the 1249 people employed by local authority archives in England and Wales, only 15.5 are Education Officers, less than 2%.⁴² None of the archives in the North West has a dedicated Education Officer, thus archive staff who are motivated to be more proactive in facilitating learning outcomes must do so without the expertise and aid of an Officer whose skill set and role is specific to enabling learning outcomes amongst a broad diversity of users.

One archivist commented that her/his access to the recently appointed Education and Outreach Officer attached to her/his parent organisation 'was a luxury' and s/he anticipated making much use of her/his expertise.

c. Archives have a limited capacity due to their service provision model:

The structure of service provision in archives has traditionally been to provide a one-on-one service. Thus the archive domain has not developed a variety of approaches to making archives accessible. It has instituted a range of *service based* changes/ additions to their provision model such as digitisation, electronic catalogues, research services, and publications; however, apart from digitisation, most of these developments require special training or a pre-existing knowledge of archives. Even in the case of digitisation, access is dependant on a certain level of computer literacy and given that in '2003/04, 37 per cent of adults in Great Britain had never used the Internet, and this proportion rose to 69 per cent of those aged 55 and over',⁴³ digitisation cannot be the primary strategy for broadening access to archive services. There are important implications here for facilitating access, as the archive domain has not developed new and innovative strategies to enable access to archives for new users. There is a

⁴² Archives Task Force, 2004.

⁴³ National Statistics, 'Lifestyles & social participation', <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=1055>, accessed 16/08/05.

fundamental shift required from defining archives in terms of a *service-based* model to a *user-based* model of delivery.

d. Archives have a limited capacity due to lack of partnerships:

While partnerships may help with some of these capacity problems, in comparison with museums and libraries, archives have very few partnership arrangements. The consensus from our discussions with archive staff who recognised this as a limitation (and this was not the majority) was that this shortfall was due to understaffing and a lack of resources to devote the time to developing these connections. One archivist said that the failure of archive staff to develop partnerships was blamed on the lack of imagination of staff but that when operating under such capacity restrictions thinking strategically is not possible. Another interviewee commented that archive staff do not naturally think about working with partners and often need leading to opportunities.

The fundamental problem with the archive domain's lack of partnerships is that it further limits their capacity. Limited capacity is cited as one of the reasons the archive domain does not develop partnerships; however, the lack of partnerships produces limited capacity.

e. Archives have a limited capacity due to a lack advocacy:

The archive domain has not been good at communicating its value to other sectors and organisations. Some individual archives are taking the initiative by focusing on learning but collectively the archive domain is not engaging with contemporary social and cultural policy agendas. As identified by the Archives Task Force through a comparative analysis of political and policy profiles 'archives have so far failed to win the attention of politicians and policy makers'.⁴⁴ As we saw above one consequence of this is that compared to the museum and library domains archives have relatively few partnerships. This may be in part because they do not position their services in relation to outside agendas.

A number of interviewees complained of 'turf wars' for learning resources where Local Education Authorities were dominant and did not understand the potential offerings of archives. However, archives have not generated evidence of learning, which they could use to demonstrate their value to Local Education Authorities or other partners. This is symptomatic of the fact, as identified by the Task Force,⁴⁵ that archives have not developed successful marketing and advocacy strategies, in comparison to the museum and library domains. Therefore, there is a limited awareness of what archives have to offer to potential partners. One colloquium participant stated that unless an individual archivist has a forceful character and is ready to campaign they will often find that funding has

⁴⁴ Archives Task Force, 2004, p34.

⁴⁵ Archives Task Force, 2004, p34.

been diverted elsewhere. S/he argued that archive staff needed to be upskilled in advocacy skills in order to argue for funding and to make politically astute partnerships. Similar conclusions have been reached elsewhere— an Australian report found that archives ‘are out of step with the opportunities posed by the dynamic, informal, project-oriented and team-based 21st century workplace’.⁴⁶

We discuss the lack of evaluation of user experiences of archives and its consequences for advocacy at 4.2.5.

4.2.2 Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from attitudinal issues

a. Archive staff are cynical about new initiatives:

We found a great deal of evidence that many archive staff are cynical about *Inspiring Learning for All* as ‘yet another initiative that will last for a while and create a bit of excitement but it won’t really make a difference’. Another archivist commented on the ‘initiative overload’, that ‘archives are swamped with so many external initiatives that people get fed up and good initiatives get ignored along with the rest’. This perception of multiple initiatives and the cynicism towards these was confirmed at the colloquium when one participant described *Inspiring Learning for All* as simply the latest ‘fashion’, which would be replaced with another next year.

b. Archive culture is internally focused:

We have found that the dominant organisational culture of archives is inward looking. As one archivist said ‘lots of people in archives are in a world of their own, they don’t really understand, they don’t think they need education’. Another interviewee confirmed this view when s/he stated, ‘some staff aren’t interested, they prefer backroom work and aren’t particularly comfortable dealing with the public’. However, s/he also said that this was a small proportion and others are keen to engage with learning agendas.

Most archive staff tend to be very focused on their specific archive; archive staff can be isolated even within their own domain.

c. Archive staff do not understand their role includes facilitating learning:

This can be explained in part in terms of how archive staff see themselves; for many, their primary function is about providing raw material in as neutral a fashion as is possible:

‘There is a dilemma for record offices ... our core activity is preservation’,

⁴⁶ Pederson, Ann, 1999, ‘Understanding ourselves and others: Australian archivists and temperament’, *Australian Society of Archivists 1999 Conference*, <http://www.archivists.org.au/events/conf99/pederson.html#intro>, accessed 10/08/05.

‘Business archives are there to reflect the company’s growth and development, protect its rights and to help it in taking decisions going forward’,

‘Archives have a very specific function ... looking after particular unpublished material for historic administrative and legal reasons, providing a resource which is not relevant to 100% of the population’.

d. Archive staff believe that they should not have a ‘mediating’ role:

Archives consist of many individual collections of documented provenance, which are either accepted complete, or selected by an approved (and recorded) process. The integrity of these individual collections is what archivists seek to preserve and it is this function that should be neutral. Thus, archives are about a continuity of custody (including by transfer to the archive) in accordance with the principles of provenance. It is this that gives archives their ‘special status’ as evidence. Archive collections are the transactional records of a particular organisation or event. However, the collection of an archive repository as a whole is, of course, ‘mediated’ in that it is interpreted for users or at the very least catalogued. The very fact that it is a collection means that some ‘mediation’ has occurred.⁴⁷ In other words, judgements are made regarding value and significance in the act of choosing what and what is not worthy of keeping in an archive repository. Thus, the repository as a whole is far from a neutral collection of raw materials. It is this latter fact that archivists do not acknowledge, preferring to describe their role as preservers and cataloguers rather than mediators. In fact, they are both.

For some archive staff having an educational role in relation to archive material is a contradiction to their supposedly non-mediating role. One interviewee commented that ‘archives should stick to what they do best: physically looking after documents, putting them in a useable order, guides and responding to queries. They should not offer legal advice, help adults with learning difficulties, teach school children’.

Some archive staff believe that their supposedly neutral role should also be extended to dealing with outside organisations as well as users. One colloquium participant thought it would be ‘unethical’ for archives to position their services in relation to the needs and priorities of outside organisations and users.

This belief in the neutrality of archives is a factor in the culture of archives which tends to be characterised by a lack of experimentation, unreceptive

⁴⁷ For the ground breaking discussion of the ways in which the meaning of objects, collections and knowledges are constructed, or given particular meanings, by the ways in which they are presented see Foucault, Michel, 1972, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Tavistock Publications and specifically in relation to cultural organisations Bennett, Tony, 1995, *The Birth of the Museum: History, theory, politics*, Routledge.

to change, passivity rather than proactivity. An Australian study of the temperament of archive staff shows a tendency to conservatism, lack of experimentation, and introversion.⁴⁸ These qualities may contribute to the static nature of many archives.

e. Archive staff are not motivated to actively facilitate learning:

Most archive staff are not motivated in relation to the development of their role in actively facilitating accessible learning outcomes. As we have seen, some archive staff are actively antipathetic to this role, considering that it is not their job to facilitate learning outcomes. However, this is not the only position adopted by archive staff. There are also some archive staff who are actively developing programmes to facilitate learning, as best they can. One interviewee stated that there were some reactionary staff that are not interested in users and especially the use of archives by non-traditional users but that this was 'not a major factor'. This interviewee also thought that there were an equal proportion of staff positively keen to engage with users and learning outcomes but they were hampered by other factors.

One archivist who recognised the apathy of most of her/his domain in relation to facilitating accessible learning talked about the need for archive staff to be enthusiastic and to highlight to people why they should take an interest in archives. S/he said 'there is no point in collecting stuff for it to gather dust in boxes, it has to come out, and there are so many gems to be highlighted'. For this interviewee 'it is not enough to know about the collection and keep it to yourself, you have to enthuse others, open the collections up, shout about what's in there'.

