

Using Archives in Higher Education History Teaching

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SOCIETY OF ARCHIVISTS

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USING ARCHIVES IN HIGHER EDUCATION HISTORY TEACHING

Introduction

The use of archive sources is central to the practice of history. Yet it is surprisingly common for first-degree history students to graduate without any experience of using archives. They do not learn the skills of archival research and they miss out on the satisfactions of making their own historical discoveries. In effect, they never arrive at the stage where they are doing real history.

The aim of this guide is to encourage a wider and more systematic use of archive-based study in higher education history courses, primarily in Britain. It contains several case studies of undergraduate-level courses and modules in which students are taught to make use of archival resources. It includes some general suggestions relating to archive-oriented teaching and notes on guiding students from the initial stage of locating suitable sources to the point of completing individually researched history projects.

The guide is based on information supplied by lecturers and archivists who are or have been closely involved in archive-oriented teaching. Their approaches are broadly similar, though not in every respect identical. One of the things they have in common is a passionate belief in the value to students of direct experience of archival research.

Benefits to students

When students work with primary documents they learn to evaluate evidence. They acquire insight into the basis on which historical arguments are developed. When they move into the archive, they encounter primary material in its raw, unmediated form, unselected and untranscribed: this is potentially daunting, but also challenging and intriguing. History ceases to be an intellectual artefact and becomes an investigation into traces left by real people who lived and thought and acted: with whom, on some level, it is possible to feel a connection. Students find this immensely exciting. Sifting through archive documents, struggling to understand and contextualize them, they gain a much deeper appreciation of the problems inherent in using documentary sources, and the resourcefulness and creative thinking needed to interpret them. They enjoy the detective work of looking for clues and making connections. They are inspired by finding that they can make their own discoveries and form and support original interpretations and arguments.

Skills learned

Archival research teaches students how to extract information from a large amount of disparate material by distinguishing what is relevant and useful: a valuable and highly transferable skill. They are required to locate and access a range of sources, to appreciate the characteristics of different types of documents and assess their properties as evidence. They learn to correlate sources, weigh one source against another and present complex arguments. Depending on the nature of the research project, specific techniques employed may include quantifiable analysis and the use of spreadsheets and/or databases.

Research-informed teaching

When students are introduced to archival research the content of the course draws very directly on the teacher's own research practice. It is government policy in England to value and support 'research-informed teaching' in higher education, and this policy is reflected in the current funding regime.

Advantages for archives

A wider use of archive-based study in undergraduate-level history courses will increase awareness and understanding of archive services and encourage students to recognize the value of archival resources and the importance of deposits. It has the potential to build a strong core of experienced and confident users of archives, many of whom are likely to continue to make use of archives after graduation: some as academic historians, others as school-teachers, as members of local history groups or as independent scholars. Some may return to archives to pursue careers as archivists, bringing with them the insights and enthusiasm they acquired as student users. Others may return to work as volunteers.

Partnerships

Some university teachers and departments develop close associations with particular repositories. Dr Matt Cook's 'Queer Histories' course (Birkbeck), described in the 'Case Studies' section of this guide, is taught almost entirely on archive premises, mainly at London Metropolitan Archives. Dr Steve Poole's course 'Crowds, Disorder and the Law, 1730–1820' (University of the West of England, Bristol) incorporates a workshop held at Bristol Record Office.

For a number of years, the History team at Nottingham Trent University has had a closely co-operative relationship with Nottinghamshire Archives. To departments seeking to take this approach, Professor Martyn Bennett of NTU advises contacting archives local to their area to see which is prepared to provide the kind of support that they need for their students. He recommends talking to archivists about what they have in their collections that will engage the students' interest and imagination. Keep them informed about the content of courses and discuss what holdings they have that are relevant. It may be feasible to invite specialist archivists to come to the university to give seminars to the students. Let them know the topics of student dissertations and make sure students know who to ask for by name when they visit the archive to do their research. Aim to build a lasting relationship with the archivists and the archive.

From the other side of this relationship, Chris Weir, Senior Archivist (Public Services) at Nottinghamshire Archives, notes that partnerships with HE institutions need to be properly planned. They should be underpinned by an education or learning and outreach policy and for larger projects the work should be incorporated into annual business plans. The resources and staff time required need to be budgeted. Nottinghamshire Archives maintains partnerships with various departments in several local universities. Archivists may be involved in assisting lecturers to locate relevant material for their courses, in induction sessions for students and helping to deliver modules with an archive element. Some undergraduate and postgraduate students come to the archives office to do one-week work experience placements, cataloguing or working in conservation. Some students who visit the archives for work experience or study become regular volunteers.

Not all effective partnerships between archives and HE departments operate in this kind of way. At London Metropolitan Archives, the selection and interpretation of records is left to the course teacher. LMA facilitates teaching sessions by providing study space. Pre-ordered documents are delivered ready for class use. Student groups are offered archive tours, with introductions to the finding aids.

Developing a close relationship with a particular archive has obvious benefits both for the teacher and for the students, but it is not the only way to do archive-oriented teaching. Some courses introduce students to more than one archive, or to a range of different archives. Moreover, where undergraduates are working on individual research projects, such as final-year dissertations, they will be working independently in repositories where there is material that is relevant to their chosen topics.

