Archives West Midlands (AWM) is an independent, strategic partnership of archive services in the region which aims to maximise the benefits of working together both in terms of shared projects and funding opportunities.

Who we are
AWM members represent 26 organisations which hold the largest archive collections, and attract the most visitors, in the region. AWM is backed by The National Archives and supported by seven other national and regional archive bodies.

When we were formed
AWM was formally launched in June 2016.

Why?
In a nutshell, AWM is about working together and forging a collective identity for the region’s archives. In times of financial constraint, collaboration is more important than ever. Sharing our knowledge and expertise makes us collectively stronger, and creates new opportunities for exciting joint projects.

Our aims
• Promote the importance of archives as vital regional assets
• Encourage the highest standards of archive work
• Encourage investment in digital preservation and digital access to collections and services
• Develop and support regional (or sub-regional) projects
• Provide a confident and coherent voice for the region’s archives

The bigger picture
It’s not just about preservation and accessibility. Archives in the region are making significant contributions in other areas such as skills and employability, community engagement, health and wellbeing, and tourism.

How we are funded
AWM is subscription-based and has received additional financial support from donor organisations in the form of grants for funded projects.

Charitable status
Archives West Midlands is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Registered Charity Number 1168386).

For more information
website: archiveswestmidlands.wordpress.com
twitter: @ArchivesWM
facebook: facebook.com/Archives-West-Midlands
email: archiveswestmidlands@gmail.com
Introduction

2018/19 is Archives West Midlands’ third year as an independent organisation working to advance learning and education for public benefit by supporting the collection, storage, preservation, promotion and access to archival materials relating to the region.

I believe AWM has made huge strides as an organisation each year. This report celebrates our achievements and details our priorities for the next 12 months, which have been informed by our membership.

As the Chair of AWM I am really proud of the progress that we have made as an organisation, the support which we have provided to our members, and the relationships that we have built with key stakeholders. Our Trustees are ambitious for the archives sector across the West Midlands, and at each of our meetings we focus on how we can make a real difference to the sector and raise the profile of the amazing collections and resources which are held in archives across the region.

We continue to work in really challenging times. 2018/19 has been one of the most challenging years of my career. Resources are incredibly tight, society and communities are changing, and there are very different expectations of how individuals wish to learn and use their leisure time. Engagement with our collections is also transforming - and our approach to collecting, storing and promotion is changing as a result.

A key aim for Archives West Midlands is to establish how we can best support our members to work effectively within this challenging environment. We do believe that our organisation enables our members to be stronger and better placed to advocate and promote the importance of our collections. As an organisation we are building a really effective network where our collective experience, skills, enthusiasm and commitment will enable our workforce, our volunteers and our collections to develop, prosper and make a real difference to the communities and individuals who engage with them.

During 2017/18 we have:

- Continued to promote the importance of archives as vital regional assets
- Supported nine of our members to achieve accreditation/re-accreditation
- Delivered The National Archives sustainability project to develop a regional solution to digital preservation
• Presented to the East Midlands and North East regional archives groups to share our learning on becoming an independent, innovative and sustainable network
• Organised and delivered a members’ meeting focused on funding opportunities
• Ensured that our training and development events were informed by the needs of our members, and organised to maximise networking opportunities for archive leaders
• Delivered a successful training and skills sharing event for our volunteers and Friends Groups

Our Priorities for 2018/19 are to:

• Continue to promote and celebrate the importance of archives as a vital regional asset
• Share best practice, skills and policies to support members to gain and retain accreditation
• Seek further funding opportunities to continue our Digital Preservation programme
• Continue to share our learning so that other regional networks can develop and become sustainable
• Continue to build our relationship and reputation with key funding bodies and further explore ways in which we can work together
• Continue to celebrate, embed and support the contribution of volunteers and Friends through our training and development programme
• Re-design, enhance and improve our website

Janene Cox OBE
Archives West Midlands Chair
Commissioner for Culture, Communities and the Rural Environment
Staffordshire County Council

It is now three years since the launch of Archives West Midlands in June 2016. With their collaborative, innovative and forward-thinking ethos they are achieving much for archives across the region, particularly this year with their digital preservation project, which is an ideal project for partnership working and collaborative solutions.