One of the most fundamental issues here, according to the minority of archive staff who have engaged with *Inspiring Learning for All*, is that there is no external impetus to engage with learning agendas. There is no external imperative, which requires archives to either engage with contemporary learning agendas or measure their impact in terms of learning outcomes. As one interviewee said 'archives aren't judged or assessed on their contribution to learning, so it's not a real priority'. In relation to *Inspiring Learning for All* specifically one interviewee described the dominant perception of its tangential nature for archives well when s/he said '*Inspiring Learning for All* has been included in the performance framework for the directorate but staff aren't sure of the level of real commitment among departmental managers—it could easily come off the list'.

f. Archive staff do not believe that they have the capacity to facilitate learning:

⁴⁸ Pederson, 1999, accessed 10/08/05.

We found a great deal of evidence that most archive staff think they have neither the knowledge and skills nor capacity to undertake work in learning. The attitude was encapsulated by one interviewee who despite expressing interest and enthusiasm for developing a more proactive orientation towards learning agendas said about her/his archive that it 'is [at the] bottom end of service provision, one man, what impact can you expect to have?'

One archivist expressed a belief in the 'limited appeal of archives for use in exhibitions and outreach' that archival material was 'not as interesting as museum objects and works of art'.

On the other hand many interviewees recognised the potential value of archival resources to learning:

'Archives understand the power of democracy. This is really significant for inclusion. They have a forceful role to play, they can contribute to community cohesion, social justice... archives need to recognise this value',

'The ability to use archives— and to touch and handle materials— makes a connection with the past and instils a feeling of history, respect for the past',

'People and communities can discover their histories, personalise history from their own perspectives',

'Archives can support interest in identity— personal and community identity, sense of place'.

As well as fulfilling an important legal, democratic and historical role in society, archives can also have a powerful effect on society and individuals. They are recognised as contributing to the learning agenda; however, despite evidence that some archive staff recognise the importance of broad-based learning this is a minority position and a clear acknowledgement from the archive domain of their role in promoting lifelong learning and the impact they have on peoples' lives is lacking.

4.2.3 Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from understandings of learning

a. Archive staff value the learning experiences of some users more than others:

Here lies the paradox for such a user-centred domain; staff repeatedly score highly in user surveys for approachability, knowledge and interest and inspire very high levels of trust in users 'sometimes akin to that between a doctor and patient' but most archive staff 'usually have no knowledge of

learner needs, how to deliver learning or what learning initiatives are in currency.⁴⁹ It seems that archive staff do not value much of the learning that they do facilitate. This is in part because the archive domain is not familiar with the definition or language of contemporary learning agendas; and this means that they do not recognise that much of the day-to-day activity that occurs in archives involves learning.

Audience surveys of archive users routinely return very high levels of satisfaction; the 2004 Public Service Quality Group Survey (PSQG) showed that in the North West 98% of users gave a good or very good rating for the helpfulness and friendliness of archive staff.⁵⁰ However, we have seen there is often 'accepted' discrimination in archives against so-called 'recreational' users in favour of academic or professional users. During RCMG's data collection for the North West Learning Advocates Network an archivist was asked to help find a broad range of archive users to be interviewed about their experience of learning. S/he repeatedly declined to recommend any interviewees who were not academics, professional or semi-professional historians, or archivists for local history societies. When specifically asked if s/he could access any other types of user, s/he described other users as 'just recreational users' and was bemused that we wanted to interview them.⁵¹ This attitude to non-traditional archive users is of great concern when surveys reveal that 70-80% of archive users are there for personal or recreational reasons.

In response to an article in the *Journal of the Society of Archivists* arguing that 'recreational users' were taking up valuable time which would normally be allocated for professional researchers who were in danger of becoming marginalised, Stacey Gee called for greater flexibility in archive staff's approach to both types of user:

'The results of recreational research are not as noticeable but that does not mean that this type of research is useless, or that the user has failed to achieve anything more than to while away a few spare hours. Campaigns to preserve the 'historic' character of an area, to fight for a right of way, or to inspire local community feeling through a private publication of old photographs of a town or village are carried out by so-called recreational users. Local history groups or family history societies are also responsible for hours of valuable work in listing memorial inscriptions or transcribing parish registers and similar sources... This work not only facilitates the work of other family

⁴⁹ Oxborrow-Cowan, p3.

⁵⁰ Working Heritage Limited, 2005, p34.

⁵¹ The tendency of some staff to categorise certain visitors as 'not good enough' has been discussed in relation to art museums by Mark O'Neill in 'The good enough visitor', *Museums, Society, Inequality*, edited by Richard Sandell (2002, Routledge), p24-40.

historians, but is also valuable for professional historians who want to research the family background of their particular interests...'⁵²

Researchers and archive staff are increasingly becoming more aware of the value of visits to archives for users from a diverse social background. Chris Weir argues for the value of archives in relation to learning and identity:

'At some point in life anyone and everyone can benefit from access to archives and for many different reasons. Archives can make a real difference to peoples' lives. For students the documents discovered at a record office could be vital to their qualification, a qualification that could affect the rest of their lives. Information from an enclosure act may be crucial in a decision over the development of a piece of common land or on the closure of a public footpath. There may be vital documents to help with an adoption case, involving liaising with social services and the individuals concerned. In some communities a project based on discovering its cultural and historical roots through exploring archives can play a vital role in bringing isolated people together and building up a sense of pride in their localities...'⁵³

b. Archive staff do not recognise/ understand broad-based definitions of learning:

When asked about learning most archive staff responded in terms of either their own learning as professionals or in terms of teaching users to learn the archive system; even when pressed archive staff would only talk about formal education. In section 2.4 we established that 84% of the use of archives are activities generating informal and life long learning rather than formal uses. However, our research found very little acknowledgement of the informal and life long learning uses of archives. We have seen above some of the ways in which informal learning in archives can be devalued, and this will be further discussed at 4.2.4.

However, we also came across a few examples of archive staff who did understand the broader definition of learning as used in *Inspiring Learning for All*. For instance, one colloquium participant stated that learning and education was at the centre of what archives do, as even if users did not see themselves as learners, learning still happens. This person also commented that people who work in archives are skilled and gifted facilitators without recognising it.

⁵² Gee, S., 2002, 'A standard service for all? The case for a flexible attitude', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol 23, No 2, p234.

⁵³ Weir, C., 2004, 'The marketing context. Outreach: luxury or necessity?' *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol 25, No 1, p73.

c. There is minimal debate about learning in the archive domain:

The limited depth of most responses to our questions about broad-based learning is symptomatic of the fact that there is very little discussion about users and learning in the archive domain. For instance, it was reported in the interviews that at the recent Society of Archivists meeting it was clear that 'most people weren't previously aware of *Inspiring Learning for All* and hadn't looked at it', it was thought that this was because 'archivists hadn't seen it as relevant enough to explore'. For museums a lively debate about learning, their impact on learning experiences and social role has emerged. Both formal and informal education provision is well developed. However, in the archive domain similar debates are lacking, particularly around learning and access. As we have discussed there is little specific research into how archives impact upon their users' experiences, particularly learning experiences.

What was very clear from the interviews and the colloquium was that most archive staff have a lack of knowledge, skills and therefore confidence in relation to broad-based learning. There is a fundamental lack of knowledge in the domain's familiarity with the *language* and *theory* of learning, which informs *Inspiring Learning for All*. So, while archive staff do respond to the enthusiasm of individual users, they do not see the significance of this as part of the wider learning process.

d. The archive domain should develop more learning initiatives which work in the archive context:

The archive domain seems to equate learning almost exclusively with schools. There were examples offered in the interviews of partnerships between archives and formal education programmes. However, even with this bias to schools, formal-education services in archives are under-developed. Archives are likely to produce one-off education packs, for example, but education or learning work is rarely sustained for long.⁵⁴ While this model of facilitating formal education has been very successful in museums it may be that this model is not appropriate for archives.

A number of interviewees reported that while in the past the archive domain engaged with formal adult education, this was now difficult due to the requirement to fit in with new qualification and accreditation structures. This requirement was described as 'one hurdle too many' by one of our interviewees. Interviewees also identified a problem with poor enrolment and attendance in evening classes leading to qualification.

However, these real difficulties should not be allowed to halt the archive domain's engagement with adult education. There are many alternative programmes for educational delivery which are designed to facilitate

⁵⁴ Hallam Smith, E., 2003, 'Customer focus and marketing in archive service delivery: Theory and practice', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, Vol 24, No 1, pp36-53.

access to both educational and cultural resources and with which archives could have active partnerships. For instance, under the New Deal funding is available for training partnerships.⁵⁵ The main barrier to engaging with these other models is the fundamental lack of knowledge and understanding about the position of the archive domain in relation to contemporary policy agendas. This tendency presents a barrier to the archive domain's modernisation more generally and we will discuss this at more length in the conclusion. For now it is enough to note that an understanding of the archive domain's roles in relation to contemporary policy agendas would lead to the development of relationships (with programmes like the New Deal for instance) which would broaden access to archives through learning initiatives.

As discussed in section 2.5 *Inspiring Learning for All* defines every experience in an archive, library or museum as having the potential to encourage learning. *Inspiring Learning for All* asks archives, libraries and museums to look beyond the formal learning context and to assess the impact they have on their informal learners and visitors. In many cases these comprise the majority of their users'.⁵⁶ It may be that the archive domain should focus on facilitating the learning outcomes of the 'recreational users', who make up the majority of archive users, and attracting new users, rather than continuing with formal education models which are of limited success.