Direct access to UK archives is not always possible. At Yale University Professor Keith Wrightson teaches a course on 'London 1560–1760' to junior history majors (described in the 'Case Studies' section below). For one of the two assessed papers students are required to analyse a body of primary material specially transcribed for the course from UK archival sources. In other assessed activities the students are encouraged to make use of UK archival material available online.

Archive visits

Successful group archive visits require to be carefully set up by the teacher. Detailed research has to go into selecting material likely to interest the students and stimulate a productive session. For this reason, it is essential that the teacher is already reasonably familiar with the collections to be used. Orders for documents must be placed in advance of the visit.

Activities have to be well planned. Students should be given a project to engage in that is manageable and will rouse their interest. One approach sometimes used in initial, 'taster' archive-based classes involves issuing students with small 'packages' of selected original documents for study in relation to a particular topic or question. The students typically work in twos or threes and report their findings to be discussed by the class at a later point in the session.

The university teachers consulted for this guide held differing opinions of archive tours. One lecturer thought they were not useful, and simply bored the students. However, another considered that visiting conservation departments and learning about the problems and methods of conserving old documents was interesting to students and concentrated their minds on the intrinsic value accorded historic records, as well as the importance of treating them with respect.

All the lecturers acknowledged that it is sometimes necessary to use copies in place of fragile originals. However, several of them feel strongly that the experience of handling original documents is immensely valuable to students: that it brings home to them the fact that the people they are studying had a real existence, and fires their imagination in productive ways. Specific guidance on handling is sometimes delivered by archive staff, sometimes by the teacher, depending on arrangements.

In cases where the lecturer is not working closely with the archive staff, it is still necessary to notify them that a group is coming in. The National Archives, and possibly other archives too, can arrange for readers' tickets to be prepared in advance for collection, thus saving time.

The 'Case Studies' section of this guide describes one course, Birkbeck's 'Queer Histories: London's Lesbian and Gay Past', where the classes are regularly taught on archive premises. The obvious benefit is that students are able to explore a wide range of original material in a well-structured way with closely focused support from the course tutor. However, it is clear that the approach requires quite a lot of preparation and a very good knowledge of the archives. Anyone lacking previous experience of this kind of teaching is not recommended to begin by planning a complete course based in an archive (or archives). It is suggested that instead they should try out the approach in a single archive-based pilot session scheduled as part of a course that is otherwise run along more conventional lines.

Preparation

The keys to successful archive-oriented teaching are preparation and careful guidance. First, students need to be given a context within which to understand and interpret the documents. They need to acquire a general understanding of the period and subject of study. They also need the knowledge of how a particular class of

records was produced, and for what purpose. It is important that they recognize that using primary material is very different from using secondary sources, in that the material was not originally designed to provide answers to historical questions. It is necessary to interrogate it resourcefully and with caution, assessing its likely reliability and allowing for its limitations and biases.

Secondly, students may need to acquire particular skills. If they are studying original material from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they will need to learn to read secretary hand. It is essential to give them practice reading copies in the classroom before they go on an archive visit. Later hands present less of a barrier, though students may need to be given help in particular cases. It is unusual for students to be taught to interpret Latin documents, but a module on Latin for local historians has been offered as part of the English Local History course at the University of Surrey. It is worth noting that early modern legal documents in Latin are typically highly formulaic. Learning to identify and interpret the formulas and abbreviations is likely to be of more use to history students than the finer points of Latin grammar, and will assist them to extract usable information. Moving away from textual sources, it may well be useful to discuss with students productive techniques for 'reading' visual material: maps, cartoons, pictures, photographs, films.

Thirdly, students will need some general guidance on visits to archives. On some courses relevant advice is included in the module handbook. They should be warned to take pencils, and advised that a magnifying glass may sometimes be helpful. When it comes to visiting unfamiliar archives to research their own projects, they will probably find it useful to be reminded to check in advance whether they need to book seats, what the opening hours are, and whether they need to take ID (and in what form). If they have a camera, they will wish to find out if the archive permits photography.

Students should be encouraged not to be shy in approaching archive staff. They should be advised to ask for any help they need in locating and using the archive's finding aids. They should ask the staff on duty to tell them which of the archivists are specialists in the type of material they are working on and try and arrange to consult them about their projects.

Online archive catalogues have transformed students' ability to locate primary sources relevant to their research projects. Yet there are pitfalls involved in using them, of which students will need to be advised: they are not necessarily complete, and they do not usually index full details of every document, something that the novice user may not understand.

Online archives are increasingly rich in documents. These can be used as material for exercises to develop students' skills in interpretation. 'The Proceedings of the Old Bailey 1674 to 1834' (Old Bailey Online), a fully searchable online edition of the printed Old Bailey trial reports, is one of the richest and best presented open access archive sites on the web. Dr Steve Poole at UWE and Professor Keith Wrightson at Yale both set students tasks involving keyword searches on the Proceedings in order to encourage them to think about specific aspects of the social and cultural life of the period. Online resources provide students with access, usually searchable, to large amounts of material they would otherwise find it difficult or impossible to consult. They can whet students' appetites for research and provide information to supplement, rather than supplant, the discoveries made through archive-based research. The last section of this guide contains a comprehensive list of good online archival resources relating to British and Irish history in the early modern and modern periods. Other useful sites are also listed.