At The National Archives we are proud to be able to support groups like AWM, which work hard to adapt to an ever-changing landscape, and display ambition and pragmatism in equal measure. Archives of all kinds have the opportunity to unlock access to the information and have the power to inspire trust and enrich people’s lives.

Jeff James
Chief Executive and Keeper of The National Archives
Accreditations

Congratulations to **Dudley Archives and Local History Service** for achieving Archive Service Accreditation in July 2018. Archivist Rachel Brown said: “This is recognition of the good work we do in looking after the collections entrusted to us and serving the various communities of the borough and beyond.”

The National Archives observed that “a large and well regarded group of volunteers, including some remote working volunteers, participate in a wide range of activities” and that “the enthusiastic Friends Group are a source of advocacy and support for the archive service.”

Rachel said that without the close co-operation between a team of dedicated staff and the selfless volunteers and Friends, some of the excellent activities and the variety of means of making archive and local studies material accessible would not be possible. The diligence of all and the success in this area was noted by the assessors who reported:

“The archive service has demonstrated commitment to opening up collections and the archive service to new communities and groups, in particular seeking and developing partnerships with other organisations.”

Congratulations also to **Wolverhampton City Archives** who successfully retained their Archives Service Accreditation status following a review by The National Archives. Wolverhampton first received the prestigious honour in 2015. The latest review recognised the further enhancements to its service, achieved with the support of the Friends of the Archives and volunteers.

Melinda Haunton, Archive Service Accreditation Programme Manager for The National Archives, said: “The Accreditation Panel welcomed this positive update on the service’s position, which showed that the very real resource constraints on the service have not restricted its ambitions. They commended the hugely impressive partnership and collaboration work, particularly in enriching collections and meeting community needs. The Panel noted and commended the success of the service’s review of its on site provision and opening hours, which showed a strategic response to user needs within existing resources.”

Councillor John Reynolds, Cabinet Member for City Economy at Wolverhampton Council, added his congratulations: “Building on its Archives Service Accreditation status is testament to the excellent service Wolverhampton City Archives provides to our city, thanks to the hard work of the staff, Friends of the Archives and volunteers.”
Around the archives

Research and repairs at Hereford Cathedral

Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives received a National Lottery grant of £866,700 to repair and conserve the College Cloisters. Volunteers, working under the guidance of the Research Intern, are exploring the stories of the Vicars Choral, who lived in the Cloisters from the 15th to the mid-20th century.

The Cathedral’s 1217 Magna Carta was the highlight of an exhibition in the Northern Italian city of Vercelli about Cardinal Guala Bicchieri. He was an important figure in the city’s history and, as the papal legate to England, was instrumental in the creation and ratification of the 1217 Magna Carta.

Collaborations at Keele

New members Keele University Special Collections had plenty to report including collaborations with The Sociological Review, the History of Parliament Trust, the North Staffordshire Historians group, and with volunteers working on the Cholera in Newcastle under Lyme project.

Keele reported increased use of archives in teaching and learning at the university, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level - particularly in English, History and Humanities. Their collections are regularly used not only by UK academics but also by the local community, and attract research visitors and enquiries from overseas. Material from the archives recently featured in a local heritage trail and two BBC2 documentaries.

Lots to do in Dudley

Dudley Archives and Local History Service have had a busy 12 months, supported by volunteers who gave 5,360 hours of their time. Search-room visits rose to 3,070 - 148 up on the previous year. Family Fun Days last August, organised by the Friends group, attracted 80 people, and more than 160 people attended a Local History Day in October.

Oswestry highlights

Oswestry Town Council Archives celebrated the centenary of women’s suffrage with an exhibition at Heritage Open Days last September. The display proved so popular it has been on tour in Shropshire ever since and will make further appearances at Heritage Open Days in Oswestry this September, supporting the theme of ‘People Power’.

They are working closely with the Oswestry Family and Local History Group on indexing hard copies of the Border Counties Advertizer newspaper. These are different editions to those held by the British Library, so volunteers are making sure that the extra content in the Oswestry editions is captured.
Sandwell remembers

Sandwell Community History and Archive Services joined forces with Sandwell Museums on a project to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. Following photographic workshops, billboards, banners and posters featuring faces of the people of Sandwell were displayed in libraries, museums and prominent places around the borough.

