



**Archives & Records
Association**
UK & Ireland

The Impact of Volunteering in Archives

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Contents

Foreword	2
Summary	2
1. The project	3
2. The data	3
3. Who are they? The profile and motivations of volunteers	4
4. What do they do? The roles of volunteers	6
5. Where do they do it? The contexts of volunteering in archives	7
5.1 Organisational commitment	7
5.2 Background and sources of volunteers	9
5.3 Dependence on volunteers	10
6. Defining impacts on people and organisations	11
7. How are these impacts demonstrated?	12
7.1 On volunteers	12
7.2 On archive services	16
7.3 On the wider archive sector	21
8. What are some less positive impacts of volunteering?	23
8.1 For volunteers	23
8.2 For archive services	23
9. Conclusions and recommendations	25

Foreword

This report into the impact of volunteering in the archive sector was commissioned by the ARA Volunteering Sub Committee in October 2017. It builds on previous research initiated by the Sub Committee such as the *Managing Volunteers in Archives, 2014* and *Volunteering in Archives, 2015* reports. It follows a scoping exercise carried out in 2016 which considered how impact should be defined and how subsequent research might be approached. It fulfils section 4.4 of the *Volunteering in Archives Action Plan 2015-2017* 'Scope a research project on how to evaluate the impact of volunteering'.

This research has produced new information about the social, human, economic and cultural impacts of volunteering. It reflects how these impacts relate to individual volunteers, services, and the profession. It particularly considers the impact of specific, less-explored areas of the archive sector such as business archives, HEIs and charities.

Despite a limited budget and timeframe for this research the Sub Committee has fulfilled its commitment to provide a useful foundation for more in-depth studies into this area.

Helen Dafter
Chair, Volunteering Sub Committee
March 2018

Summary

Research commissioned by the ARA has produced new information about the impacts of volunteering in archives and how these affect volunteers, services, and the profession. Existing evidence was supplemented by new qualitative data from underrepresented sectors. Description of the identity, roles, contexts and backgrounds of volunteers preceded an analysis of impact. Impacts both on individuals and services are substantial and significant. Volunteers feel the long-term effects of improved health and well-being, new and re-enforced skills and enhanced prospects of employability. Services find that volunteering can impact on strategic aims, service development, profile raising, workforce development, access and use, and add capacity and expertise. Impacts are social, human, cultural and economic. Services might increase such benefits by focusing more purposefully on impact as they plan volunteering projects. There are challenges too, but nothing that cannot be met by good planning, management, communication and commitment.

There is scope for further exploration to provide a more balanced account of volunteering impact across the UK and Ireland's disparate archive sectors to show how at a more strategic level volunteers might further contribute to the delivery of national and local outcomes.

1. The project

In 2017 ARA commissioned research to produce new information about the social, human, economic and cultural impacts of volunteering in archives and to reflect how these impacts related to individual volunteers, services, and the sector across the different archive sectors such as business, voluntary, and university archives. Analysis of existing information and generation of new data through interviews and focus groups were the methods selected to pursue this goal.

Impact refers to the broader, long-term effects of activities on people and organisations and answers the question ‘So what?’ Impact measurement calculates the shift between ‘what you do’ and the ‘difference it makes’. Understanding the impact of volunteering – whether positive or negative – will enable ARA to develop further its guidance, advance its workforce development strategy and support archive services when making the case for funding or other support.

2. The data

Substantial evidence exists about the experience of volunteering in archives in the UK, provided both by volunteers and the services that host them. This report analyses existing data and then explores additional aspects not well represented in previous data collecting. Quantitative data demonstrates a 64% increase in volunteer numbers 2006/7 - 2015/16.¹ Reports (2009-14), ARA Volunteering Award applications (2010-17) and other documents demonstrate the robustness and increasing value of the volunteer contribution. These documents provided 83 case studies which generated substantial information about impact on volunteers, services and the sector.²

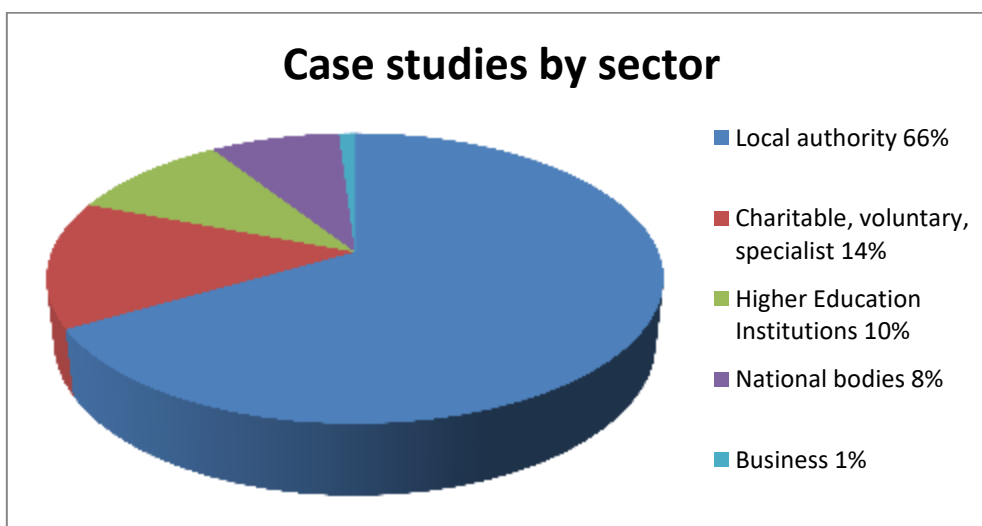


Figure 1. 83 case studies 2009-2017: the sectoral base

¹ CIPFA actuals. Metrics developed by ARA in 2010 may be used to indicate quantitative data.

² Reports: Ray, L. *Volunteering in Archives* (2009); Lindsay, H. *Volunteering in Collections Care* (2011); Williams, C. *Managing Volunteering in Archives* (2014); Williams, C. *Volunteering in Archives* (2015); ARA Award Applications 2010-17.

As Figure 1 suggests, this evidence base provides an unbalanced picture, since data is derived predominantly about the public sector experience. **Local authority archives** provide data as a by-product of their activities: for example annual statistical returns to CIPFA. They are also the principal applicants to HLF and other funding bodies and to the ARA's annual Volunteering Award. Other sectors have fewer reporting requirements, and are less engaged in funding and award applications. In **business archives** there is evidence about the Ballast Trust, but this is less a corporate archive than a Trust devoted to the cataloguing of business archive collections. Some impact data about volunteering in **higher education institutions** (HEIs) was extracted from eight case studies embedded in reports and award applications.³ **The charitable, voluntary and specialist sector** is a diverse one about which it is difficult to draw general conclusions about volunteering activities. A report into the charity sector and 12 case studies provided some understanding of impact here.⁴

To supplement existing data new qualitative information was derived from the less well represented sectors. Interviews and focus groups were held with 12 representatives from the business archives sector, and with 10 from the charitable and voluntary and specialist sectors.⁵ There was only time for superficial discussion with the HEI sector and for triangulating specific findings with local authority archives; and no quantitative data was sought.⁶ A nuanced picture of volunteering provides new insights, showing that impacts are often driven by context; and identifies the potential for further, deeper research.

3. Who are they? The profile and motivations of volunteers

We know that, mainly in the public sector, 'in terms of gender, 63% were female and 37% were male...Predictably perhaps, most volunteers are at the older end of the age spectrum, with 59% being over 55...The next largest group (17%) is in the 18-24 age group, suggesting that this represents students and others seeking work experience.'⁷

³ University of the Arts; University College London; Women's Library London Metropolitan University; University of Reading; University of Edinburgh; University of Glasgow; University of Plymouth St Mark and St John; University of Huddersfield Heritage Quay.