Student projects

To complete a successful independent research project, students need advice and guidance at every stage. First, they must choose, or be assigned, a suitable topic. A question, either set by the teacher or devised by the student in consultation with the teacher, helps them to focus on their argument and produce a structured piece of research. Next, students need advice to help them locate source material that will provide them with evidence relevant to their topic. The Dissertation Resource Pack provided for final-year history students at Lancaster University contains information on a huge range of primary sources. The module guide for NTU's second-year module 'Exploring History in the City: 1800–1960' (described in the 'Case Studies' section) includes a survey of specific classes of records in Nottinghamshire Archives and other local repositories, with details of document references.

Some students will focus on the pleasures of delving in repositories and will need encouragement to move beyond this stage and evaluate and interpret their discoveries within a broad historical context and with regard to historical debate. Several of the lecturers consulted for this guide remarked that in general, mature students tend to be enthusiastic about archive-based investigation, but less comfortable when they have to move away from their sources to consider matters of broad context, methodology or debate. By contrast, younger, 'traditional' students are at ease with discussing the general historical picture, but not always so keen to put in time in the archives.

Dr Nick Hayes of NTU notes that students are generally surprised to find just how much research material it takes to produce even quite a short historical account. He also comments that one of the biggest challenges for students is thinking of ways of making good use of their chosen sources in constructing a historical argument. NTU's 'Exploring History in the City' module is organized so as to move students through a two-stage learning process: first, an assignment in which they use archival sources to produce a narrative account of a historical topic or sequence of events, and then an individually researched essay in which they are required to develop a well-constructed, properly supported historical argument.

Dr Michael Winstanley of Lancaster University stresses the importance of introducing students to different types of primary material in the context of the uses to which they have been put in historical debate. Students develop ideas about how they might use primary sources in their own research from seeing what other people have done with similar material. Student projects from previous years can be used very effectively as examples of successful approaches.

Concluding note

The case studies that follow are all of undergraduate/undergraduate level courses. The disciplinary approaches used fall broadly into categories of social, social-economic and cultural history and include urban history, local and regional history, queer history and 'history from below'. Political history at a national rather than local level is notably absent. This appears to reflect a current bias in the delivery of HE history teaching. However, there is no obvious reason why archive-oriented teaching should not be incorporated into any kind of course in early modern or modern British history.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1

Nottingham Trent University

BA History, Joint and Single Honours

Exploring History in the City: 1800–1960

This is a two-semester module in modern urban history for second-year undergraduates. It was introduced in 2007–2008. The students are guided through the process of locating and evaluating primary sources relevant to a specific topic and using them to develop a historical argument.

Before they are sent into archives to work with primary material the students are given several weeks of preparatory teaching. A series of lectures introduces nineteenth- and twentieth-century urban history and provides context for specific themes. In seminars the students discuss possible research topics and consider ways in which they might explore them using archive material. Some general advice on using archives and archive sources is included in the module guide.

Each student receives individual advice on their projects through a series of one-to-one tutorials. Specific skills such as palaeography or quantitative methods are taught in tutorials as occasion requires. In a step-by-step approach, students are led through the process of using a variety of archive-based sources to produce a narrative account of a historical topic or sequence of events, and then to construct a historical argument on the basis of evidence they have researched themselves.

The module is assessed on two essays. For the first assignment, due before the start of term two, the students conduct their research in small groups but plan and write the essay individually. Broad topic areas suggested include housing, health provision and local voluntary associations in Nottingham. Detailed advice is given on relevant sets of primary sources and their location. The students are directed to use archive-based primary material only in constructing their accounts and to use a range of sources. For the second assignment, due in May, the students work individually to produce an extended piece of research on a topic of their own choosing from nineteenth- or twentieth-century urban history. A focus on Nottingham is considered to be likely, given the availability of Nottingham sources, but is not required.

Record repositories used include Nottinghamshire Archives, Nottingham University Library Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Local Studies Library Nottingham Central Library (Angel Row) and the Galleries of Justice. The documents used are generally originals, though copies are substituted for some very fragile sets of material.

‘Exploring History in the City’ builds on a basic introduction to archives delivered as part of a first-year ‘core’ history module. This takes the form of a programmed group visit to Nottinghamshire Archives. The students are given an introduction to the archives, and are then given pre-selected packages of related documents to evaluate (three documents per package). Types of documents used for this exercise include hospital records, school records, census returns, and records relating to a ‘rescue home’ for women.

In the final year of the degree students spend at least a third of their time researching and writing a 15,000 word dissertation on a self-chosen topic. 'Exploring History in the City' is designed to provide students with a solid foundation in the skills and theoretical understanding required to produce the dissertation.