4.2.4 Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from the archive domains understanding of its users

a. Some archive staff have a hierarchical approach to users:

We found a great deal of evidence of a hierarchical approach to archive users. At its most extreme this attitude was expressed in the following way: 'People come in to use the archive when they are barely literate. We are not here to teach basic literacy skills'. This same interviewee argued that the primary role of archives is for academic research. At the other end of the scale was an interviewee who told us that users now influence cataloguing priorities— indicating what material they want to be made available first. Another interviewee told us about a workshop for people with learning difficulties and mental health problems to learn basic information communication technology (ICT) skills using family history sources and which leads to a basic accreditation in ICT.

In both the interviews and the colloquium there was a great deal of concern expressed by many archivists about the perceived reduction in traditional users which comes about from encouraging non-traditional users

⁵⁵ Department for Work and Pensions, *New Deal for Training Partners*, <http://www.newdeal.co.uk/page.asp?SSN=train&ID=TRAINP>, accessed 10/08/05.

⁵⁶ Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, *Inspiring Learning for All*, <http://www.mla.gov.uk/action/learnacc/00insplearn.asp>, accessed 06/09/05.

to visit archives. There was some discussion at the colloquium of how 'Friends of Archives' membership had dropped off as a result of an archives' policy to encourage non-traditional users. There was also some discussion of complaints from traditional users who believe that frameworks such as *Inspiring Learning for All* will divert resources away from them. A number of interviewees and colloquium participants reported that regular users were disgruntled by changes and that there were issues about space, noise levels, and the presence of children in the archive. At the extreme end, one colloquium participant commented that increased access leads to inappropriate behaviour and 'anything goes', for instance, 'talking on mobile phones'.

We also found evidence that these negative sentiments towards inclusion were not shared by all archive staff. One archivist explained her/his strategy towards users saying 'academics can take care of themselves', and that her/his primary job was to provide access to the people who need most help, who are frightened to come into the archives, who think it is 'not for them'. Another colloquium participant said that 'archives needed to become places which people own; the sense of ownership has got to change. One can't just drop in; people don't feel that they belong to them'. Interestingly this comment was received with much dissent from other colloquium participants who felt that their archives were very welcoming. However, on the basis of our research we argue that there is still a great deal of work to be done. The following selection of comments from our interviewees is typical of the dominant position towards users:

'When we get inappropriate questions we need to modify the publicity material',

We need to 'manage expectations of what archives servicees can handle... [we can not deal with] 20 letters from individual pupils asking the same question',

'People come in with all the wrong questions'.

Thus, despite the relatively strong one-to-one engagement with users, it seems that on the whole, apart from regular users, there is very little understanding of user needs and in some cases very little sympathy for new archive users.

4.2.5 Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from lack of evaluation and impact studies

a. No evidence has been collected of the learning impact of archives:

There have been no specific studies done on the learning impact of archives, although the Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) survey does ask some questions on learning. Archives do not gather evidence of their

learning impact. Further, there is not a strong culture of evaluation in archives. This is in part because comparatively speaking archives do not access a great deal of project funding, which tends to require inbuilt evaluation. Conducting projects using external funding produces a culture of evaluation. This is lacking in the archive domain.

This lack of evaluation also means that the archive domain lacks the skills required to conduct successful evaluations. Archive staff say that they do not undertake evaluations because users do not want to be evaluated. There were a number of interviewees and colloquium participants who talked about difficulties getting users to write about their experiences in archives. RCMG's experience running a small response card based data gathering exercise during August 2005 throughout the North West for the Learning Advocate network is in direct contrast with this. The results of our data gathering was that all the archives involved achieved a strikingly better rate of return for response cards filled out by users than libraries and museums who had much larger user numbers over the same period. It may be that this experience of users as noncompliant in relation to evaluations actually points to a lack of skill amongst archive professionals in designing and conducting evaluations.

Some interviewees did talk about the importance of collecting data from users and the ways that this influences cataloguing and conservation programmes. However, this seemed to be more in relation to enabling users to successfully navigate the archive system rather than the content of the archive, or more interpretative forms of mediation. Chris Weir of Nottinghamshire Archives explores some of the hesitancy of the archive domain to 'measure' the experiences of users, whether it is possible (or desirable):

'Nevertheless we are working towards more sophisticated methods of measuring our performance. Is it possible, for example, to measure the quality of a visit to an archive repository? Or is it possible to assess whether archives have made a difference to someone's life? Perhaps it is not, but if we do not try to evaluate the nature and quality of that experience, we will struggle to develop effectively our services in future years?'⁵⁷

The lack of evaluation of the learning outcomes from archive use means that there is no data on learning in archives. The archive domain literally does not know what learning in archives encompasses.

b. There is very little evidence to prove the potential learning impact of archives:

⁵⁷ Weir, 2004, p77.

The fact that archives do not have data about learning means that they do not have any evidence to use to make other organisations understand their potential. This was confirmed by one interviewee who pointed out that the lack of educational provision meant that archives did not have the evidence of what can/ could be achieved therefore making it more difficult to convince others that archives have a strong role in relation to learning outcomes. Thus, there was a perception from a number of interviewees that archives were losing out to other domains (especially museums) who are forging ahead, leaving archives behind and often ignoring the potential contribution archives could make in joint ventures. However, it was also felt that learning was an area where archives have the opportunity to make a case for funding and support for services and this must be a priority.

In addition to the difficulties relating to advocacy and attracting partnerships and funding, which stem from the lack of data on learning in archives, this lack of data presents an additional problem in that there is no clear idea of the particular dimensions of learning in archives, that is, what does learning in archives look like?

4.2.6 Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from perceived problems with the *Inspiring Learning for All* framework

It was suggested by some archive staff that *Inspiring Learning for All* is more suited to museums and libraries. An interviewee stated that *Inspiring Learning for All* was 'very museumy'. Another interviewee commented that the belief in the museum orientation of *Inspiring Learning for All* stemmed from that fact that there were no case studies involving archives on the *Inspiring Learning for All* website, thus, because the links are not made to archives it confirms the belief that *Inspiring Learning for All* is not for them. A number of interviewees commented that the case studies that are on the website are not applicable to archives and are not within their capabilities.

In fact the archive domain was integrally involved in the inception and subsequent development of *Inspiring Learning for All*. Far from this agenda being developed only for the museum and library domains in fact a number of senior representatives of the archive domain including the Society of Archivists were on the original *Inspiring Learning for All* 'Think Tank of Critical Friends'. Furthermore, *Inspiring Learning for All* was piloted at archives and the results of these pilots were used for its further development. Thus, there is no basic philosophical disconnection between *Inspiring Learning for All* and the archive domain. Rather we found that the barriers to archives engaging with *Inspiring Learning for All* were symptomatic of much larger organisational issues. Thus, the discussion that follows identifies barriers for archives engaging with *Inspiring Learning for All*, which emerge from organisational issues, but which are not specific to

Inspiring Learning for All. This finding is confirmed by other current research on archives in the UK,⁵⁸ and the North West specifically.⁵⁹

Throughout the research we were presented with evidence that very little information about *Inspiring Learning for All* is reaching archive staff. This is despite the fact that MLA North West have delivered a session on *Inspiring Learning for All* to the Society of Archivists.⁶⁰ To a certain extent this is due to factors we have already discussed which are internal to the domain, such as the domain not understanding *Inspiring Learning for All*'s relevance to them. However, it was striking that some archive staff seemed to be totally unaware of *Inspiring Learning for All*, one archivist commented that it was 'just a name to me. Seen it on the internet... it may have been mentioned but I have not had to study it or look at it in the department'. Other interviewees were aware of it, but did not see its relevance to them.

There seemed to be no champion for *Inspiring Learning for All* in the domain nor was it being actively championed by any of the professional archive bodies. A number of interviewees reported that *Inspiring Learning for All* has not become a priority for local governments.

One interviewee reported that 'there is still a big selling job to do, that there is very little awareness in the region. While the larger archive services are interested in *Inspiring Learning for All* even they have not actually done much in relation to it'.

We asked interviewees what they felt MLA North West could do to help support *Inspiring Learning for All* in archives in the North West; their responses are listed in appendix eight. It is worth noting that at least one interviewee said that MLA North West 'is sending out confused messages'. S/he said that 'on the one hand MLA North West is promoting *Logjam* and cataloguing as priority and on the other hand promoting *Inspiring Learning for All* and learning and access'. S/he felt that record offices are being 'spilt by conflicting demands'.

4.2.7 Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from issues concerning the training of archive staff

a. Learning and education is not part of archive staff's training:

There are a limited number of courses for training archive staff in the country. Archival training seems to be almost exclusively focused on the systems of the archive, that is, the collection and cataloguing functions of archive staff. Not only does this training include limited material on users and learning but there also seems to be very little training given on management, advocacy, dealing with partners, contemporary cultural

⁵⁸ Archives Task Force, 2004.

⁵⁹ Oxborrow-Cowan.