⁴ M. McMurray *Charity Archives in the 21st Century* (2014); Black Cultural Archive (BCA); 4 corporate charitable (WRVS, RVS, Children's Society, Leonard Cheshire Disability); 3 arts (Trinity Laban; Battersea Arts Centre; Royal Academy of Arts); Shakespeare Birthplace Trust; Bishopsgate Institute; Lanhydrock and Pennine Digital Horizons.

⁵ Business sector contributors represented: Bank of England, Barclays, BT, Clarks Shoes, The Guardian, Nationwide Building Society, Postal Museum, John Lewis Partnership (JLP), Rothschild, Transport for London (*TfL*), Unilever and the Ballast Trust. Charitable, voluntary and specialist sector contributors represented: Blind Veterans, London Zoological Society, Barnardo's, Royal Voluntary Service (RVS), The Children's Society, Methodist Archives, Royal College of Nursing (RCN), Canal and River Trust (CRT), Liverpool Anglican Cathedral and *Saltaire Stories*.

⁶ HEI and Local Authority contributors represented: Universities of Huddersfield, Bradford, Liverpool, Northampton, Roehampton, Worcester, De Montfort, and Birmingham; Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, Liverpool Record Office, Lancashire Record Office, Hull History Centre, Gloucestershire Archives, Dudley Archives and Local Studies, Hampshire Record Office, Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre and Dorset History Centre.

⁷ Williams, *Managing Volunteers*, p.13.

As the age profile suggests ‘volunteering in the archive sector falls into two main groups: career and non-career oriented. In 2014 just under two thirds of volunteers volunteered for social reasons, while 28% stated career motives.’⁸ In the public sector, those ‘social’ volunteers are likely to be drawn from the general public: this is less the case in some other sectors.

A third group, a subset of those volunteering for social reasons is conspicuously present in the business and voluntary sectors, comprising those who bring ‘expert’ pre-existing knowledge and skills often to their previous workplaces.

- Transport for London’s (*TfL*) archive depends on expert volunteers e.g. to identify signalling plans on DLR, Hammersmith and Circle lines and appraise log books and ticketing records.
- Rothschild called on the expert knowledge of finance and terminology of its volunteering pensioners for its 175th anniversary correspondence transcription project.
- The Ballast Trust has seven long-term male retirees, experts in their fields of railways, shipyards and marine engineering to catalogue business collections.
- Canal and River Trust volunteers’ knowledge of engineering, canal boats and infrastructure ‘is essential to the archive...they make a huge commitment – it feels a bit like a church!’
- Royal College of Nursing’s (RCN) member volunteers include retired experts e.g. senior lecturers who engage fully with collections and helped RCN get accreditation.
- Clarks Shoes’ former employee, a polymer chemist for 30+ years, was indispensable for helping solve problems with historical collections of footwear:

‘What I’ve enjoyed with him and would like to replicate, is the ability to access old expertise and use it proactively to inform new problems from different perspectives’.

The local authority archive sector also calls on ‘experts’ for example in medieval palaeography who have volunteered in Devon and Cheshire, in accountancy at Wolverhampton and in engineering in Gloucestershire archives but attention has not been drawn to this category in previous studies.

The motivations of social volunteers, social/expert volunteers and career volunteers undoubtedly overlap, but there are identifiable distinctions indicated in broad terms in Figure 2. In addition to altruism motivations may be social, intellectual, cultural, skills-focused or economic.

⁸ ARA Williams, *Volunteering in Archives*, p.6.

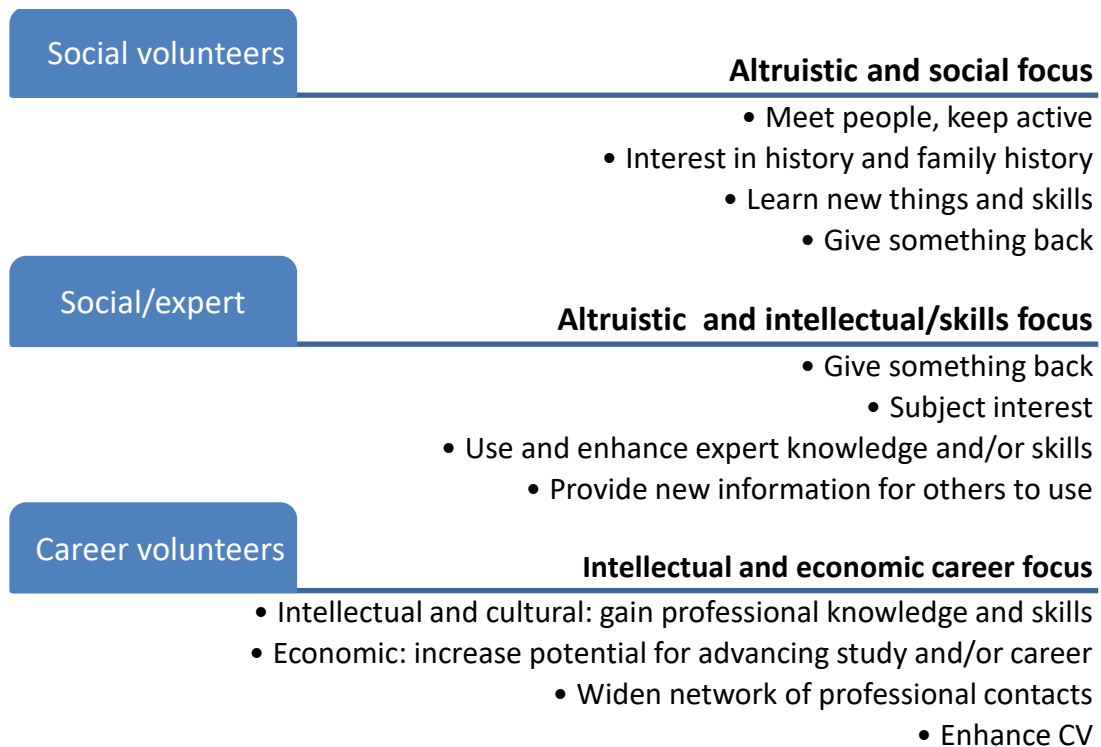


Figure 2. Volunteer motivations

These align with previous findings that motivations include social fulfilment, interest in family and local history, skills acquisition (archival/workplace), to give something back, and career ambitions.⁹

4. What do they do? The roles of volunteers.

Volunteers may be committed to open-ended assignments/tasks without end-dates or deadlines. Most involve on-site working but a significant minority takes place off-site. Home working includes data inputting, cataloguing digital images and so on. Project-based volunteering is increasingly common and may comprise thematic projects e.g. ‘Unexplored Riches in Medical History’, cataloguing specific archive groups e.g. Philip Larkin letters, or time-limited preservation, indexing or transcription projects.

Projects are often undertaken in partnership, with national (e.g. National Trust) or local (e.g. schools, history societies) bodies, often supported by funding (e.g. HLF or National Cataloguing Grants). Of the 83 case studies examined for this project 29 (35%) were undertaken in partnership. Volunteering tasks appear comparable across all sectors. Typical tasks are indicated in Table 1.

⁹ Williams, *Volunteering in Archives*, pp. 10-11.