Information from Dr Nick Hayes, Senior Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary History

Case Study 2

Birkbeck, University of London
Certificate/ Diploma in History

Queer Histories: London's Lesbian and Gay Past

This is an open access evening course for part-time adult students, at a level equivalent to the first year of undergraduate study. Students who successfully complete the full certificate in history of which this is an optional module may gain exemption from the first year of Birkbeck's BA in History. However, some students take the module purely out of interest, with no intention of continuing to a further stage.

The course runs for twelve weeks. Topics covered range in time from the 'molly house' culture of the early eighteenth century to gay and lesbian life in London in the 1990s. Teaching takes place mainly at London Metropolitan Archives and the sessions are largely organized as workshops in which students study and discuss original source documents. The types of material used include court records, therapeutic records, bound copies of magazines, and material related to twentieth-century campaigning organisations. One session takes place at the London School of Economics, using material in the Hall Carpenter Archives. In the penultimate week there is a walk around London's West End to look at sites associated with lesbian and gay history.

There is a choice of methods of assessment. Students may write a short essay and combine this with one or more additional tasks. Options include a written analysis of one or two of the source documents studied in the course; an oral presentation to the class, plus a short written reflection on the presentation; a talk given in the context of the guided walk, plus a short written reflection; an archive review; and conducting a small oral history project. Alternatively students may elect to write an extended essay. Each seminar topic is associated with one or two possible essay questions, but students may arrange instead to write on a topic of their choice. Some of the students do independent research for their essays using sources in the archives.

Information from Dr Matt Cook, Senior Lecturer in History

Case Study 3

Lancaster University
BA History, Single Honours

Dissertation

This is a compulsory final-year module. The aim is to research and write a dissertation exploring a historical problem. The prescribed length is between 8,000 and 10,000 words, not including footnotes or bibliography.

Teaching for the dissertation begins in the Lent Term of the second year. A short course of introductory lectures, covering the medieval to the modern periods, provides initial advice on choosing a topic and looking for sources. As part of this introduction the students are given demonstrations of online digital resources and catalogues. At this stage students decide on their topics, and early in the summer term they are allocated supervisors with whom they plan their research. In the Michaelmas Term there is a further short course of lectures which covers matters of structure, writing and presentation. The dissertation is submitted at the end of the Lent Term of the third year.

As a rule, only those students who are working in relatively modern periods on British-oriented topics are in a position to make use of original sources in UK archives. It is rare for students to possess the palaeographical skills or Latin required to work with earlier documents.

The following information comes from Dr Michael Winstanley, Senior Lecturer in History:

Dr Winstanley supervises students working on topics from nineteenth- and twentieth-century history. All the students whom he supervises do archive-based research for their dissertations. It is recommended that they do most of their primary research in the summer vacation, and that they keep down expense and travel time by using archives that they can easily reach from home.

Types of archive used include local record offices and university archives. The module resource pack contains detailed information on locating sources in repositories and online. It also contains ‘worked examples’ of searches for secondary literature and primary material. Examples of student dissertations from previous years are used in teaching to stimulate ideas for possible research projects and suggest ways of using the available primary sources to debate historical questions.

Some topics of recent dissertations include the Cornish in Cumbria in the nineteenth century; women in a nineteenth-century local prison; ‘The Robbery Bill’: brewers’ reactions to the 1908 Licensing Bill; women’s work in the First World War; women and the cotton industry in the First World War; Belgian refugees in the North West during the First World War; Sylvia Pankhurst and the British Communist Party; the British Union of Fascists and the Spanish Civil War; and Wigan housing in the 1930s.

Case Study 4

University of Surrey
Certificate/Diploma/BA

English Local History

This subject has been offered for about ten years in the Department of Adult and Continuing Education, originally to diploma level and for the last five years to BA level. The students are part-time and full-time adult learners who may choose to study individual modules on a stand-alone basis or to accumulate credits towards a certificate, diploma, or BA honours degree in English Local History.

Most of the modules involve students in making archive visits. Some of these are organized group visits, while others are made independently. Record repositories used include the National Archives, the Surrey History

Centre and Winchester Record Office. The maximum number of students taken on any one group visit is twenty; the usual number is about ten. Students receive specific instruction on handling originals, either by the course tutor or by the archive staff, depending on the arrangements with the archive. On organized visits students are split into small groups and given different exercises: for example, one group may be given maps to study while another group is given a set of documents for quantitative analysis.

Before any archive visit takes place, students study copies of documents in class. The starting point is usually census records (on microfilm), since students generally have some familiarity with their purpose and form. Document-based modules are run alongside related general history modules so that students are enabled to place documents in their contexts and understand the circumstances under which they were produced and the purposes for which they were originally used. Specific skills that are taught on the course include palaeography and Latin for local historians.

Primary material used includes the Loseley House estate papers at Surrey History Centre, and education, poor law and hearth tax records. The earliest documents studied date from around the middle of the sixteenth century. Where transcripts or copies are available, these are used in place of the original documents for conservation reasons.

During the course students undertake a number of individual research projects of various kinds, culminating in a 10,000 word dissertation in the final year. To save them travel problems and expense, students are advised to research these projects in archives near where they live.

One option available on the course is a work placement module, for which students arrange to do voluntary work in an archive, museum or English Heritage property.