⁶⁰ We note that at the time of writing MLA North West was due to deliver a further two sessions on *Inspiring Learning for All* to regional archive groups.

policy, funding, and so forth. In other words archive staff do not seem to be trained in the skills necessary for all cultural organisation staff operating in the contemporary policy environment. Moreover there is no formal training for non-professional archive staff who have the most immediate contact, and provide the greatest support for learners.

A university based training provider in the North West told us that their training scheme had only one session on education and none on learning. This same training provider specifically rejected a user orientation to archiving. S/he said that 'education and interpretation is not done by archives. Specifically archives do not interpret and it is critical that they do not interpret'.

It may be that the actual training of archive staff militates against the archive domain opening up to new users and facilitating diverse experiences of learning. One colloquium participant described a project s/he had been involved with, which aimed to facilitate an excluded community's access to archival material. The participants were encouraged to interpret and engage with the material on a very individual basis. The archivist expressed much discomfort at this mode of operation, s/he said it 'was an uncomfortable experience, it was about disorder, people thinking in a different way... counterintuitive, it runs against all the training'. Is it the case that the exclusive focus on the system of the archive in archival training actually produces staff who are inflexible in their working orientation? At the very least it means that most archive staff have very little knowledge and few skills in relation to education and learning. One archivist put it bluntly, 'the Record Office has no expertise to fit in with the ... learning agenda'.

b. There is a hierarchy in the archive workplace:

An interviewee who had taken the archive-training course offered in the North West felt that it had a 'heavy-handed, over the top academic approach', that it understood archives as the realm of academics. This interviewee also felt that this course produces a culture of isolation and exclusion, where the skills of archiving are valued above all else. We also found evidence that within the archive domain there is a hierarchy between the value given to the contributions and opinions of archivists and that of 'sub professionals', as one colloquium participant described non-professional staff. This suggests a very vertical organisational and management structure in archives.

c. There is a lack of opportunities for continuing professional development for archive staff:

In addition to the lack of training for archive staff in learning and education the domain as a whole does not undertake comparable levels of continuing professional development. The main reason for this seems to be practical issues such as releasing staff (and covering their work) and travel.

We were given one example of an attempt to provide a vocational training course for archive staff. According to the training provider this course failed due to lack of enrolment. In the colloquium there was some discussion of whether the reason for this under enrolment was because there was an undervaluing of practical skill in the archive sector. This was seen as a significant problem, a colloquium participant commented, 'you have to see the work in practice not sit in a room and write an essay. You wouldn't do this for a motor mechanic so why for an archivist?'. However, further research established that this particular course had no progression built into it, that is, you could not use completion of this course to gain credit in a professional archivist course, such as a masters or diploma. We believe that this factor may also have been very significant in the under-enrolment and subsequent failure of the course.

Vocational training for archives initiatives are being developed by regional museum, libraries and archives agencies outside the North West. For instance, Yorkshire Museums Libraries and Archives Council launched a pilot Archives Apprenticeship programme in 2004/5. This combines completion of the distance-learning Certificate in Professional Studies: Archives and Records Management at LUCAS (Liverpool) with practical training and development. The Certificate gives credits towards a postgraduate qualification. Five apprenticeships were offered and authorities in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire have taken up the offer. However, the emphasis of training and development activities is around the more traditional responsibilities of archives and archivists, and does not have a learning or user focus.⁶¹

4.3 Conclusion

In identifying and understanding the barriers the archive domain experiences in engaging with *Inspiring Learning for All* we found in the first instance that there was simply a lack of knowledge about it and its relevance to the archive domain. One interviewee had not heard of it until we contacted her/him for an interview and others had barely any knowledge of it or thought that it did not have anything to do with archives. Where archive staff were aware of contemporary learning agendas they identified limited capacity as the reason they did not make the facilitation of broad-based learning across a diverse user base a central role for archives. However, we found that the challenges and barriers were much more fundamental than could be addressed by either better distribution of information about *Inspiring Learning for All* or increased funding to archives. The issues were fundamentally about the need for *modernisation* in the archive domain. The next section will discuss the

⁶¹ YMLAC, 2004, *Archive Apprenticeship Framework 2004/2005*, Yorkshire Museums Libraries and Archives Council.

implications of our findings and our recommendations for the initiation and management of a change process in the archive domain.

SECTION FIVE: Conclusion and Recommendations— How can MLA North West best support the development of *Inspiring Learning for All* in archives?

5.1 Introduction

This research was driven by two research questions:

1. What challenges and barriers do archives in the North West have in embracing *Inspiring Learning for All*?
2. How can MLA North West best support the development of *Inspiring Learning for All* in archives?

Before providing a list of recommendations it will be useful to summarise and discuss our findings to the first research question— what are the challenges and barriers to archives in the North West embracing *Inspiring Learning for All*?

As a result of our research we identified seven trends and characteristics which form the basis of challenges and barriers to archives engaging with learning. We identified these as:

1. Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from organisational issues
2. Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from attitudinal issues
3. Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from understandings of learning
4. Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from the archive domains understanding of its users
5. Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from lack of evaluations and impact studies
6. Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from perceived problems with the *Inspiring Learning for All* framework
7. Challenges and barriers to learning stemming from issues concerning the training of archive staff.

In section four we presented the findings of the research in relation to these key trends and characteristics.

We can further focus these trends and characteristics around four themes. These four themes encapsulate the issues for the archive domain's engagement with contemporary learning agendas and *Inspiring Learning for All*. They are:

1. Capacity and capability
2. Contemporary agendas
3. Purpose of archives
4. Imperatives for change.

These four themes and the issues encapsulated by each are fundamentally about the necessity for modernisation in the archive domain.

5.2 Capacity and capability

Without exception, archive staff cite lack of capacity in terms of staff, space and time as the central problem for them in engaging with contemporary learning agendas and *Inspiring Learning for All*. Our research has shown that over and above the issues with capacity there are attitudinal and organisational issues in the archive domain, which are far more fundamental to explaining the domain's lack of engagement with contemporary learning agendas. This manifests itself in a range of ways that tend to compound the issues with capacity.

Archives in the North West are understaffed; therefore archive staff say it is difficult for them to respond to the contemporary learning agenda as encapsulated in *Inspiring learning for All*. However, we have found that archive staff believe their cataloguing and preservation functions are more important than facilitating broad-based learning and extending access to a user base which is more representative of the community as a whole. The archive domain should modernise to reflect the fact that it, in common with all organisations which have some public responsibility, must give equal weight to access and learning and core functions.

Even when archive staff are presented with unlimited capacity in terms of funding and staff they are not able to clearly articulate a modern socially responsive understanding of their function and its relationship to the community as a whole. Appendix Ten is a record of the colloquium participants' responses to the following question: if there were no limitations of any kind what would be your vision for archives in the 21st century? The group was split into two. One group came up with a list which demonstrated an understanding of the need to balance the archival functions of the domain with the domain's responsibilities to access and learning. The other group could barely articulate a vision at all, mentioning the provision of a 'coffee machine' as a key point in their list. This confirmed the findings of the research more generally that the factors which do impinge upon the archive domain extending its capacity, such as, lack of

partnerships, lack of recognition from external organisations, lack of advocacy and so on, actually stem from the lack of a clear internal (and therefore external) understanding of the role of the archive in the twenty-first century.

5.3 Contemporary agendas

The domain is not conversant with the contemporary policy languages, which frame all contemporary cultural organisations and indeed all organisations, which work with the public. This policy language understands the relationships between governance, society, culture and the individual in terms of user focus, citizenship, social inclusion/ exclusion, access and participation, and life long learning. Progressive organisations with any kind of public function have a responsibility to respond to these contemporary agendas. Through the development of a modern vision for the archive domain, the domain will be able to develop strategies, as other under-funded public organisations have, to manage capacity in order that both their responsibilities towards accurate cataloguing and preservation are maintained AND their responsibilities to facilitate broad-based learning and access are achieved.

There are a number of strategies which could be used to begin this process; we have suggested some of these in 5.6. In essence the archive domain must develop a vision for itself which encompasses both its functional roles and its wider responsibilities to learning and access. This strong and modern vision must be imprinted across the domain; as yet such a clear and uniform vision is not present.

5.4 Purpose of archives

The archive domain is dominated by an understanding of itself as first and foremost involved in administrative functions. For the domain, its core function is preservation and cataloguing. The domain does not accept that there is a mediating role in the function of presentation and cataloguing or that archive staff should have a mediating role in relation to the facilitation of access to archive collections. Until the culture of the domain changes so that it recognises the active relationship it already has with the material it manages and the way it facilitates access to this material, it will continue to be dominated by a service provision rather than user-based orientation to its work.

For the Archives Task Force it is imperative that archives develop as places of formal and informal learning. Their report outlines the role that archives have as 'the foundation on which are built all our histories' and draws attention to the capacity of engagement with archives to change lives:

'We have been impressed by the enjoyment and inspiration that people have gained from their discoveries: from learning about themselves, their past and their place within the wider community...