Tasks and roles	%
Describing records (transcribing, data inputting, indexing, cataloguing)	93%
Conservation and preservation (cleaning, packaging, boxing, condition checking)	85%
Sorting and arranging records	74%
Scanning and digitising	54%
Research and interpretation	46%
Exhibitions/ displays	36%
Profile raising and outreach	23%
Giving advice on family history/archival/records issues	22%
Public events (e.g. giving talks and lectures)	19%
Oral history/reminiscence sessions	13%
Other	3%
Total Respondents: 97	

Table 1. Specific volunteer tasks and roles 2014¹⁰

5. Where do they do it? The contexts of volunteering in archives.

Successful volunteering in archives requires a balance between achieving organisational goals, meeting project outcomes and fulfilling individual volunteer needs. How this is achieved depends upon the organisational context in which it takes place. The environments of local authority, corporate business, university, and voluntary, charitable and specialist archives vary: it is likely that some impacts will also differ. Table 2 summarises how differences may derive from

- Degree of organisational commitment to volunteering
- Background and source of volunteers
- Level of organisational dependence on volunteers

5.1 Organisational commitment

Organisational commitment to volunteering varies between sectors in so far as it aligns with their mission. In neither the **corporate** nor the **higher education sector** is volunteering greatly sought, although in business it can contribute to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Rothschild, BT). For Transport for London (TfL) it only became culturally and corporately acceptable to involve volunteers after the 2012 Olympics demonstrated their value and impact. While HEIs may not be heavily involved in volunteering, it occurs for example when supporting the student mission, or where funding requires activities that engage with external bodies and individuals.

In contrast, all local authorities engage with the voluntary and community sectors and work in partnership with such local bodies as their Council for Voluntary Service. CIPFA shows that volunteering is healthily embedded in archives with total numbers of volunteers (2015/16) being 2,977 for those 80 services submitting returns, representing a 64% increase since 2006/7. Similarly voluntary, charitable and specialist organisations and groups often rely heavily on volunteers and

¹⁰ Williams, *Managing Volunteering*, pp.16-18. 45% of responses were received from local authority archives; 27% from public and private sector specialist archives; 15% from universities; 6% from national libraries and archives, and 5% museums. 2 responses came from business archives.

	Business archives	Higher Education Institution archives	Local authority archives	Voluntary, charitable and specialist archives
Organisational commitment to volunteering	Often seen as part of CSR mission, and/or workforce development, job shadowing etc. Some, as wealthy organisations, hesitate to recruit unpaid people: an ethical conundrum.	Not part of HEI mission, except where e.g. supports student employability. Most HEI archives are small, lacking capacity. Not required to look externally, engage in programmes etc.	All local authorities engage with voluntary/ community sectors, working with e.g. local Council for Voluntary Service. Volunteering is healthily embedded in archives, and growing.	This is a diverse sector lacking homogeneity. Many third sector organisations rely heavily on volunteers, and their archives may be more or less dependent on volunteer input.
Background and source of volunteers in archives	Retired/ current employees. Rarely go external for security reasons. Retirees often have expert knowledge. Current employees for workforce development. Members' children for work experience. Archive career placements.	Usually students and others internal to the institution. If an HEI goes for e.g. HLF funding some may recruit externally. Some host archive career placements.	Predominantly general public and former users, some of whom bring expert knowledge. Mainly hosted in placements associated with 'social' volunteering. Many host archive career placements.	Varies from members of own organisations, general public, experts and archive and other career placements.
Level of organisational dependence on volunteers	Neither corporate business nor their archives are dependent on volunteer input.	Dependence on volunteers is very low in HEIs and in their archives.	Dependence within archive services is moderate, adding value and capacity.	Varies considerably: the most dependent sector. Where they run the archive dependence very high.
Impact on services	Human and cultural impact. Volunteers are ambassadors; contribute to Corporate Social Responsibility; provide expert added value.	Human, cultural, economic impact. Volunteers support HEI employability agenda, gain skills and economic potential.	Human, social, cultural and some economic impact, Support government objectives while enhancing productivity and capacity of archive services.	Human, social, cultural and economic impacts are felt variously depending on identity and context of the organisation.

Table2. Sectoral contexts for volunteering

these volunteers become stakeholders in their organisations.¹¹ Archives of these bodies may be more or less dependent on volunteer input: ‘... charity archives...are most often cared for by volunteers or non-qualified members of staff...’.¹² This report has not specifically focused on this area, and further investigation would provide useful insights.

5.2 Background and source of volunteers

Corporate and higher education institutions tend to recruit internally when they engage volunteers. In **business** these are usually retired and/or current employees, while in universities they are students or other internal members. Business archives are less likely to recruit volunteers from outside the business although some (e.g. Unilever, TfL) do so, and others have specific charitable links (e.g. Rothschild and Age UK; Guardian Archive and Mencap). Complications with security and access are often cited as disincentives to external volunteers, especially in the banking sector (and John Lewis Partnership (JLP)). Some have circumvented these issues by setting up external archival microsites, restricting access to such platforms (JLP, BT, Bank of England) to protect internal systems.

Retirees, a loyal ‘known quantity’, frequently have middle management experience, and high calibre understanding of the business (JLP, Rothschild) not always present in the archive team. Where businesses take current employees this supports workforce development, skills acquisition and developing CVs including for those in a ‘transition phase’ between work and redeployment: these can act as ambassadors across the organisation (HSBC, JLP, Nationwide, BT). At TfL employees with specialist knowledge nearing retirement are invited to volunteer. The Bank of England has an ‘opportunities register’ encouraging job shadowing in specific business areas while BT allows employees 3 days’ volunteering, seen as an in kind contribution to CSR. Business archives are frequently asked to provide work experience for the children of trustees and directors (JLP, Rothschild, Bank of England).

In **universities** volunteers are generally derived from within: ‘Our priority is to assist the HEI in fulfilling its mission – to support student employability’ so there may be little incentive to recruit externally unless other conditions apply.¹³ Students may volunteer in order to satisfy module requirements and gain experience for CV purposes. When incentivised (e.g. by external funding) interesting external-facing projects develop. One (University of St Mark and St John (Marjon) Plymouth) provided opportunities for volunteers with disabilities, and long-term unemployed to learn workplace and social skills; another (Edinburgh) has ‘engaged with our whole community: our focus has not just been on our own students’ while at Glasgow ‘The Project recruited and trained

¹¹ Barnardo’s has 5,025 staff and 17,175 volunteers; the ratios for the RVS are 1,073: 39,296; the Children’s Society 812: 27,000; and Blind Veterans 310:300. McMurray, *Charity Archives* p.11.

¹² *Charity Archives* p.v.

¹³ Sarah Wickham, Heritage Quay, University of Huddersfield.

32 volunteers: 26 current University of Glasgow students and 6 others with a great deal of life experience.¹⁴

In **local authority archives** volunteers are predominantly members of the general public, often former staff and/or users, some of whom bring expert knowledge and where some retirees may view it as a replacement workplace. Volunteers are mainly hosted in generic placements associated with 'social' volunteering (59%) with a substantial minority undertaking specific placements...¹⁵ In the **voluntary, charitable and specialist sector** volunteers come from a variety of sources, including members of the public, experts and internal members. RCN only recruits volunteers from its members, all with nursing knowledge: its culture is deliberately professional rather than social. In contrast the RVS is open to all comers. In some of these organisations volunteers are fundamental to the operation and sustainability of the archives, which they may run, but this area needs further research.

In all sectors some provision is made for those seeking a career in the heritage sector, in particular to access the UK and Ireland's postgraduate information, archives and records management programmes.

5.3 Dependence on volunteers.

Neither corporate business nor university archives are dependent on volunteer input. Volunteers are seen as offering exceptional rather than anticipated support. In local authority archives the use of volunteers is far greater: they add enormous value and capacity to work undertaken. In the voluntary sector the level of dependence varies considerably. Where volunteers almost entirely run the archives (Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, Saltire Stories) dependence is very high and professional input often limited; in others, where the parent organisation might be heavily dependent, the archives is less so (Zoological Society).