Information from Anne Milton-Worssell, Director of Studies for English Local History

Case Study 5

University of the West of England, Bristol
BA History, Joint and Single Honours

Crowds, Disorder and the Law in England, 1730–1820

This is a two-semester special subject module for third-year undergraduates. It has been running for about four years. It is designed to support students as they work on their dissertations, partly by providing them with historical context but mainly by helping them develop the required research skills. The size of the group is limited to twelve. The approach is expressly ‘history from below’ and ‘reading against the grain’ is stressed as an important interpretative strategy. There are no lectures; the course is delivered in two-hour workshop sessions and through individual tutorials.

As an initial exercise students are set tasks that involve making specific keyword searches in ‘The Proceedings of the Old Bailey 1674 to 1834’ (Old Bailey Online), a fully searchable online edition of the printed Old Bailey trial reports, and interpreting what they find. One of the aims of the exercise is to encourage students to begin

thinking in terms of reading documents in ways and for purposes not considered by the people who produced them.

A special three-hour workshop at Bristol Record Office is scheduled towards the beginning of the first term. After an introduction to the collection and some advice on handling documents, students are given original quarter-sessions bundles, consisting mainly of depositions, to examine in pairs. They are given the task of selecting one well-documented case and preparing a short presentation in which they explore its value as evidence of everyday plebeian life and culture. Areas that they are encouraged to investigate include gender relations and codes of sexuality. Bundles for this workshop are specially selected in advance, to ensure that each of them contains some cases that are rich in informative documents. All bundles used date from 1730 or later, so there are no documents in Latin. Deciphering the written hands is not usually found to be much of a problem.

So far as possible, students are matched up with bundles that contain information relevant to their chosen dissertation topics. However, they do not always choose to focus on those cases in their presentations.

Later workshops focus on document study, working on a different topic every week. The module handbook contains a large number of source documents, some as transcripts, others as reproductions: these include maps, broadsides, pictures, political cartoons and articles from newspapers. In addition, students bring to the workshops for discussion copies of documents they have found in archives while working on their own research projects. Students are also given advice on interpreting and using the sources they discover in individual tutorials.

The module is assessed on two written assignments, due in terms one and two, and an exam at the end of the year. Both written assignments focus on the selection and interpretation of primary materials. For the first assignment the title is set and the documents are supplied in the handbook; for the second, longer assignment the students choose a topic covered in one of the workshops, locate archival sources to use and formulate their own question. The topic chosen must not be one that overlaps with the subject of their dissertation.

The exam is a three-hour paper with one question on a topic studied in the course of the year. The students are supplied with a set of twenty to thirty previously unseen source documents of various kinds. Most of these are direct copies of the originals; transcripts are only used when an original is difficult to read. The students have to evaluate the documents, select which ones they are going to use to answer the question and construct an essay of 1,500 words. They are allowed to take their own notes into the exam to use as reference material.

As part of the teaching programme for the dissertation all third-year single honours history students at UWE are taken on an induction trip to the National Archives at the start of the academic year.

Information from Dr Steve Poole, Principal Lecturer in English social and cultural history in the long eighteenth century

Case Study 6

Yale University

BA History

London 1560–1760

This is a one-semester course for junior history majors. It examines the development of London from a city of moderate size to a great metropolis. Aspects studied include migration; household life; London as the center of print culture; the royal court; religious and political radicalism; polite society in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries; the ‘middle sort of people’ and consumerism; the world of the poor; and vice and criminality. In addition, the course is intended to provide a training in original research. Extracts from primary sources are supplied for each topic and are used to illustrate the types of sources available for further investigation.

For the first assessed paper, students are required to make an analysis of a body of primary material consisting of transcriptions of London Church Court depositions, specially made for this course. The university paid a graduate student to transcribe these documents during a research trip to London. The topic of the second assessed paper is chosen by the student. The paper is required to be based principally on primary sources, contextualized with reference to the secondary literature. In addition, each student contributes a short oral presentation to one of the sessions, presenting the results of their own research on an aspect of the topic under discussion.

Students are encouraged to use primary source material available online, including ‘The Proceedings of the Old Bailey 1674 to 1834’ (Old Bailey Online), a fully searchable online edition of the printed Old Bailey trial reports, and several subscription-only collections: ‘Early English Books Online’ (EEBO), ‘Eighteenth-Century Collections Online’ (ECCO) and ‘Eighteenth Century Journals’. The course syllabus includes suggested research exercises to use with these resources.

Now that the Court Books of Bridewell Hospital are available in photographic form online they will be incorporated into the course next year as additional sources. (See ‘Resources Online’ for reference.)

The Sterling Memorial Library at Yale holds a number of collections of British primary source documents on microform; these include State Papers, family letters and church court depositions. Some undergraduate students make use of this material for their ‘senior essay’ projects (final-year dissertations).