Another joint project - with the Gardens Trust and Warley Woods Trust - commemorated the 200th anniversary of the death of landscape gardener Humphry Repton. Workshops were held based on research inspired by his ‘Red Book’ of landscape designs, and sessions in schools, for Years 5 and 6, were delivered by Archives staff and volunteers.

Shropshire successes

Shropshire Archives also marked the centenary of the First World War. More than 45,000 people took part in their commemorations, which included the death of ‘war poet’ Wilfred Owen in November 1918.

The service completed cataloguing the More/Hope Edwards estate and family collection, with over 1,700 records now available online. The Shropshire Archives website has been upgraded to allow digital downloads and online payments. More than 70,000 images can now be accessed online.

Happy Birthday Wolverhampton

Last July Wolverhampton City Archives celebrated their 40th birthday. Former members of staff invited to the celebrations included the first archivist, Liz Rees, who started the service back in 1978. The Mayor and Mayoress of Wolverhampton also attended the party.

Another highlight of Wolverhampton’s year was the launch of their website, featuring the first tranche of digitised photographs from the collection of the Express & Star newspaper, in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton. The event attracted much media attention and was featured on the BBC’s Midlands Today.

Asylums and pottery in Staffordshire and Stoke

Staffordshire Archives and Heritage, in partnership with the Wellcome Trust, have started a two-year research project to shed light on the history of three County Asylums. The project will catalogue case records from the period 1818-1960, focusing on the patient experience. As well as developing a database of information for medical and social history research, the project will create an online index to aid family historians. There are also plans for a touring exhibition and a series of talks, at venues across the county, about the history of mental health care in Staffordshire.

Stoke on Trent City Archives have just completed ‘Doulton Described’ - their project to catalogue the Royal Doulton archive. The Stoke Archives Team have spent much of the last four years working on the collection as a whole. More than 3,300 records have been added to the catalogue, which can be seen online at: www.themintonarchive.org.uk
Digital preservation project

AWM Trustees Lisa Snook and Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan report on the very successful digital preservation project

Last year we reported that we had secured £7,635 from The National Archives Sustainability Fund, match-funded by Archives West Midlands, to deliver workshops, develop template policies and guidance, and raise the profile of digital preservation with IT colleagues. This project has now successfully completed. We:

• Hosted four workshops on digital preservation
• Developed a template Digital Preservation Policy, Accessioning Guidance, and Guidance for Depositors
• Made a presentation to West Midlands SOCITM (Society for IT practitioners in the public sector)
• Hosted an information-sharing event with Archives First, who also received a grant from the Sustainability Fund

Members continue to feedback on how useful and important regional collaboration on digital preservation has been to them, so we continue to plan for this work in the coming year.

Future plans

AWM is committed to supporting its members to develop their digital preservation capacity, and to achieve a minimum of Level 1 of the NDSA Levels of Digital Preservation Maturity.

We are developing the ‘Digital Progress Programme’ of guidance and will be delivering events to which members can send several staff - for little or no cost - as well as providing information resources and networking opportunities. During 2019/20 we aspire to seek funding to deliver the following for our members:

• ‘Two courses delivered by the Digital Preservation Coalition - ‘Getting started in digital preservation’ and ‘Making progress’
• Two dedicated workshops looking at key topics to help services move onto the NDSA maturity levels
• Guidance on key areas - informed by our experience of writing informed guidance on a Digital Preservation Policy
• Access to all the materials generated in our workshops, and the AWM guidance
• A ‘check-in’ process at our meetings to enable members to share their experiences and give them the impetus to keep working on digital preservation
Funding Day

In May AWM members heard four very informative presentations from the National Lottery Heritage Grants, Arts Council England, The National Archives and the Wellcome Trust on their different funding streams.

Elise Turner (NLHG) talked through the new five-year funding framework. She said the application process had been simplified and the range of eligible projects widened. Elizabeth Neathey (ACE) talked through the funding opportunities that exist within ACE, which has libraries and museums in its remit. She said priorities for grants were building excellence and ensuring that activities funded would be for everyone. Beth Astridge (TNA) said a new funding stream would be added to the two Cataloguing and Scoping Grants already available. Called ‘Collaborate and Innovative’ the new stream aimed to deliver positive change via two programmes: Networks for Change and the Archives Testbed Fund. Chris Hassan (Wellcome Trust) said applications for Research Resource Awards needed to demonstrate how projects would contribute to health research in the humanities and social sciences.