At Barnardo's the organisation's strategic plan, a result of budget reductions, is to recruit volunteers who are then trained for a specific role. Its approach mimics employment to the degree that aims, objectives, training and induction (and benefits) mirror those of the paid workforce, including in the archive. In contrast the RVS has no requirements of those seeking to volunteer: the aim is to find them a task they will enjoy, no matter how long it takes them to do it. Volunteers need to be aware, therefore, of the culture and expectations of an organisation when they offer them their services.

In a brief and unscientific survey archivists and others from 35 organisations were asked to rank their archive's dependence on volunteers from 0-10, with 0 = no volunteers and 10 = totally

¹⁴ ARA Annual Volunteering Award applications.

¹⁵ Williams, *Managing Volunteering*, p.3; 45% of responses were received from local authorities.

dependent.¹⁶ Chart 1 shows that the median findings accord with the research into volunteering context.

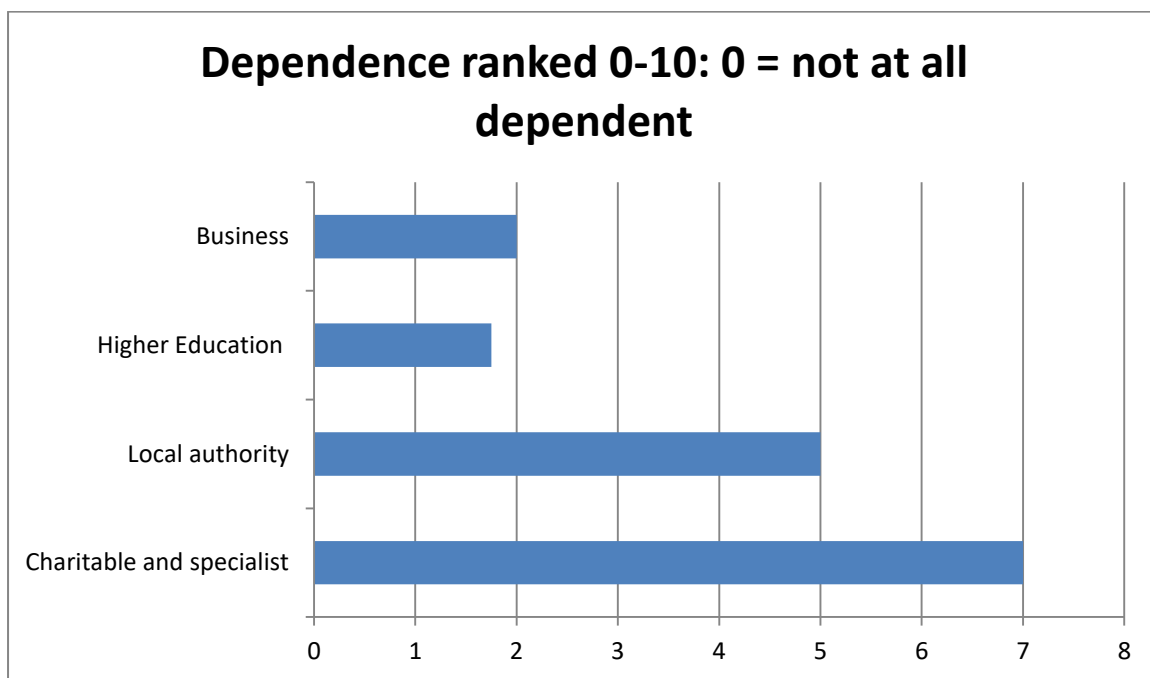


Chart 1. Dependence on volunteers

6. Defining impacts on people and organisations

Measuring impact has become increasingly important as the climate of financial austerity requires particularly public organisations to be accountable to their stakeholders (users, staff and funding bodies). Impact refers to the broader, long-term effects of activities on people and organisations and its measurement identifies the shift between ‘what you do’ and the ‘difference it makes’.

The greater the focus on impact the greater the difference an organisation can make through its activities. This normally involves planning in advance what impact you want to have and how best to achieve it, collecting information about impact, assessing what impact you are having, communicating this information and learning from it. The archive sector doesn’t habitually plan for volunteer impact, but might consider doing so in future business planning.

Government initiatives over the years, filtered through the HLF, National Council for Volunteering Organisation (NCVO), the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and Arts Council England have focused on generic social and generic learning outcomes and hence impact, focusing on e.g.

¹⁶ Nine business archives, 8 HEI archives, 8 local authority archives and 10 voluntary, charitable and specialist archives. See notes 5 and 6.

health and well-being, social capital and economic benefit.¹⁷ Volunteering impact is also scrutinized by the Institute of Volunteering Research (IVR) and Museums and Galleries Scotland.¹⁸

Impact measures defined by IVR (2016) include:

- *Human impact*: for personal development, skills and well-being. This is evidenced by increased confidence, self-esteem and vocational and other skills
- *Economic impact*: for economic costs/benefits of volunteering. This is evidenced by increased earning power; costs/benefits to volunteers and services; financial equivalence
- *Social impact*: for development of social relationships, networks. This is evidenced by increased contacts, networks and involvement in local activities
- *Cultural impact*: for the development of cultural identity and understanding. This is evidenced by an increased sense of community, understanding of other cultures and the effect of cultural experiences on audiences.¹⁹ Cultural activity can also boost skills, engagement, self-esteem and aspiration.

Distinguishing between impacts is useful, although of course each overlaps and intersects with the others. Although phrased in terms of impacts on individuals, these can be scaled up to include paid staff, service, organisational and national agenda. Each might be impacted by any of the above although human and social impact may be felt particularly at an individual level and economic and cultural ones at more strategic levels. There is an assumption that impacts are generally positive, however negative impacts of volunteering also occur.

7. How are these impacts demonstrated?

7.1 On volunteers

Volunteers were not interviewed as part of this project. However there is plenty of evidence of the impacts on volunteers, observed both by themselves and by those managing them: given below in their own words.²⁰ Volunteering can have a life-changing and transformational impact on some, particular on social volunteers and where **health and well-being** are enhanced through meeting new people and undertaking rewarding activities. Human impacts are derived from learning new **skills**, by both social and career volunteers: these include archival, practical, intellectual, work based and transferable skills. Skills endorsement and development is valued greatly by those

¹⁷ Museums Libraries and Archives Council, *Impact Evaluation of Museums, Archives and Libraries: Available Evidence Project* (2002); HLF *Assessment of the Social Impact of Participation in HLF-funded projects Final Report* (2009); HLF *Evaluation: Good-practice guidance* (October 2012); NCVO *Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit: A practical guide for assessing the difference that volunteering makes* (2015); Arts Council England *Generic Learning Outcomes: Knowledge and Understanding; Skills; Behaviour and Progression; Enjoyment: Inspiration and Creativity; Attitude and values. Generic Social Outcomes: Health and well-being, Stronger and Safer Communities; Strengthening Public Life.* <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>

¹⁸ For example: Museums and Galleries Scotland *The Whole Picture: Understanding the scope, scale and impact of volunteering in museums and galleries in Scotland* (2015).

¹⁹ Institute for Volunteering Research, (2016) Joanna Stuart 'Assessing the impact of volunteers'.

²⁰ Most information in this section has been derived from the documentation for the ARA Volunteering Award 2010-17.

bringing pre-existing expert knowledge and skills to their role. Cultural impact is recognised through an increased knowledge and understanding of history and other cultures and working with people from new and diverse backgrounds. Economic impact is a particular feature for those whose volunteering is motivated by career requirements and the need to secure relevant employment: where volunteering impacts on future employability.