Information from Professor Keith Wrightson

APPENDIX: RESOURCES ONLINE

Archives and Archive Directories

Archive Repositories in Wales

(Archives and Records Council Wales)

<http://www.llgc.org.uk/cac/cac0023.htm>

Contact details for Welsh record repositories

ARCHON Directory

(National Archives)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/>

Contact details for UK record repositories

The British Library Manuscripts Collections

<http://www.bl.uk/collections/manuscripts.html>

Many important historical collections

A Directory of Scottish Archives

(Scottish Archive Network)

<http://www.scan.org.uk/directory/contactdetails.htm>

Contact details for Scottish archives

The National Archives of Ireland

<http://www.nationalarchives.ie/>

<http://www.nationalarchives.ie/contactus/agencies.html>

Contact details for Irish archives, libraries etc

The National Archives of Scotland

<http://www.nas.gov.uk/>

The National Archives (UK)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

The National Monuments Record (NMR)

(English Heritage)

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.1530>

Public archive of English Heritage

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

<http://www.proni.gov.uk/>

Repositories of Primary Sources

(Terry Abraham, University of Idaho)

http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other_Repositories.html

A listing of over 5000 websites describing holdings of manuscripts, archives, rare books, historical photographs, and other primary sources for the research scholar; international; sections for UK and Ireland under Europe

Aids to Finding Documents

A2A: Access to Archives

(National Archives)

<http://www.a2a.org.uk/>

A database of catalogues describing archives held locally in England and Wales

Archives Hub

(Consortium of University Research Libraries)

<http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/>

A national gateway to descriptions of archives in UK universities and colleges

English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)

(British Library)

<http://estc.bl.uk/>

Comprehensive, international union catalogue listing early books, serials, newspapers and selected ephemera printed before 1801

National Register of Archives (NRA)

(National Archives)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/>

Searchable online indexes to information about the nature and location of manuscripts relating to British history

Online Archive Guides and Research Aids

(i) National

Guide to Local History

(National Archives)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/localhistory/>

A Guide to the National Archives of Ireland

(Centre for Irish Genealogical and Historical Studies)

<http://homepage.eircom.net/%7Eseanjmurphy/nai/>

Information leaflets

(Public Record Office of Northern Ireland)

http://www.proni.gov.uk/index/research_and_records_held/catalogues_guides_indexes_and_leaflets/information_leaflets.htm

A series of research aids, guides to the collections and introductions to topics in PDF format

Records Research Guides

(National Archives)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/catalogue/researchguidesindex.asp?j=1>

An extensive series of guides to collections and topics

Record Guides

(National Archives of Scotland)

<http://www.nas.gov.uk/guides/>

Guides to collections and topics

(ii) Metropolitan

Guildhall Library Guides

http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/leisure_heritage/libraries_archives_museums_galleries/city_london_libraries/guildhall+library+guides.htm

A series of research aids and guides to the collections in PDF format

Information leaflets

(London Metropolitan Archives and City of London Record Office)

http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/leisure_heritage/libraries_archives_museums_galleries/lma/visitor_information/free_information_leaflets.htm

A series of leaflets in PDF format introducing specific collections and topics

(iii) Local

Cumbrian Manorial Records

(Cumbrian Manorial Records Project)

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/manorialrecords/>

Practical guidance for users of manorial records, particularly in Cumbria

General Advice on Using Archives

The ARTS Scheme (Archival Research Techniques and Skills)

(Nick Barratt)

<http://www.arts-scheme.co.uk/>

Online tutorial in archival research, aimed at university students

A Survival Guide to Archival Research

(Barbara Heck, Elizabeth Preston, and Bill Svec)

<http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2004/0412/0412arc1.cfm>

Online article published in *Perspectives on History*

Archives Online: Open Access

Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads

<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads/ballads.htm>

Over 30,000 street ballads from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries

Bridewell Court Books

(Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives)

<http://archive.bethlemheritage.org.uk/web/BCB.htm>

The minute books of the Court of Governors of Bridewell Hospital, 1559–1792 (some volumes missing); digital photographs of pages, no transcripts

British Cartoon Archive

(University of Kent)

<http://library.kent.ac.uk/cartoons/>

Database of cartoons, mostly twentieth century

British History Online

(Institute of Historical Research and the History of Parliament Trust)

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/place.aspx?region=8>

Large collection of printed primary and secondary sources, browseable by region, and fully searchable; some content only available to subscribers

British Museum Collection Database

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database.aspx

Database of the Museum's collection of 2-dimensional pictorial art; numerous digitised images, fully searchable

CELT, the Corpus of Electronic Texts

(University College Cork)

<http://www.ucc.ie/ceLT/>

A searchable online textbase of Irish historical and literary documents

Collect Britain

(British Library)

<http://www.collectbritain.co.uk/>

Thousands of images of items in the library's collections, including a very large number of topographical pictures, and numerous maps of all periods

Earls Colne, Essex: Records of an English Village 1375–1854

(Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge)

<http://linux02.lib.cam.ac.uk/earlscolne/index.htm>

A large collection of transcribed documents and images, with detailed introductory and reference material; includes legislative, judicial, Church and estate records, and the diary of Ralph Josselin, vicar 1641–1683

Eighteenth century Devon: People and Communities

(Friends of Devon's Archives)

<http://www.foda.org.uk/main/projects/eighteenthcentury.htm>

Full transcriptions of oath of allegiance rolls and other sets of eighteenth-century documents

From Weaver to Web: online visual archive of Calderdale history

(Calderdale Council)