Useful links and contacts:
heritagefund.org.uk
elise.turner@heritagefund.org.uk
artscouncil.org.uk/projectgrants
elizabeth.neathey@artscouncil.org.uk
archivesrevealed@nationalarchives.gov.uk
nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/finding-funding/
c.hassan@wellcome.ac.uk

Friends and volunteers event

A total of 30 people attended the inaugural Friends and Volunteers Networking Day in July 2018, including 20 delegates representing six AWM members. The Day, which was held at the Birmingham and Midland Institute, is set to become an annual celebratory event.

Guest speaker Dr Pete Collinge from Keele University gave an informative, illustrated talk on being creative with archives, and described a poor law research project delivered in partnership with volunteers.

After a networking lunch, Friends and volunteers talked about projects they had been involved in. These included the Worcestershire Diocesan Wills Conservation Project which will see the conservation and digitisation of 162,795 wills and 12,504 related documents. Another report was on Shropshire’s mapping project, which links historic photographs in the Shropshire Archives collection to an online map.

The Friends of Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archives said they had raised more than £16,000, enabling the Archive Service to prepare high-resolution digital images of the county’s 247 tithe maps (1838-1849), to complement transcriptions of the accompanying tithe schedules completed by a team of volunteers. The resources are available at: www.staffsnameindexes.org.uk.
Welcome to Keele

Welcome to our newest member - University of Keele Special Collections, introduced by Archivist Helen Burton:

Established in the 1950s, the Special Collections and Archives at Keele University constitute a valuable tool for teaching and research, both within the University and beyond. Collections are acquired by deposit, gift and purchase, and holdings span some 1400 linear metres of manuscript, printed and pictorial material, dating from the 12th century to the present day.

Material relating to the social and industrial history of North Staffordshire is a particular strength. In addition, we hold several important collections of personal and research papers, records relating to the history of the University, and a large archive charting the development of Sociology in Britain.

Our basic mission is to select, preserve and make available the collections in our care, for the benefit of the Higher Education community and beyond.

Website and social media

Joanna Terry presented her Social Media update to fellow Trustees on 1 April 2019. She reported that, over the past year, Twitter had seen a 27% increase in the number of followers (to 778) and a 12% increase on impressions (to 52,599). Facebook has effectively been moth-balled since August 2018.

She said tweets about specific events had proved most successful, particularly with a photo. Other good tweets were those linked to what Trustees were up to, and service successes - such as accreditation. Something else that worked well was a service taking over tweeting for a big event. She thought this was worth repeating, as a way for member services to become more involved. The annual report was always well received. Looking forward to 2019/20, Joanna recommended a review of the website, and adding documents and events which could be retweeted.

Some top tweets:

- 1,230 Impressions
- 2,168 Impressions
- 2,877 Impressions
- 3,377 Impressions

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Hello and welcome

A warm welcome to two new trustees

Professor Alannah Tomkins

James Ranahan

Richard Wade

Welcome also to Richard Wade who sits on the Trustees’ committee. Richard is one of the archivists at Herefordshire Archive Service, where he has worked for the past nine years - currently with primary responsibility for accessioning. He has had a number of Archives and Records Association roles, with past stints as regional officer for the West Midlands and Events Officer for the Section for New Professionals. He is currently serving as chair of the West Midlands Region. Richard believes archives are great educational and learning resources and enjoys using them as an advocacy tool.

Trustees

Sam Collenette

Sam has worked in archives within universities, museums, businesses and charities. She is now working for Ofwat, the Water Services Regulation Authority, in the role of Information Governance Manager, responsible for records management and information compliance. As a member of the ARA Board she helped oversee the transition to the new Archives and Records Association. Sam directed AWM’s highly successful Strong Rooms project and enjoys making a difference, supporting colleagues in the region.

Janene Cox OBE

Janene Cox, AWM Chair, is Commissioner for Culture, Communities and the Rural Environment at Staffordshire County Council. She is former President of Libraries Connected (Society of Chief Librarians) and Chair of The Reading Agency national Summer Reading Challenge Strategy Group, which sets the strategic direction for the largest Summer Reading Scheme across the UK. Janene is a champion for children’s reading, and a passionate advocate for cultural services, which she believes make a real difference to people lives.