The 2014 report noted that unexpected impacts can occur: 'greater benefits than expected were gained [by volunteers] in social and communal aspects, as well as in the acquisition of skills....other benefits expressed included feeling a sense of purpose and a structure to life, satisfaction, enjoyment and achievement; the ability to make a positive contribution and share knowledge; the enhancement of career and employment prospects and engagement with original documents and inspiration for further research.'²¹

7.1.1 Health and well-being: social volunteers

From the volunteers

- 'Volunteering at my local archive has given me a **sense of purpose and self-worth**. I have a long term illness and cannot currently work. Being able to combine my love of history, academic and work background with being useful to others has meant a great deal to me.'
- 'Been kept busy, **keeping mind and body active**.'
- 'Making **new and valued friends**.'
- 'It gives me back the **contact with other people** that I had begun to miss after being made redundant.'
- 'After retiring it has given some **structure to my week** and helped me to continue **using my skills and experience**.'
- 'I feel more **confident and part of a team**.'
- 'I have had the confidence to **inspire other people** to volunteer. I call this 'paying it forward' - to use skills in a positive way to help where it can be put to good use.'

From volunteer managers

- 'It has made a real difference to their lives...[some] experienced life-changing circumstances: volunteering has helped their own **wellbeing** and, in some cases, helped to direct them towards a new **career path**. For some, **meeting other people** and being somewhere **away from their usual daily routines** makes a massive difference to them.' (Knowsley, 2017)
- '... we are fully aware that taking part in cultural activity can **boost skills, engagement, self-esteem and aspiration**. Participants enhance their **workplace and social skills** while helping to make NLW's national collections more accessible to a wide audience in different ways, including transcribing text, creating databases, digitising, research, conservation tasks and public presentations.' (National Library of Wales (NLW), 2016)

²¹ Williams, *Managing Volunteering*, p.12.

- *'By including the widest community participation possible in the project, we are encouraging **health and well-being** through socialising with like-minded volunteers, and **maintaining cognitive skills** for older volunteers.'* (Lacock, 2014)
- *A **sense of worth** and a place to share a love of history with like-minded people. One volunteer describes it as 'a haven to escape to once a week.'* (Lanhydrock, 2016)

7.1.2 Skills: social and expert volunteers

From the volunteers:

- *'I have further developed **research skills** and now know a great deal more about local history.'* (Greater Manchester, 2016)
- *'I have gained a valuable insight into the **workings of the local archives**...I have learnt **practical skills** through the project [including]access to specific workshops on cleaning and caring for the types of documents we are dealing with.'* (Bedford and Luton Archives and Records Service (BLARS), 2012)
- *'My positive experiences can be summed up as offering a LGBT community building and networking opportunity, meeting diverse and creative LGBT people and offering an opportunity to **develop archive and oral history skills** and perspectives.'* (London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), 2017)
- *'Enabled me to **use knowledge** I had built up over many years of working in the archives and to ensure that this knowledge would be available both to the office and to researchers.'* (Volunteering Report, 2015)
- *'I knew little about archives but a lot about affairs of church and state so I bring expert knowledge to sort material within archive rules. It's fascinating. I have speeded up a process, after an **excellent induction by the archivist**.'* (Methodist Archives, 2018)
- *'My existing **academic research skills** have been useful. My knowledge of diocesan affairs has been useful in assisting to evaluate sensitive correspondence and personal papers. This provides new research material, reinforces existing skills, and is interesting and enjoyable with the satisfaction of a job well done.'* (Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, 2018)

From volunteer managers:

- *'The volunteers have developed their skills and interest in the **history of 20th century British theatre**, heritage and local history... Sessions have been run to help the volunteers develop skills in **basic cataloguing, research and digitisation**. Some older volunteers have added great value to the project with their knowledge.'* (Battersea Arts Centre, 2013)
- *'Increased confidence and **life skills**, such as communication or working as part of a team, particularly in younger participants; increased **skills, including IT, cataloguing, public engagement and collections knowledge**.'* (Lanhydrock, 2016)
- *'Our MIGM volunteers have enjoyed learning a range of new skills (including **cataloguing, blogging, digitisation, research and transcription**) through high quality training*

opportunities and through on the job learning. In turn, these skills have helped them to gain confidence and have improved their employability.' (Greater Manchester, 2017)

- *'The volunteers have learnt many new skills, including **archival research**, how to use archives in **exhibitions**, how to research and deliver **guided walks** and how to contribute at **community events**. Volunteers have contributed to the **blog and Facebook**, developing the skill of **writing for an online audience**.'* (Somerset Heritage Service, 2014)
- *'The opportunity to use and develop skills, particularly in **oral history collection**, and also to gain some archiving skills such as basic **data protection knowledge**; opportunities to make new social connections and be active within a community project, leading to enhanced wellbeing.'* (RVS, 2015)
- *'X and Y have learnt **film digitisation, editing and cataloguing**. Alongside technical skills, they have extended their historical knowledge of Bristol, which they use extensively for talks, exhibitions and other projects. Their **presenting skills** are improved...'* (Bristol Record Office, 2013)
- *'Volunteers with **specialist knowledge** have helped to **catalogue, interpret, and make accessible** a large collection that was uncatalogued at the project's outset.'* (Gloucestershire Archives, 2013)
- *'Volunteers have developed skills in **interviewing/oral reminiscence, IT web design, digitisation of images, cataloguing & packaging**.'* (Gloucestershire Archives, 2011)

7.1.3 Improved employability: career focused volunteers

From volunteers:

- *'The training has been enormously beneficial for **my career ambitions** whilst offering a fascinating insight into WRVS. The skills I have learnt and opportunities I have had have just **secured me a job** as an editor for an educational resources company which specialises in primary archival material.'* (WRVS, 2012)
- *'Working at the archives gives me **experience of a work environment** that I can draw on in interview situations. It has helped me to gain confidence in the workplace and I now have **work-based experience of using a computer**.'* (Bury Archives, 2009)
- *'The skills I have acquired as a volunteer have **helped me in my degree** and in making **decisions about my future career**. I am planning on working in this sector so I am hoping that the mixture of training, experience and accreditation from this project will **impress potential employers**.'* (University of Reading, 2009)
- *'As well as feeling part of the very open and inclusive workplace that is the archives sector, I gained invaluable **career and interview advice from professionals**, and friends and mentors in these professionals. Going onto a professional course, the confidence I have gained from working alongside and being included by **senior sector professionals** because of my skills has been hugely valuable.'* (Volunteering in Archives report, 2014)

From volunteer managers:

- *'The volunteers enjoy their work at the Record Office and three-months of work, even if unpaid, **looks better on a CV than three months of doing nothing.**'* (Flintshire, 2009)
- *'Our placements through supported **employment agencies** provide an opportunity to develop an awareness of the **expectations of a workplace and learn how to interact with colleagues.**'* (Glamorgan, 2017)
- *'...individuals who had undertaken conservation volunteering; carrying out remedial **conservation treatments or re-packaging collections...** was frequently seen as a formative part of their education. [Working] with experienced conservators in many cases their volunteering **led directly to employment.**'* (Volunteering in Collections Care, 2011)
- *The Student Placements have improved **student employability and skills** and in some cases inspired students to begin **careers in the heritage sector** and go on to seek further work experience.'* (Heritage Quay, 2017)
- *'This project resulted in our volunteers being trained in historical research skills and gave them the opportunity to hone **their professional and transferable skills that will enable them to apply for heritage positions** in their working career.'* (Kingston Museum, 2014)

7.2 On archive services

The impact of volunteering on archive services is rather more context-driven than its impact on individual volunteers, contingent on the degree to which they are embedded in service delivery. For some (e.g. local authority archives) the capacity they offer provides added value in quantifiable terms as projects deliver hugely increased opportunities for access to collections, including increased footfall to the service. For business and university archives volunteering is less an essential aspect of the work than an optional extra, in contrast to those voluntary bodies where no archive work would be achieved without volunteers.