<http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/wtw/sources/sourcetypes.html>

Scans of many printed sources, including poll books, transcribed wills, local acts of Parliament, printed memoirs and autobiographies, trade directories, and topographical images

Historical Directories

(University of Leicester)

<http://www.historicaldirectories.org/>

Searchable digital library of local and trade directories for England and Wales, 1750 to 1919

Histpop: Historical Population Reports

(University of Essex)

<http://www.histpop.org/>

British population reports for Britain and Ireland 1801–1937

Homosexuality in Eighteenth-Century England: A Sourcebook

(Rictor Norton)

<http://www.infopt.demon.co.uk/>

A collection of sources relating to homosexuality from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries

Imperial War Museum Art Collection

<http://collections.iwm.org.uk/server/show/nav.00g001>

Database of official war art and posters; pre-First World War onwards

Internet Library of Early Journals

(Universities of Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester and Oxford)

<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej/>

Browseable runs of several important periodicals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; includes the *Annual Register* 1758–1778 and the *Gentleman's Magazine* 1731–1751

John Strype's Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster (1720)

(Stuart London Project/HRI Online Publications)

<http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/strype/>

A searchable online edition of this monumental work; includes maps and topographical engravings

A Nation of Shopkeepers

(Bodleian Library)

<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/johnson/exhibition/>

Browseable exhibition of trade ephemera 1654–1860 in the John Johnson Collection; may be searched from VADS (<http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/>)

New Landscapes: Enclosure in Berkshire

(Berkshire Record Office/Museum of English Rural Life)

<http://www.berkshireenclosure.org.uk/>

Collection of images of maps and land awards showing the process of enclosing the common fields of Berkshire between 1738 and 1883; includes explanatory material

The Proceedings of the Old Bailey: London's Central Criminal Court, 1674 to 1913

(Old Bailey Proceedings Online Project/HRI Online Publications)

<http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>

A fully searchable online edition of the printed Old Bailey trial reports; also has the Ordinary of Newgate's Accounts, 1690–1772, additional associated records, and a number of background essays; each case is accompanied by a note of associated records in archives and libraries

The Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791–1845

(EDINA)

<http://edina.ac.uk/statacc/>

Detailed parish reports for the whole of Scotland, covering subjects including agriculture, education, trades, religion and social customs; limited but still useful access for non-subscribers

The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft 1563–1736

(Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin, Joyce Miller and Louise Yeoman)

<http://www.shc.ed.ac.uk/Research/witches/>

Database of Scottish witchcraft cases, with supporting material

A Vision of Britain Through Time

(University of Portsmouth)

<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/>

Britain between 1801 and 2001; includes maps, statistical trends and historical descriptions

The Voice of Radicalism

(University of Aberdeen)

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/radicalism/>

Collection of material related to radicalism and the campaign for the vote in the North East of Scotland in the 19th and early 20th centuries

The Word on the Street

(National Library of Scotland)

<http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/>

Facsimiles of nearly 1,800 broadsides published in Scotland between 1650 and 1910

The Workhouse

(Peter Higginbotham)

<http://www.workhouses.org.uk/>

Extensive collection of printed texts, images, maps and plans, all well contextualized; includes list of archives with workhouse records

WW1: the World War I Document Archive

(World War I Military History List)

<http://wwi.lib.byu.edu/>

Large archive of primary documents from World War One

Archives Online: Restricted Access

(i) Restricted to subscribing institutions

Early English Books Online (EEBO)

(Proquest/Chadwyck-Healey)

<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/>

Comprehensive archive of printed texts, 1475–1700

Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO)

(Thomson Gale)

<http://gale.com/EighteenthCentury/>

Comprehensive archive of eighteenth-century printed texts

Eighteenth Century Journals

(Adam Matthew Digital)

<http://www.amdigital.co.uk/collections/Eighteenth-Century-Journals-Portal/>

Archive of newspapers and periodicals published between 1693 and 1812

House of Commons Parliamentary Papers

(Proquest/Chadwyck-Healey)

<http://parlipapers.chadwyck.com/>

The nineteenth-century House of Commons sessional papers or ‘blue books’; available free to UK HE and FE institutions via JISC

17th and 18th Century Burney Collection Newspapers

(British Library/Gale)

<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/britishlibrarynewspapers/>

Very large archive of newspapers, newsbooks and news pamphlets; particularly rich in material from eighteenth century London

The Times Digital Archive

(Thomson Gale)

<http://www.galeuk.com/times/>

Covers period 1785–1985

(ii) Restricted to HE and FE institutions and some others

British Library 19th Century Newspapers

(British Library/Gale/JISC)

<http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/19thblib>

19th century local, regional and national British newspapers

18th Century Parliamentary Papers

(BOPCRIS/JISC)

<http://www.jisc-collections.ac.uk/18thcpp>

Includes sessional papers, bills, acts, debates, registers, reports, and journals

HDS: History Data Service

<http://hds.essex.ac.uk/history/>

Access to census data, a map of ancient parish boundaries, poll books and other resources

(iii) Available to individual users/subscribers

British Pathé Film Archive

(ITN Source)