We have met and heard of many people whose lives have been changed for the better by the experience. This exploration of personal history and identity should be the right of every citizen'.⁶²

The Task Force is clear that the archive domain can engage with learning, and with *Inspiring Learning for All*. They conclude that it is important to promote the idea that archives are important to education and learning, not only among the public and to other organisations but also:

'to inform archive professionals of the importance of developing their services to engage with these social agendas'.⁶³

As we have seen, currently the users of archives are not representative of the wider population, and yet it is clear that archives are perhaps in an even better situation to facilitate broad-based access and learning than museums and art galleries in that they are in a position to provide access to material which is individually relevant to individuals. This opportunity has not yet been embraced by the archive domain. It is imperative that the domain revisions itself to place access and learning as central to its function and role in society.

5.5 Imperatives for change

Currently there does not seem to be any imperative for change either internal or external to the archive domain. There does not seem to be any internal leadership in relation to dealing with contemporary learning agendas neither is there any impetus driving change from archive organisations or from their parent/ hosting organisations. This is of particular concern since, as we have seen, archive staff tend to look for external impetuses to drive change within the domain. It is imperative that this tendency to look for an external impetus is changed. The domain must be encouraged to develop an internal motivation for change; it cannot expect other organisations or domains to change agendas within the archive domain. While archives must be responsive to external policy agendas, the drivers for change must come from within. In this the archive domain should act on recommendation two of the Archive Task Force to 'position UK archives as key contributors to local, regional and national social and economic objectives'.⁶⁴

Indeed it seems that the other recommendations of the Task Force bearing on access and learning are yet to be implemented in the archive domain. The domain's attention has focused on other recommendations of the report to do with collections, investment and stewardship; the key recommendations of the report regarding access and learning have gone

⁶² Archives Task Force, 2004, p18.

⁶³ Archives Task Force, 2004, p42.

⁶⁴ Archives Task Force, 2004, p8.

almost unnoticed. On the basis of our research we strongly endorse the Archive Task Force recommendations, and in relation to the archive domain and contemporary learning agendas especially recommendations two to five:

- 'Recommendation Three: Release the potential of archives to enrich and enhance teaching and learning and contribute to raising standards in education
- Recommendation Four: Increase community participation in UK archives with particular focus on engaging hard-to-reach communities
- Recommendation Five: Encourage business, private and specialist archives to develop as integrated component parts of our national heritage'.⁶⁵

The implementation of *Inspiring Learning for All* could provide a tool to encourage this change. As the Archive Task Force commented 'MLA's *Inspiring Learning for All* framework can be used to transform the way archives engage users in learning'.⁶⁶

5.6 Recommendations

This research found that the challenges and barriers for archives engaging with *Inspiring Learning for All* were fundamental to the internal perception of the purpose of archives and archivists, the organisational culture of the archive domain, and external perceptions of the role and function of archives. We found challenges for archives engaging with contemporary learning agendas, which are based on facilitating broad-based learning outcomes for a diversity of users, due to limited capacity. However, we also found that the archive domain has limited capability to allow them to address this limited capacity by developing different models of service provision or developing partnerships, for instance. We found that in addition to the archive domain not engaging with contemporary learning agendas, the domain has limited engagement with contemporary public policy agendas in general. Finally, we found that there are very few imperatives which are driving the necessary modernisation in relation to contemporary public policy objectives, organisational culture, or engagement with learning agendas.

The challenge to the archive domain should not be underestimated. In order for the domain to modernise in such a way as to place contemporary learning agendas as a core part of its purpose, fundamental change management will be required. This will require the introduction of new skills,

⁶⁵ Archives Task Force, 2004, p8.

⁶⁶ Archives Task Force, 2004, p41.

new people and changed perceptions. This process may be difficult in part, as it has been for the museum and library sectors as they have gone through modernisation over the last 20 years. However, this change process also provides great opportunities to capitalise on the immense potential for archives to use their ability to facilitate broad-based learning outcomes for a diversity of people. Encouraging and developing this function of archives will strengthen the domain's ability to actively contribute to fundamental contemporary public policy issues such as social inclusion and cultural diversity.

As our central finding has been that in order for the archive domain to engage with contemporary learning agendas fundamental change will be required it is not possible to provide a set of easy recommendations for MLA North West to action. Rather the recommendations we have provided relate more to the fundamental change required. We have provided a way of drawing archives into a change process which is built around contemporary learning agendas and *Inspiring Learning for All* in particular. Where possible we have suggested specific actions but these are not meant to be exhaustive and we expect MLA North West will understand best the particular current or future initiatives it can use to drive each stage of the change process we have described below.

5.6.1 Purpose of archives

A contemporary vision for archives must be developed. A vision that is modern in that it is focused on providing access to archives to a diversity of users, making the facilitation of accessible learning a central function of archives will enable this change. Actions which will enable this revisioning could include:

- The development of a vision statement for archives— a statement that envisages what archives relationship to broad learning agendas might look like.
- A review of the purpose of archives within the MLA framework. How do we increase the archive domain's contribution to the shared MLA agenda while recognising that all three domains have loyalties and responsibilities outside and beyond it?
- Development of a position statement by MLA North West on the role of archives within the MLA framework. This position statement needs to present the relationship between the archive domain and MLA's agendas including learning.
- The endorsement of *Inspiring Learning for All* as the framework and model for organisational development and planning across the three domains.

5.6.2 Drivers for change

As we have discussed there are very few drivers for change internal to the archive domain. This means that external drivers must be identified and used to enable the change process to occur. These could include:

- The use of Local Authority Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPA) as major drivers of change. Resources from the *Inspiring Learning for All* change study provide tools for archives to undertake service review and development which would meet CPA targets. These measures require archives to strategically contribute to contemporary public policy agendas such as, inclusion, learning, community cohesion and well-being. (National MLA is working on this and some archives, eg. Nottinghamshire, have already been included in this way).
- The representation of *Inspiring Learning for All* as an organisational development model and catalyst for change.
- Capital development as an imperative for change. MLA North West could use its influence in Heritage Lottery Fund Capital Project bids to press for new or improved facilities supporting a wider range of activities. Without that steer, it is likely that the emphasis of these developments will be on collections care, not access and audience development.
- The use by MLA NW of the current audience development project and capital development proposals, such as those by Lancashire, Cumbria, and Greater Manchester County Record Office as imperatives for change.

5.6.3 Strategies for organisational change

In addition to the utilisation of external drivers for change MLA North West must develop a set of strategies which will enable it to act as a motivator for change in archives in the North West. The following are some suggestions for actions which will allow the development of such strategies:

- MLA North West can use its contacts and relationships with key stakeholders to advocate the power of a user and learning focus for archives and its potential contribution to a range of agendas.
- Commission and present evidence of what archives already do in relation to learning; this evidence must reflect MLA's broad-based definition of learning, not just formal education. This evidence of learning must be robust and in depth.

- Commission an action research project on learning in archives which would involve a number of small teams of archive staff working together to explore methods of understanding and measuring learning in archives. For an example of such a project see *Measuring the Outcomes and Impact of Learning in Museums, Archives and Libraries. The Learning Impact Research Project End of Project Paper* (RCMG, 2003).⁶⁷
- Organise a series of seminars on 'Archives in the 21st Century' utilising motivational speakers who are from outside the archive domain and who are known and respected for their innovative thinking in relation to cultural organisations. MLA North West could invite Charles Landry, Director of the innovative cultural consultancy Comedia; Tom Bentley, Director, or John Holden, Head of Culture, of the think tank Demos; Professor Lola Young, who was involved in the Culture Team for the Greater London Authority Olympic Bid and was Project Director of the Archives Museum of Black Heritage; Sue Wilkinson, MLA Director of Learning Access; and, Stuart Davis, *Renaissance in the Regions* author and member of the Archives Task Force.
- Showcase best practice and pilot/ innovative projects to demonstrate what learning in archives looks like (this may involve finding archive programmes from other regions).
- Lobby archive training course and course regulators nationally for broader professional training to encompass awareness of contemporary agendas and policy language.
- Establish a small advisory group of champions of a user-focused approach to steer and support the modernisation process (may include people working in and outside of the archive domain).
- Develop audience development officers— working together to support change, rather than placed in individual services, and described as 'change agents' to introduce a user and learning focus.
- Develop *Inspiring Learning for All* training and development activities— both in archives with archive staff and outside of archives in cross-domain learning contexts.
- Promote leadership training and support for those seeking to promote *Inspiring Learning for All* and influence change; this may involve utilising the skills of people from other sectors and drawing on their organisational change leadership resources.

⁶⁷ See www.mla.gov.uk/documents/insplearn_wp20030501.pdf

- Drawing on the model of 'Inspiring the Workforce', MLA North West's organisational development and change initiative, create secondments within archives with a focus on evaluation and organisational learning, working both within individual archives and as a group.
- Establish skills training for non-specialist staff who work with school groups and adult classes.
- Target archives, archive staff and projects that are already utilising the MLA learning agenda. Give these archives, archive staff and projects specific support with the aim of facilitating advocates for the MLA learning agenda and developing case studies and evidence from which others can learn.