Where they are embedded, volunteers help both to deliver **strategic aims** and support **service development**. They frequently act as **advocates** and in all sectors their involvement can significantly raise **service profiles**. The expert knowledge imported by some volunteers also helps inform the paid workforce. **Workforce development** is perhaps a less anticipated outcome: however managing volunteers greatly enhances the skills and experience of those who manage them. It has a knock on effect on other paid staff too, particularly where volunteers are drawn from minority communities. **Widening audiences** has a cultural impact on all parties, and occurs where projects are aimed at atypical groups: e.g. people in minority ethnic groups, people with physical or learning disabilities or mental ill-health, the unemployed, and the prison population.

Few services appear to view volunteering in terms of **economic impact**, but it may be useful as an indicator to estimate not only the number of hours contributed but how these compute against salaries and/or wages of paid staff, or the national minimum wage. 'Upskilling' the workforce also helps individuals contribute to wider economic performance, and where volunteering has **added capacity** new collections and resources become accessible increasing **access and use**, and new

footfall can bring economic benefits to an area in terms of spend in shops and restaurants even if this is difficult to quantify.

7.2.1 Strategic aims

- *'The Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP) works under a Memorandum of Understanding whose statement of purpose focuses on the Greater Manchester **Strategy's aims** of creating a sense of place / personal and community identity; better life chances; a strong economic base and digital futures. This project has helped us achieve these aims by encouraging residents to use archives to **create narratives** around the city region's industrial past and by **providing high-quality volunteering opportunities** with the chance to develop digital skills.'* (Greater Manchester, 2017)
- *'...from a record office perspective the project has been very successful as it has **added value to our service**, promoted user and non-user involvement, enriched the quality of life of volunteers, helped to deliver strong, healthy, thriving communities or groups of volunteers, strengthened citizenship and created learning for life opportunities enabling people to achieve their ambitions and routes to employment as well as underpinning the wider heritage economy.'* (Suffolk Record Office, 2010)
- *'Volunteers bring a variety of experience and help support the Council's key objectives: the Director holds the service in high esteem as a result.'* (Managing Volunteering report, 2014)

7.2.2 Service development

- *'Staff are building and gaining volunteer management skills. Procedures have been built into the archive, including changes to staff knowledge and ways of working that will make the archive far more able to work with more volunteers in the future. The archive has been acting as a **role-model for volunteering** within the Corporate Services Division of The Children's Society, linking through to the organisation's redevelopment of its work with volunteers.'* (The Children's Society Archive, 2013)
- *' This project has been the first time the GMALSP [comprising ten local archive services] has had an opportunity to **work together on such a large scale**. Choosing business collections has allowed us to take a new approach to connecting our collections in a thematic and holistic way.'* (Greater Manchester, 2017)
- *'Thirty collections have been listed, repackaged, described, preserved or catalogued by volunteers. It has made the service more **audience-focused, brought in new audiences and improved university relations** with the local community, our depositors and partners.'* (Heritage Quay, 2017)

7.2.3 Widening audiences

- *'To provide an opportunity for people with **disabilities** and the **long-term unemployed** to learn and put into practice workplace and social skills, to encourage widening participation in archive and heritage activities for **non-traditional audiences**, to provide wider access to*

*the archive material. People who have not previously engaged with archives have had an opportunity to **engage on a meaningful level** with heritage material... and have felt empowered to make decisions about the means of accessing and displaying the material, and in its care and collections policy. They have had **input into cataloguing** and creating finding aids, which will positively affect future users by offering an accessible alternative to the professionally-created standard.'* (University of St Mark and St John Plymouth, 2014)

- *Young people (**16-19 year olds from disadvantaged areas of the N.E.**) were able to participate in a deep and meaningful relevant experience for them that made archives real and accessible. The young people who participated in the experience would usually not have engaged with museums and archives without this project. This model of working is an opportunity to widen audiences to young people and their families that would usually not access or engage with. The partnership working with the youth service and other partners is a unique model that could open up archives for many existing groups.'* (Woodhorn Museum and Northumberland Archives, 2012)
- *'This project has allowed us to provide opportunities for a much wider group of volunteers than we have been able to previously (**physical disability, learning difficulty, residents of HMP Askham Grange**). Staff [are] much more confident in supporting volunteers from a wide variety of different backgrounds and the increased diversity has had a positive impact on our entire workforce.'* (York Libraries and Archives, 2016)

7.2.4 Profile raising and advocacy

- *Our volunteers are current employees who act as **ambassadors** within and beyond the organisation, undertaking tours of the Heritage Centre in Hong Kong and in crowdsourcing a transcription project of WW1 records by 30 volunteers.'* (HSBC, Nationwide, 2018)
- *'[We have] initiated networks of likeminded people and created **advocates for engagement** with archival collections, recommending us to visitors and researchers; established Heritage Quay's **regional and national reputation** as a training and research centre for local history and rugby league history.'* (Heritage Quay, 2017)
- *'This Programme has seen Dudley Archives and Local History Service lead the way with the engagement of volunteers within Dudley Council and... has been recognised by Council leaders as **leading the way**'. This has greatly improved the profile of the archive service within the Council and has resulted in an **increase in the number of volunteers** working with us.'* (Dudley Archives and Local History Programme, 2011)
- *The volunteers act as **powerful advocates** for the service, supporting new projects and initiatives, promoting the service to local communities and helping to encourage people to donate collections of records to the Archives. People have spoken about the importance of volunteering ... in terms of the sense of well-being people get from volunteering with us, the pride they take in their local history and heritage, new friends they have made and the importance of volunteering for their health in terms of remaining mentally and physically active.'* (Wigan Archives Service, 2014)

- *The volunteer project has generated huge **interest in the press**. The Hull Daily Mail in particular... This has impacted on visitor numbers to the History Centre and an increase in the number of people wishing to volunteer within the Centre and across the Council... The high profile of this project has prompted a number of deposits.’ (Hull History Centre, 2013)*
- *They are great advocates for our service. The wider impact is amazing: our ‘will-flatteners’ are known **nationwide and even further afield!** Volunteers **provide good news stories** for the local media, raising the profile of volunteering and archives.’ (Lancashire Archives, 2013)*