<http://www.britishpathe.com/>

News footage 1896–1970; searchable, free previews

The Guardian and Observer Digital Archive

(Guardian News and Media Ltd)

<http://archive.guardian.co.uk/>

Can be searched without charge, but requires a paid-for time pass to view/print content; currently covers the period of 1821–1975 for the Guardian and 1900–1975 for the Observer

1901 Census Online

(1901Census/National Archives)

<http://www.1901census.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

Census records for England and Wales, 1841–1901; can be searched without charge, but paid-for credits are required to view images and transcripts

Maps Online

(i) Scotland

Timothy Pont's Maps

(National Library of Scotland)

<http://www.nls.uk/pont/>

Detailed maps of Scotland made in the 1580s and 1590s; includes pages on interpretation

Charting the Nation: Maps of Scotland and associated archives 1550–1740

(Edinburgh University Library)

<http://www.chartingthenation.lib.ed.ac.uk/>

A large collection of maps of Scotland 1550–1740 and beyond

(ii) London

Greenwood's Map of London 1827

(Mark Annand, Bath Spa University)

<http://users.bathspa.ac.uk/greenwood/>

London: A Life in Maps

(British Library)

<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/features/londoninmaps/homepage.html>

A virtual exhibition of London maps and views from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries

MOTCO Image Database

<http://www.motco.com/map/>

Good quality images of a number of maps of London published between c. 1705 and 1862; also prints and panoramas

Web Portals and Directories

Archives Portal

(National Archives)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/portal/>

A gateway to archival resources, projects and initiatives in the UK and abroad

Casglu'r Tlysau/Gathering the Jewels

(National Library of Wales)

<http://www.gtj.org.uk/>

Showcase of documents and objects from museums, libraries and record offices in Wales; Welsh and English language versions

Early Modern Resources

(Sharon Howard, University of Sheffield)

<http://earlymodernweb.org.uk/emr/>

A gateway for electronic resources relating to the early modern period

EuroDocs: Online Sources for European History

(Richard Hacken, Brigham Young University)

<http://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/>

An extensive wiki-style directory of links to European primary historical documents on open access on the web; good UK coverage

Moving Here: 200 years of migration in England

<http://www.movinghere.org.uk/>

Explores, records and illustrates 200 years of migration to England; includes searchable online catalogue of 200,000 items from 30 collections

Moving History

(Screen Archive South East/AHRB Centre for British Film and Television Studies)

<http://www.movinghistory.ac.uk/>

A research guide and showcase for the UK's twelve public sector film archives

Library and archival exhibitions on the web

(Smithsonian Institution Libraries)

<http://www.sil.si.edu/SILPublications/Online-Exhibitions/>

A searchable directory of links to online exhibitions created by libraries, archives, and historical societies; also to museum online exhibitions with a significant focus on library and archival materials.

photoLondon

<http://www.photolondon.org.uk/>

A portal showcasing modern and historic photographs of London held in libraries, museums and archives

VADS: Visual Arts Data Service

<http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/>

Incorporates a searchable image catalogue providing access to a number of discrete collections; also contains links to additional resources

Palaeography

English Handwriting 1500–1700

(Andrew Zurcher, University of Cambridge)

<http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/ceres/ehoc/>

An online course

Palaeography: reading old handwriting 1500–1800

(National Archives)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography/>

A practical online tutorial

Scottish Handwriting.com

(Scottish Archive Network)

<http://www.scottishhandwriting.com/>

Online tuition in Early-Modern Scots palaeography

The Study of Manuscripts

LIMA: Literary Manuscript Analysis

(Centre for the Study of the Renaissance, University of Warwick)

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/projects/publications/lima>

Pages on handwriting analysis, paper and watermarks

Latin

Beginners' Latin

(National Archives)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/latin/beginners/>

Latin 1086–1733: a practical online tutorial

Advanced Latin

(National Archives)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/latin/advanced/>

A step-by-step online tutorial with 12 lessons to teach medieval Latin to an advanced level

Textkit

<http://www.textkit.com/>

Resources for learning Latin; includes downloadable text-books

Dates and Calendars

Historical Calendar of Western Europe, A.D. 550 to 1970

(Bernd Kratz, University of Kentucky)

<http://www.k-f-w.de/roots/download.html>

Freeware MS-DOS program; runs under Command Prompt in Windows 2000 and Windows XP

A History of the Western Calendar

(Karl Hagen)

<http://www.polysyllabic.com/?q=calhistory>

An extended hypertext essay; covers the Julian and Gregorian calendars, etc

Ian's English Calendar

(Ian MacInnes, Albion College, Michigan)

<http://www.albion.edu/english/calendar/>

Online application which calculates the date of Easter, regnal years, etc

Money and the Cost of Living

Current Value of Old Money

(Roy Davies, University of Exeter)

<http://www.projects.ex.ac.uk/RDavies/arian/current/howmuch.html>

A page containing annotated links and a bibliography

MeasuringWorth

(Lawrence H. Officer, University of Illinois and Samuel H. Williamson, Miami University)

<http://www.measuringworth.com>

A service for calculating relative worth over time.

<http://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/>

A calculator to measure the purchasing power of British pounds 1264–2007