Appendix One: Classification and list of interviewees

Name	RA	Training	Overview	SA	Engaged	LAN	Small	Business	Specialist	Disengaged
Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan			✓		✓					
Janice Tulloch	✓									
Margaret Procter		✓								
Jacque Crosby				✓						
Anne Rowe					✓	✓				
Aidan Jones										✓
Katharine Carter					✓	✓				
Alan Davies							✓			
Ann Hardy									✓	
Jeannette Strickland								✓		

Key	
RA	Regional Agency
SA	Society of Archivists
LAN	Learning Advocate Network

Appendix Two: Interviewees and contact details

Name	Organisation	Contact details	Date	Researcher
Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan	Archival consultant	Corfield House Nesscliffe nr Shrewsbury SY4 1DB Tel: 07719 609894/ 01743 741799 Elizabeth.o-c@dial.pipex.com	11/5/05	Jocelyn Dodd
Janice Tullock	MLA North West Archives Development Officer	Ground Floor The Malt Building Wilderspool Park Greenall's Avenue Warrington WA4 6HL Email: janice.tullock@mlanorthwest.org.uk Tel: 01925 625062	19/5/05	Chris Pickford
Margaret Procter	University of Liverpool Centre for Archive Studies (LUCAS) Associate Director	LUCAS School of History University of Liverpool 9 Abercromby Square Liverpool L69 3BX Tel: 0151 794 2411 mprocter@liv.ac.uk	9/5/05	Jocelyn Dodd
Jacquie Crosby	Chair of the Society of Archivists – North West Region Assistant County Archivist	Lancashire Record Office Bow Lane Preston PR1 2RE Tel: 01772 533028 Email: Jacquie.Crosby@ed.lancscc.gov.uk	6/5/05	Chris Pickford

Name	Organisation	Contact details	Date	Researcher
Anne Rowe	Cumbria CC Archives County Archivist	Cumbria Records Office Kendal County Offices Kendal LA9 4RQ Tel: 01539 773543 anne.rowe@cumbriacc.gov.uk	6/5/05	Chris Pickford
Aidan Jones	Cumbria CC Archives Archivist	Cumbria Record Office and Local Studies Library, Barrow 140 Duke Street Barrow-in-Furness LA14 1XW 01229 894363 barrow.record.office@cumbriacc.gov.uk	25/5/05	Jocelyn Dodd
Katharine Carter	Greater Manchester County Record Office Deputy County Archivist	Greater Manchester County Record Office 56 Marshall Street New Cross Manchester M4 5FU Tel 0161 819 4705 kcarter@gmcro.co.uk	20/5/05	Gaby Porter
Alan Davies	Wigan Archives Service Archivist	Wigan Archives Service Town Hall Leigh Wigan WN7 2DY Telephone 01942 404430 Fax: 01942 404425 Alan.Davies@wlct.org	11/5/05	Gaby Porter
Nicola Siminon	MLA North West Learning and Access Officer	Ground Floor The Malt Building Wilderspool Park Greenall's Avenue	20/05/05	Ceri Jones

Name	Organisation	Contact details	Date	Researcher
		Warrington WA4 6HL Tel: 01925 625059 Email: nicola.siminson@mlanorthwest.org.uk		
Jeannette Strickland	Unilever Head of Archives, Records Management and Art Collections	PO Box 69 Port Sunlight CH62 4ZD England Tel: 0151 6414551 Email: archives@unilever.com	19/5/05	Chris Pickford

Appendix Three: Interview questions

Research questions:

1. What challenges and barriers do archives in the North West have in embracing *Inspiring Learning for All*?
2. How can MLA North West best support the development of *Inspiring Learning for All* in archives in the region?

Introduction to interviewee

- Introduce the interviewer.
- Introduce RCMG:
 - ❖ Research centre, which focuses specifically on learning and the social role of museums, archives and libraries.
 - ❖ We've been commissioned by MLA North West to carry out a piece of research around archives and *Inspiring Learning for All*.
 - ❖ RCMG were involved in the development of *Inspiring Learning for All* and the Generic Learning Outcomes.
 - ❖ This is part of work we are doing with the Learning Advocates Network in the region.

We are interviewing:

- ❖ 8-10 people in the North West.
- ❖ The emerging findings will be tested in a colloquium with people from in and outside the region.
- ❖ A report will be prepared for MLA North West.

Interview questions

Ask interviewee for their name and their post/ role in archives (this is to show we have consulted with a range of people).

	Questions	Probes
1	What do you think the role of archives is in society?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Want to find out their philosophy ❖ How much are they user-focused, how much collections focused?
2	What experience have you had of <i>Inspiring Learning For All</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ How visible and significant is it? ❖ Context.
3	What do you think other people think about <i>Inspiring Learning for All</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Have they encountered any resistance to <i>Inspiring Learning for All</i>? ❖ Some people have suggested

		that because <i>Inspiring Learning for All</i> isn't about collections it has limited significance for archives. Do people believe this and why?
4	What does learning in the context of archives mean to you?	❖ MLA Definition of learning.
	<p>This is the MLA definition of learning:</p> <p>'Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve and increase in or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, values, feelings, attitudes and the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more'</p> <p>What is your reaction to this definition of learning?</p>	
5	What kind of contribution do you think archives can make to the learning agenda?	❖ Are they acknowledging archive's contribution already to the learning agenda e.g. non-specialists carrying out research on family history, learning skills, finding out about their identity, developing self-esteem, greater understanding, making relationships, understanding their place in the world.
6	How do see your role in supporting and promoting learning in archives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ We want to find both their role in being reactive and proactive ❖ It can be their role within their organisation and more broadly.
7	How much does the parent organisation value learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Priority accorded to learning by the parent organisation ❖ E.g. county council, business, cathedral.
8	Archives as a domain have had limited access to specialist education staff— what impact has this had in relation to archives engaging with learning agendas?	
9	How do you find out about user needs? When you make changes e.g. in search room procedures, how do you know this is better for users and who decides to make the changes?	How much do they understand a user needs focus rather than an organisational needs focus e.g. the Royal Bank of Scotland approach to producing a CD without consulting schools then blaming schools for their lack of interest.
10	Is a user-focused service one, which	

	responds to users' requests, or should it be proactive on focusing on specific agendas e.g. Black History?	
11	<p>If these are the range of areas archives are involved in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Conservation, ❖ Cataloguing, ❖ Search room, ❖ Education, <p>which area of work enables the archive to have most knowledge of its users needs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Role of staff who run the search room ❖ Explore demarcation between professional and non-professional staff.
12	What do you feel are the barriers to archives engaging with learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Competing priorities ❖ Small archives ❖ Resources ❖ Limitations etc.
13	Have you explored with any other partners how archives can contribute to quality of life?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ E.g. social services
14	What could MLA North West do to help support <i>Inspiring Learning for All</i> in archives in the North West?	

Appendix Four: Colloquium participants and contact details

1. Colloquium participants

Name	Organisation	Contact details
Peter Daniel Education Officer	Westminster City Archives	020 7641 5180 pdaniel@westminster.gov.uk
Rachel Hasted Social inclusion and access	The National Archives	020 8876 3444 (ext 2531) Rachel.hasted@nationalarchives.gov.uk
David Mander	Consultant	020 8967 3882 davidmander@clara.co.uk
Rebecca Simor Learning and Outreach	BBC (<i>Who do you think you are?</i>)	020 8752 5091 Rebecca.simor@bbc.co.uk
Jan Pimblett Principal Interpretation Officer	London Metropolitan Archives Society of Archivists— Archives for Education and Learning Group	020 7332 3893 jan.pimblett@corpoflondon.gov.uk
Claire Dyson Regional Archives Advisor	Yorkshire Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, involved in <i>Archive Apprenticeship Framework 2004/2005</i>	0113 394 4867 Claire.dyson@ymlac.org.uk
Alistair Tough NHS Greater Glasgow Board Archivists and Records Manager and Senior Research Fellow	University of Glasgow	0141 330 2992 a.tough@archives.gla.ac.uk
Marie Kerwin	NIACE	0116 2044514 marie.kerwin@niace.org.uk

2. Invited but unable to attend

Name	Organisation	Contact details
Vic Gray Former Director	<i>Inspiring Learning for All</i> think tank member	020 7280 5874 victor.gray@rothschild.co.uk
Jonathan Douglas Head of Learning and Access	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council	020 7273 8295 jonathan.Douglas@mlla.gov.uk
Kiran Olak Skills and Training Manager	Yorkshire Museums, Libraries and Archives Council	0113 263 8909 Kiran.olak@ymllac.org.uk
Jenny Moran	Northants Archives	JMoran@northamptonshire.gov.uk
Professor Michael Moss	University of Glasgow	m.moss@hatii.arts.gla.ac.uk
Elizabeth Hallam-Smith Director of Public Services	National Archives	elizabeth.hallam-smith@nationalarchives.gov.uk 020 8392 5245
Keith Sweetmore County Archivist	North Yorkshire Record Office	01609 777585
Tom O'Leary Education, Learning and Access	National Archives	020 8392 5298 thomas.o'leary@nationalarchives.gov.uk
Bill Jones Development Officer (higher education)	NIACE	0116 285 9686 bill.jones@niace.org.uk
Helen Plant	NIACE	Helen.plant@niace.org.uk
Louise Ray Archive Lottery Advisor	National Council on Archives	020 8392 5347 Lousie.ray@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Appendix Five: Classification and list of colloquium invitees