7.2.5 Workforce development

- *‘Working as the sole archivist...it has been a really positive experience having a volunteer to assist on some areas of the listing work. Supervising the volunteer has given me **valuable knowledge of managing others** which I would not have [had] otherwise.’ (Hugh Sinclair Project, 2009)*
- *‘New links forged with... e.g. the NHS mental health team and Aberystwyth University’s Psychology Department; ...and the People’s Collection Wales programme...our **staff have advised the Youth Justice Team and Aberystwyth University** on good practice in setting up a volunteering scheme.’ (NLW, 2016)*
- *‘Being able to harness the enthusiasm and energy of our student community, while giving individuals a taste of working in our sector, has been a thoroughly positive experience for us. The diversity of our collections often means that project archivists are required to work in “silos”, and so **creating small teams of volunteers and professionals enables us to add value to projects and to develop management skills among our team.**’ (University of Reading, 2009)*
- *‘**Staff morale** has improved since work started on some of the larger collections. The project has encouraged better **team working** within the branches and right across the service...This and other aspects of the project have facilitated the development of **closer working relationships between staff and volunteers** and a better understanding of the latter’s needs and greater appreciation of their achievements.’ (Suffolk Record Office, 2010)*
- *‘There’s a **cultural change** to staff when we see people from all walks of life. Staff learn people management and supervisory skills, including about disabilities.’ (Unilever, 2018)*
- *‘It has increased my **knowledge about all the technical aspects** of the records. It is easy to be intimidated by specialist knowledge and I was in awe of volunteers’ expert knowledge. But as mine has increased I can **respect that knowledge** but now have the confidence to handle specialist material at exactly right level.’ (Ballast Trust, 2018)*
- *‘When volunteers are in our workspace it seems to modify the behaviour of the professionals – they seem to **become more ‘professional!’**’ (TfL, 2018)*
- *Dealing with minorities has had an impact on me. It is **a direct good**, and while it can be difficult, has improved my **understanding of diverse needs**. It’s good to question why you do something and be **taken out of your comfort zone.**’ (Guardian Archive, 2018)*

7.2.6 Added value: capacity

- *'The volunteers' contribution to enhanced intellectual control...will have an immeasurable impact on the service. ESRO's response to the willingness of volunteers to engage in file and item-level listing has been to reformat many areas of the CALM database to enable both present and future efforts; over the course of 18 months, its capacity has **grown by almost 50% to just under a million entries**. As a result, we will be able to provide detail on a scale previously thought impossible.'* (East Sussex Record Office, 2013)
- *'The impact on the service is considerable. Last year volunteers **contributed 8,202 hours, equivalent to almost 5 full time equivalent staff**. Volunteers 'dig down' into the documents, recording detailed information working on projects beyond our means. They record an incredible quantity of information – over 300,000 entries on LANCAT, our on-line catalogue, were created by volunteers.'* (Lancashire Archives, 2013)
- *'Soon after work began it was apparent that completing the cataloguing on time would have been **impossible without the work of the volunteers**. Sorting and numbering ready for cataloguing made the uncatalogued Rolls more accessible than ever before - BLARS staff praised the project for enabling them to answer enquiries. Descriptions of the rolls are being made available to a worldwide audience via the online catalogue, **increasing enquiries and generating new income** for BLARS.'* (BLARS, 2012)
- *'Volunteers began working on Bishopsgate Voices in October 2011, and the number of oral history interviews carried out, key-worded and catalogued has **doubled, going from 30 interviews made between 2007 and 2011 to 68 interviews** as the current total. As well as raising the profile of the Institute and interest in the collections, these interviews have offered the benefit of a wide range of people (former interviewees) engaging with the archive, our work and promoting it among their friends.'* (Bishopsgate Institute, 2012)

7.2.7 Added value: experts

- *'...using volunteers who have a wealth of accumulated knowledge about railways, shipbuilding or engineering means that they are able to approach a collection at a **level of preparedness the average archive cataloguer does not have**. There are some things 'they just know' and it means the Trust can concentrate on teaching them the practical aspects of cataloguing rather than how to recognise a general arrangement drawing. The level of knowledge our volunteers possess about certain subjects means that our **confidence in their ability** to catalogue the collections is high.'* (Ballast Trust, 2009)
- *Volunteers with **specialist knowledge** have helped to catalogue, interpret, and make accessible a large collection that was uncatalogued at the project's outset. The work of the oral history volunteers has added over 51 hours of oral history recordings to it. Over 40 donations and deposits of unique material previously in private collections have been made, ensuring its long-term preservation and availability at Gloucestershire Archives.'* (Gloucestershire Archives, 2013)

7.2.8 Access and use

- *'The direct effects on the Archive Service has been a **50% increase in the numbers of undergraduate students using the collections.**'* (University of Glasgow, 2015)
- *'Over **2000 previously inaccessible business records** have now been catalogued and/or digitised.'* (Greater Manchester, 2017)
- *'A number of volunteers are now conducting their own research within the archive ... acting as advocates to others ... By involving our future researchers in the cataloguing process we know that the **descriptions are relevant and accessible.**'* (Vivacity Peterborough, 2011)
- *'Archive material is becoming more **accessible to the care community**, including care leavers and their families, helping them to get a sense of closure and helping them to understand their past from access to own records. Archive material is becoming more accessible to the **academic community**, including medical historians, social and community historians, family historians, schools and others.'* (The Children's Society, 2011)

7.3 On the wider archive sector

It is in general terms possible to align evidence of the impact of volunteering with wider government and cultural agenda, for example:

- General UK, Scottish and Welsh **government aims** to enhance health and well-being, active retirement, build social capital and citizenship and promoting inclusion
- The **ARA's** strategic aim to *'...support and promote wide audience engagement with, and stake holding in, records and archives, particularly through partnership with the community archives sector and in developing volunteer involvement'*²²
- **TNA's** *Archives Inspire* 2015-2019 strategic priority *'We will be an effective leader and partner for the archives sector, to sustain and develop the nation's collection'*²³
- The **Museums Association** and the **Arts Council England** also seek inclusiveness. The MA's vision is for *'inclusive, socially-engaged museums at the heart of their communities'* while the Arts Council England's mission is *'Great Art and Culture for Everyone'*²⁴

In 2006 it was noted that

'Communities with a wide variety of voluntary groups and lots of opportunities for volunteering are often seen to be more vibrant, sustainable and better places to live than those without or with only small numbers. Government at all levels is keen to see an

²² ARA <http://www.archives.org.uk/about/vision-mission-business-plan.html>

²³ TNA <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives-inspire-2015-19.pdf>

²⁴ Museums Association <https://www.museumsassociation.org/news/11042017-ma-reveals-new-mission-and-vision> and Arts Council England <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/our-mission-and-strategy>

increase in the number of people volunteering, and a well-organised, progressive voluntary and community sector.²⁵

Although slightly dated this statement is no less relevant today: indeed positive engagement with volunteers is a key aspect of successful HLF programmes where volunteering is seen as

‘...a vibrant expression of active citizenship. It is a powerful force for social change, both for those who fulfil their potential through volunteering and for the wider community. Volunteers can offer support, expertise and innovation to any organisation, enhancing impact and adding value.’²⁶

As Lindsay notes

‘When asked what they have got out of a volunteer project, staff involved in organising and managing volunteer projects commonly refer to the practical outcomes of their work, such as the re-packaging of a collection, or scanning of photographs. While it is the case that these aspects of a project are crucial, other areas of benefit should not be overlooked. The wider community in terms of the locality from which the volunteer emerges will see considerable benefit as well, one which often remains unacknowledged.’²⁷

Archive services to some degree identify and describe the wider impact of their volunteer programmes, particularly in their applications for the ARA Volunteering Award. Many quotations have been cited above. Typically, wider impact includes:

- Encouraging wider community participation
- Providing access to previously uncatalogued material
- Creating new research opportunities for greater numbers and the wider community
- Social media initiatives that enable services to reach a wider audience
- Benefiting the wider locality from which the volunteer emerges
- Volunteer organisation of events publicise projects and the service to wider audiences locally and nationally
- When volunteer input builds capacity in services, it enables projects to have much stronger impact on public learning and well-being

The wider impact of volunteering might be studied in greater depth and compared with the experiences of other cultural sectors.

²⁵ Bridget Yates, ‘Working with volunteers – an introduction to good practice’ Association of Independent Museums AIM Focus Paper, 2006.

²⁶ HLF Volunteering: good-practice guidance (2016) p. 4.

²⁷ Lindsay, *Volunteering in Collections Care*, 2011 p.21.

8. What are some less positive impacts of volunteering?

There is general agreement that the contribution of volunteers is essential to large parts of the archive sector and that the capacity and resources that result from their input is a more than adequate return for the investment incurred. Understanding potential negative impacts is important in order to improve continually the experience of both volunteers and services.

8.1 For volunteers

The 2015 report notes that for volunteers there may be issues around:

1. **Bureaucracy:** this can be cumbersome for volunteers leading to logistical problems with HR, IT and permits (e.g. parking) and passes.
2. **Information Technology:** the chief issues involved access to software systems, the internet, and dated equipment. Some had to take queries home in order to access the internet and this was felt to be an impediment to progress.
3. **Training and induction:** volunteers want good training and induction plans, these provide confidence and trust in the office, staff and the work they are being asked to do.
4. **Organisation:** volunteers need to be organised and do not like to be left to their own devices. They prefer a managed system/programme, ready advice when needed and set targets.
5. **Nature of tasks:** large tasks can sometimes be overwhelming, repetitive and isolating. Some would like greater access to documents for cataloguing.
6. **Feedback:** volunteers require a working feedback and appraisal procedure. When staff struggle to allocate time to volunteer needs it can result in volunteers feeling undervalued.
7. **Reward:** formal recognition of experience/contribution in the form of e.g. signed certificates by archivist when a standard has been reached is welcomed.²⁸

8.2 For archive services²⁹

8.2.1 Professional threat

The risk that volunteers are taking the jobs of qualified staff is not as seriously articulated in the archive sector as it is in museums and library domains and the ARA statements on volunteering and on interns helps clarify the situation.³⁰ There is currently little evidence that volunteers are replacing qualified archivists, although anecdotally suggestions that paraprofessional roles are being given to volunteers, particularly in the charity sector have been made. Volunteers are often careful not to take on roles that might be viewed as professional. Younger professionals have noted how difficult it is to get voluntary experience in archives, suggesting that the career would be easier

²⁸ *Volunteering in Archives*, 2015 p. 14, 25-26.

²⁹ Information for this section was derived from HLF *Volunteering Good-practice guidance*, 2016; *Volunteering in Archives*, 2015, *Managing Volunteering in Archives* 2014, documentation for ARA Volunteering Awards and in discussion with attendees at ARA training sessions on Volunteer Management and People Management Skills 2016-18.

³⁰ ARA <http://www.archives.org.uk/careers/volunteering.html>

to access were there more ‘career’ volunteering opportunities even if it is at the expense of ‘social’ ones.

8.2.2 Resourcing and planning

Successful volunteering requires robust forward and on-going planning and management and a proactive approach. The most frequently heard complaint is that managing volunteering is ‘time consuming’: ‘Although we were under no illusions that this project would be time-consuming for all involved, the full extent of the time required has been a little daunting.’ Planning is required to identify required inputs and outputs: will it matter for example if the volunteer project consumes more resources than it creates? Or are there set outputs and outcomes to achieve? Good planning comes from appropriate training and experience, particularly necessary where those managing volunteers are early-career archivists.

8.2.3 Nature of the ‘contract’

The voluntary nature of the transaction between volunteer and host service can create tension. There is no legal employment status or requirement, no contract, no pre-set hours, no right to dictate work schedules and less control over nature and priorities of work to be done, which is especially tricky if deadlines are involved. This requires paid staff to possess particular management skills to ensure the two-way mutually trusting relationship works over time. Volunteering should not mimic employment, although in a number of archives processes and language are similar: to avoid implying employment we should talk about an agreement not contract; an informal chat not interview; registration not application; conversation not appraisal.³¹

‘Volunteered on several online transcription projects. If the repository requests a CV/application form I take my time elsewhere. Some projects want to know my current salary and every job I've ever had - why is that relevant for online transcription?’³²

Issues can arise where there an archive is run entirely by volunteers. Examples arise where volunteers dedicate their lives to the archive, coming to feel a sense of ownership, but lack the skills to manage them effectively: and where tensions arise between volunteers where there are no paid or other staff to help mediate.

8.2.4 Managing expectations

Tensions can arise if mutual expectations are not met. Volunteers may be very enthusiastic and have greater expectations than the resources of the service can sustain, or its systems (e.g. IT) allow. Clarity from the outset as to roles, expectations and anticipated results is important and adjustments need to be made flexibly where volunteers are not meeting hoped-for targets. This is fundamental in recruitment and retention, but also roles should be regularly reviewed and opportunities provided to develop experience and skills. On the other hand ‘Relax: don’t be afraid

³¹ NCVO ‘Treating volunteers as employees’ <https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers/keeping/treating>

³² Raw data derived for *Volunteering in Archives*, 2015.

of letting your volunteers take your office way beyond your expectations, but be prepared to manage their often ambitious expectations.’ (Bristol Record Office, 2013)

8.2.5 Managing performance

Volunteers arrive with a wide range of knowledge, experience and practical skills. Services should consider not just what they want from volunteers but what skills they bring and utilise this huge resource. Provision of appropriate induction and training should be available to all; however performance against targets and quality of work undertaken may not always meet required standards. A skills audit at an early stage can help match volunteers to tasks that utilise their expertise, and clear and repeated instructions, with unobtrusive and informal but regular quality and consistency checks are necessary. Dips in motivation and loss of energy naturally happen but regular chats can prevent problems from escalating unnoticed: procrastination in dealing with issues causes justifiable resentment.

8.2.6 Managing behaviour

Successful volunteering depends (especially in the absence of any formal contract) on mutually open and trusting relationships between paid staff and volunteer, and volunteer agreements should highlight this. Involvement and input from all members of staff ensures the successful integration of volunteers and volunteer projects into the everyday work of the office, reducing the chances for conflict. Tension, misunderstanding and disagreement between paid staff and volunteers and between volunteers themselves can arise and need to be managed fairly and objectively and immediately any of these become apparent.

9. Conclusion and recommendations

The impacts of volunteering both on individuals and services in the archive sector are substantial and significant, and vary according to the type of service. Volunteers feel the long-term effects of improved health and well-being, new and re-enforced skills and enhanced prospects of employability. Services find that volunteering can impact on strategic aims, service development, profile raising, workforce development, and access and use, adding value through new capacity and expertise. Impacts are therefore social, human, cultural and economic. There are challenges too, but nothing that cannot be met by good planning, management, communication and commitment.

Focusing more purposefully and strategically on impact might generate even greater benefits as services start to consider it as they plan volunteering projects and funding applications. Embedding deployment of volunteers might form part of service planning in some sectors and the importance of a workforce trained in the management of volunteers (in all sectors) should be recognised.

The data for this study has been generated indirectly from evidence not primarily focused on impact, supported by some superficial collection of supporting qualitative data. There is scope for further exploration to provide a more balanced account of volunteering impact across the UK and

Ireland's disparate archive sectors. More might be learned from other cultural sectors how at a strategic level volunteers are seen to contribute to the delivery of national and local outcomes.³³

ARA's ongoing commitment to volunteering has already produced significant benefits for its members including training, monitoring and disseminating activities, encouraging partnerships and sharing good practice. Understanding the impact of volunteering on volunteers, on archives services and the sector and beyond will enable ARA to develop further its volunteer guidance, advance its workforce development strategy and support archive services when making the case for funding or other support. It is well placed to support further initiatives in the development of volunteering across the archive sector.

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³³ For example Museums and Galleries Scotland *The Whole Picture: Understanding the scope, scale and impact of volunteering in museums and galleries in Scotland*, 2015, investigates a variety of impacts in some depth.