Name	Attended colloquium	Training	K&U	Challenge	Education	Overview	Funding	Inclusion	Users	General
Peter Daniel	✓				✓					
Rachel Hasted	✓							✓		
David Mander	✓			✓				✓	✓	
Rebecca Simor	✓		✓						✓	
Jan Pimblett	✓				✓	✓				
Claire Dyson	✓	✓								
Alistair Tough	✓	✓								
Marie Kerwin	✓		✓							
Vic Gray	X					✓				
Jonathan Douglas	X					✓				
Kiran Olak	X	✓								
Jenny Moran	X			✓						
Professor Michael Moss	X	✓		✓						
Elizabeth Hallam-Smith	X			✓		✓				
Keith Sweetmore	X									✓
Tom O'Leary	X				✓					
Bill Jones / Helen Plant	X		✓							
Louise Ray	X						✓			

Key	
Training	Training within university and within the profession
K&U	Knowledge and understanding of the learning agenda outside MLA
Challenge	Experienced archivists who have been involved with challenging the traditional ideas and role of the archive
Education	Experience of archives education
Overview	Strategic overview
Funding	Experience of external funding
Inclusion	Experience of inclusion agendas
Users	Experience of using archive material but from a user perspective not an archive perspective
General	Traditional archivist

Appendix Six: Colloquium agenda

Engaging Archives with *Inspiring Learning for All*

29th June 2005

Bridgewater Hall, Manchester

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 10.30 | Welcome
Background to the research: Museums, Libraries and Archives
Council North West (MLA North West) |
| 10.45 | Session 1— Learning and the core purpose of archives |
| 11.15 | Session 2— How broad and extensive is learning in archives? |
| 11.45 | Coffee |
| 12.00 | Session 3— Barriers to engagement with Inspiring Learning For
All |
| 12.30 | Lunch |
| 13.15 | Session 4— To engage effectively with learning archives need
to change: what is your vision for archives in the 21 st Century? |
| 14.15 | Session 5— Needs for the future <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What should the core characteristics be of people working
in archives to deliver this vision of learning and change?• How can we work with people now in archives to enable
this to happen? |
| 15.15 | Summary of the colloquium discussion |
| 15.30 | Next steps
Close |

Appendix Seven: Colloquium presentation

Engaging Archives with Inspiring Learning For All

Colloquium

Wednesday 29 June 2005



University of
Leicester

The research context

- Museums, Libraries Archives North West (MLA NW)
- Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG)
- Relationship between archives and Inspiring Learning For All (ILFA)
- Identified by MLA NW as the sector with particular challenges to implementing ILFA

The research process

- What challenges and barriers do archives in the North West have in embracing ILFA?
- How can MLA NW best support the development of ILFA in archives?

MLA Definition of learning

- “Learning is a process of active engagement with experience. It is what people do when they want to make sense of the world. It may involve an increase in or deepening of skills, knowledge, understanding, values, feelings, attitudes and the capacity to reflect. Effective learning leads to change, development and the desire to learn more...”

- “There is a dilemma for archives – core activity is preservation... But for current priorities, some staff would willingly embrace ILFA – those with an aptitude and interest in education and outreach – as a valuable “added value” service”
- “Other users [learn] for their own amusement or for social contact and don’t see themselves (nor do archives staff) as learners”
- “Archives feel they neither have the knowledge or capacity to undertake work in learning”
- “Archives should stick to what they do best: physically looking after documents, putting them in a usable order, [producing] guides and responding to queries. They should not offer legal advice, help adults with learning difficulties, [and] teach school children. It is not very trendy to think like this”

What does learning in the
context of archives mean to
you?

Is archives' engagement with learning giving added value to archives or is it fundamental to them?

What does learning look like?

- Pupils with moderate learning difficulties were involved in a project with English Heritage, a local orphanage and the city archives in Sunderland
- "It made [the pupils] a lot more positive about themselves, they identified with people who hadn't been orphans being put in an orphanage. They only really uncovered a lot of that by using the city archives where there were images and people recognised locations that grandparents had had photographs of so it made them go back to their own families and talk to their families... because they had this initial visit to the building and supported that with research through the city archives it really unpacked and unzipped the whole idea"

What does learning look like?

- 2000 Glasgow Lives – Roberta took part in an oral history project at the Open Museum to collect the life stories of Glasgow residents
- “It’s given me confidence... interviewing other people and meeting other people. It’s given me skills I didn’t think I had... I’ve learned to listen - I’m a chatterer and I have learned to listen”
- “I now am not frightened - I think that’s the correct word to use - because...there is assistance to help you and I now know where to go, and how to apply”

Evidence from the research: how archives identify learning

- **Schools and formal education** – “If they do anything it will be National curriculum based, concrete specific, clear... what paymasters understand...”
- **Family history** – “Family history as an enjoyable and compulsive leisure pursuit where people learn through enjoyment and discovery”
- **Finding specific information** – “The primary role of an archive is for academic research – you need to know what the research question is... what are the starting points may be different but there is a research question to answer”

**How broad and extensive
can learning be in archives
or using archives?**

Barriers to engaging with ILFA

- Lack of capacity
- Limited staff
- Backlogs of cataloguing
- Lack of specialist education staff
- No funding
- No time
- Lack of confidence
- Feel smaller than museums and libraries and are less able to meet the learning agenda
- Lack of support
- No drivers for change so no motivation

Evidence

- Archives “losing out to other domains (especially museums) who are forging ahead, leaving archives behind – and often ignoring the potential contribution archives could make in joint ventures”
- “Have to bear in mind that[...] is bottom end of service provision, one man – what impact can you expect to have?”
- “Archives don’t think naturally about working with partners... limited confidence about approaching partners”
- “Archives aren’t judged or assessed on their contribution to learning... so its not a real priority”
- “Archives are undervalued for both formal and informal learning”
- Cataloguing backlog problem “which was seen by archivists as the major need”
- “Activity [around learning] is piecemeal, things happen when they fit in with other plans”
- “The Record Office has no expertise to fit in with the formal learning agenda... staff involved are always multi-tasking and learning on the job”

**Is there anything we have
not captured?**

**To what extent are they real
barriers?**

**To engage effectively with
learning archives need to
change...**

**What is your vision for
archives in the 21st century?**

Issues

- Purpose
- Collections
- Users
- Staff development
- Relationship with wider agendas
- Partnerships...

What should the core characteristics be of people working in archives to deliver this vision of learning and change?

How can we work with people now in archives to enable this to happen?

What would their training and development needs be?

Appendix Eight: What could MLA North West do to help support *Inspiring Learning for All* in archives in the North West? Summary of interviewees' responses

Following is a list of all the responses from the interviewees to this question (these are not listed in any order):

- 'Identify what archives already do to meet the agendas'.
- 'How can you inspire people in 10 mins, 1 hour etc.?'
- 'Archives on the underground'— 'Idea of poetry on the tube very appealing'.
- Training courses.
- Need proper support.
- Advise, resources.
- 'Need partnerships to be encouraged'.
- Mentoring.
- Need to help establish productive learning relationships.
- Funding related to *Inspiring Learning for All*.
- Need to have measurement processes with parent bodies for *Inspiring Learning for All*.
- Lack of resources needs alternatives.
- 'MLA North West needs to understand where we are starting from with very limited resources'.
- 'MLA North West shouldn't expect anything too elaborate'.
- 'If could provide staff to work on specific projects it would help'.
- Acting as a go-between with education authorities— promoting archival wares, canvassing support and brokering partnerships.

- Awareness raising— improving knowledge and perceptions of archives, and their potential contribution to other agendas (including drawing material from business archives into this).
- Could involve specialists (including business archives) by creating frameworks within which they could make a very specific contribution (e.g. learning materials for schools drawing on resources from range of archives).
- Helping to manage expectations of what archives services can handle— 'getting universities to brief research students properly, advising teachers on how to approach archives (e.g. single contact from teacher, not 20 letters from individual pupils asking same question)'.
- Awareness raising about *Inspiring Learning for All*— to the domain.
- More one-to-one work with services to help them to see how *Inspiring Learning for All* could be useful. Use consultants for a day's support leading to a report— 'used this for *Logjam* and for conservation and preservation work. Successful, because services will act on the reports'.
- Training— to be a mix of cross-domain and archive-specific, but with quite a lot of emphasis on something just for archives (travel problems, 'but also to counter the perception that MLA North West is just for museums').
- Need to identify exemplar projects showing what archives can achieve when they have the resources. 'Useful to demonstrate what could be achieved, and to show what influence this would have on others in the region'.
- Advocacy with LEAs and others (potential funders, users and other learning providers— Learning and Skills Councils). 'HLF see the value of *Inspiring Learning for All* to their projects but wider appreciation is needed'.
- Persuasion of local authority and other managers of the contribution that archives can make to learning.
- Advocacy to senior local authority managers and (especially) with Education departments to 'sell' *Inspiring Learning for All* and improve awareness of the potential contribution of archives to learning. Also with potential partners in wider world ('getting people to see archives as having relevant material').

- Leadership training and support for those seeking to promote *Inspiring Learning for All* and influence change.
- Improved publicity for *Inspiring Learning for All* aimed at archive staff — ‘must be brief, digestible and whet appetites’.
- *Inspiring Learning for All* training— allowing for difficulties of releasing staff, travel etc.— with a mix of ‘local’ and ‘away’ venues, cross-domain preferred (learning from others, making contacts). ‘Above all, inspiring— showing what people have done with *Inspiring Learning for All* (case studies) rather than just content and mechanics’.
- Skills training for non-specialist staff who need to work with school groups and adult classes.
- Grants (no specific suggestions— but a belief that MLA North West procedures are too onerous for benefits, and ideas/ themes for grant programmes have been ‘better in theory than in reality’).
- Consultancy for hand-holding and support through *Inspiring Learning for All* process.
- ‘MLA North West has made a good start with presentations to Society of Archivists and LCC (though the clash of the *Inspiring Learning for All* launch with the North West Regional meeting was poor)’. Also feels that MLA North West is sending out confused messages— ‘promoting LOGJAM (and cataloguing as priority) on the one hand, and *Inspiring Learning for All* (learning and access) on the other— feels that ROs are being split by conflicting demands’.
- Advocacy with potential partners (Education Depts., Social Inclusion partners) regarding the scope for MLAs (and archives in particular) to contribute to learning and other agendas.
- Staff training on-site and domain-specific (although meeting others has value, ‘there is a need to enthuse archive staff— problems with travel and releasing staff mean that on-site is best; cascade training isn’t very persuasive’). ‘MLA North West should take the training to the record offices’.
- Consultancy. Providing facilitator to work with staff (who must have ownership) on *Inspiring Learning for All*— hand-holding and helping services to link *Inspiring Learning for All* to current activities and initiatives.

- 'The real need is for practical help' — 'spending money on the ground' (not on policies and reports).

Appendix Nine: What are the current priorities for archives?

After the colloquium, Chris Pickford further investigated the current priorities for archives to see where learning fitted in. He contacted three senior local authority archivists from outside the North West region to answer the following questions:

1. What do you see as immediate priorities for your archive services?
2. What do you see as the current short to medium term priorities for the archive domain?
3. Which aspects of the wider public service agenda do you currently see as most relevant for archives to contribute to and/or benefit from?

The responses have been categorised in the table below.

The responses indicate that the main priorities for the archive domain are related to process, information management and organisational issues. Learning opportunities are mentioned only in relation to wider public service agendas; learning is not a key priority.

When the nature of the research was indicated to them, one interviewee commented:

‘Learning is a generic outcome and tends therefore to underpin and/or sit within many of the priorities. It also underpins much of what we already do through search room provision, and remote service delivery (either enabled or self-service). The key point about it is the need to be able to demonstrate it through survey/impact analysis to show relevance and 'making a difference' to quality of life. The questions in the PSQG visitor survey along these lines have been extremely valuable in this respect in my opinion.’

While this interviewee recognised that learning underpins other priorities did not think it was a strong enough priority to stand-alone.

What are the current priorities for archives? Interviewee responses

Theme	Immediate priorities	Short to medium term priorities	Relevant public service agendas
Process/ information management issues/ structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement with rollout of corporate Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) • Missionary work on Information Management • Replacement of mainframe records management system • Embedding electronic Records Management into the organisation with cultural change requirement • Tender for the cataloguing/management software. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finishing off the job of getting all available archival description onto the Internet— allied to that is long term sustainability of A2A • The issues surrounding electronic records— EDRMS preservation of electronic records • Starting the process at a local level of high volumes of images of documents accessible on the web • Kick out inflexible BS5454 requirements. Roll out the green agenda in records storage • Records management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positioning ourselves strongly in the Information Management debate • Gershon efficiency savings— Records Management.
Legislative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with information legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with information related legislation • Getting inclusion into the CPA block and/or more legislative underpinning • Ensure that the CPA culture block includes archives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness, Freedom of Information/EIR and linked areas of public trust— links to citizenry rights, governance etc., relates to some of the CPA corporate lines of enquiry esp. those relating implicitly to Information Management and links to e-government and service delivery.
Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing large-scale digital services for genealogists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining our relevance at a time of declining visitor numbers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing a visible role in the authority's desire to 'reach the people' e.g. community planning, community committees • Linking with other Cultural Services to meet and fulfil Quality of life

Theme	Immediate priorities	Short to medium term priorities	Relevant public service agendas
			and well being imperatives.
Leadership		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting clarity around the national leadership/ sponsorship issue and doing it effectively. 	
Funding / sponsorship			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scope for inward investment and winning external monies.
Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful Chartermark application Linkage to CC objectives and strategic planning as part of range of Cultural Services Getting Information Management recognised as critical and multi-faceted corporate issue. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition in public sector (and its monitoring regime) of information as a corporate (and cultural asset) requiring effective management whatever the medium Re-energise the local authority archives network. We have lost our way, and are in danger of being forgotten (unlike museums). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPA, CPA, CPA. For the brief period when Best Value applied to us, we got a huge leg up. We are now falling behind again as only libraries are being taken into account in CPA ratings.
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sorting out chronic accommodation problems – Archives and RM Improve old block for storage purposes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing output requirements of Service with resources so as to be able effectively to develop and widen access in all its aspects – general unevenness of funding This is about money and relevance of services to local authorities. We need to re-energise county archivists who are now lost in larger cultural departments and are forgetting to interconnect with each other. 	
Digitization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued development of e-Service Delivery via retro-digitisation (and linked finding aid development) and content development on line. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital preservation. 	
Collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining momentum on tackling cataloguing backlog. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll out the 'future life of collections' agenda 	

Theme	Immediate priorities	Short to medium term priorities	Relevant public service agendas
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-argue the case for 'general' record offices. HLF has harmed our ability to collect generally and is making it even more difficult to collect ethnic minority deposits. 	
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting other Services – cultural and other— to work with archives i.e. joining up Services to deliver better outcomes and greater opportunities e.g. for promotion and access. 		
Learning			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various (generic) learning opportunities.

Appendix Ten: Notes from colloquium visioning exercise

One of the exercises in the colloquium involved asking the participants to respond to the following statement and question:

- **To engage effectively with learning archives need to change. What is your vision for archives in the 21st century?**

The group was divided into two and given 35 minutes to develop a vision around the following categories:

- Purpose
- Collections
- Users
- Staff development
- Relationship with wider agendas
- Partnerships etc

GROUP 1: SUMMARY OF STATEMENT

Purpose of archives

- The premise— what about accountability, responsibility and history?
- *Inspiring Learning for All* to promote your institution/ survival— pragmatic
- Learning is a good thing— to develop people
- You create a demand— will endure cuts
- Training of staff— not specific, junior staff not interested in vocational training
- Volunteers— friends groups, docents and who manages them
- Forming Trusts for archives separate from local councils.

Users

- Are new users there? Oral traditions
- Visual documents— maps and photos— interpret themselves
- Social centres and productive— coffee machine— learning for each other.

Collections

- Information systems— very vulnerable, disorganised e-office.

Wider agendas

- Driven by funding priorities— short term priorities
- Contradict archives long-term purpose.

GROUP 2: SUMMARY OF STATEMENT

Purpose of archives

- Memory box for people's social and cultural experiences
- For people to use
- Bulwark of democracy— access to public record, separate from the government of the day
- Contemporary issues— active citizens
- Inclusive— reflect communities, imaginative about collections
- Leaps— fighting for staff/ resources.

Collections

- 21st century material a priority, its basis must reflect diversity— finding new methods of collection e.g. electronic records with social inclusion clause, look for additional records beyond core
- Further steps in cataloguing— ways into collections, layers, fitting into wider engines, take you to other places outside world
- Good/ accurate descriptions
- Without the collections looking outwards they won't be used
- User's view/ user's way in/ user's language (use of English and other languages)
- New interpretive tools e.g. A2A needs intro. packs, interlinking tools for documents.

Users

- Need to be more receptive areas
- Environments—creating user friendly space
- More social hours, 24/7, levels of investment
- New users, relevance to all age from infants to adults
- Mediated service, more of it
- Publishing user material— democratization of history
- Users contributing, value of personal, Community Archive movement
- Not stereotyping users e.g. older people are not just 'reminiscers'
- Use of material broader by users
- Crossing/ meeting the curriculum barrier (11-18 yrs)
- Meeting changes in Further Education and Higher Education
- User learning needs/ range of needs/ also encouragement/ sourced bridges.

Staff development

- Professional qualifications related to learning
- People handling skills, learning to communicate/ listen
- Continuing professional development
- Management skills
- Short-term= Diversity, targeted placements/ recruitment, start at school and keep feeding in

- Constructing placement in relation to links with related areas e.g. museum, gallery and school.

Relationships with wider agendas

- Communication of wider agendas
- Enthusiastic, relevant and purposeful to workforce
- Role models, best practice
- Brokering partnerships, shared experience
- Citizenship.

Partnerships

- Other institutions— underestimation
- Training or work with others
- Partnerships with community
- Flexibility.

Appendix Eleven: References

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