Richard Lewis

Richard is Collections and Development Manager at Heritage and Culture Warwickshire, and has worked for a number of other local authority services including those in Dudley, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire. He has also worked in the archives at the Mercers’ Guild and Bletchley Park Trust. Richard is passionate about community engagement and demonstrating the relevance and importance of archives to the communities they serve.
Mary McKenzie
Mary has more than 30 years archives experience. She is currently Archives Team Leader at Shropshire Archives and is a long-time supporter of regional collaboration. Mary believes that working in partnership across archives, and other cultural services, is essential to enable the sector to progress and develop in increasingly tough times. Her particular interests include developing remote access to collections, and working in partnership with volunteers.

Pat Kiernan
Pat became a Trustee and the Treasurer for AWM in May 2017. She is a retired Civil Servant who worked for several government departments. Pat has been a Trustee and the Treasurer for The Friends of Shropshire Archives since 1994. She sees her role as ensuring that AWM is put onto and remains on a sound financial footing. In pursuance of this, members will be encouraged to pay their annual subscriptions on time, and any fundraising efforts undertaken will be supported.

Dr. David Owen OBE
David Owen has worked for the family firm, Rubery Owen, all his life and was Chairman from 1969-2010. A member of the Business Archives Council, David sees business archives as a real asset to a company in recording its innovation, products and activities - and creating a hunger to develop new products and business for the future. He is particularly keen to see AWM grow and to be able to offer a real service across the community.

Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan
Elizabeth set up her own archive consultancy in 2003. She has since worked with archive services across the UK and with key strategic and policy bodies such as The National Archives, the Archives and Records Association (ARA) and the Welsh Government. Elizabeth sits on the Archive Service Accreditation Standard Committee and chairs UNESCO’s Memory of the World UK Committee. She is an Assessor for the ARA’s professional membership programme and a Director of the National Conservation Service.

James Ranahan
Jim is a registered archivist with a specialist interest in the care of photographic collections, and a passion for communicating the importance of archives for all people and communities. He has worked for local authority, museum and religious archives and is currently an archivist within an integrated collections team at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. He represents Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society on the management committee of Harvington Hall, Worcestershire, and organises lecture programmes for the Newcomen Society and Warwickshire Local History Society.

Joanna Terry
Joanna Terry is Head of Archives and Heritage at Staffordshire County Council. She is also an executive member of the Chief Archivists in Local Government Group and a member of the Victoria County History Advisory Board. A former electronic records manager, Joanna is passionate about using digital technology to promote and share archives, and has a particular interest in developing solutions to preserving born digital archives.
Prof Alannah Tomkins
Alannah started work as a History lecturer at Keele University in 1995 and initially contributed to the Victoria County History for Staffordshire. Her research is focused on poverty, poor relief and charity (including the Stafford and North Staffordshire Infirmaries). She is now a Professor of Social History and works regularly with archival volunteers in Stafford and other counties.

Dr Clare Watson
Clare is Director of the Media Archive for Central England based at the University of Lincoln, and works closely with sector colleagues through Film Archives UK. She is also a member of the executive of the East Midlands Regional Archive Council. Clare has considerable experience in archive education, having led training in film and television archiving at MA level, co-ordinated the Media Archive Traineeships in partnership with Creative Skillset and FOCAL Int’l, and now convening archive internships and lecturing at Lincoln.

Goodbye and congratulations

Sadly for AWM, Lisa Snook resigned as Secretary and Trustee from AWM as of 31 May 2019, on taking up the position of County Archivist in Gwent. Lisa has been involved with AWM since the very beginning and has done so much for the organisation, including managing the digital preservation project. She will be greatly missed and our loss is definitely Gwent’s gain. Lisa fully deserves this appointment and we wish her all the very best in her new position.

We also say goodbye and congratulations to another Trustee, Dr Malcolm Dick. He received an OBE in the New Year Honour’s List for services to history in the West Midlands. The region is very lucky to have such an advocate for the importance of its past. We at AWM saw the time and commitment that Malcolm gives to projects, and we benefited from his expertise during our crucial first two years.

Dr Malcolm Dick and HRH Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales
Membership

Subscription members:
Birmingham Archives & Collections
British Motor Industry Heritage Trust
Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham
Dudley Archives & Local History Service
Herefordshire Archives & Records Centre
Hereford Cathedral Library & Archives
Media Archive of Central England
Oswestry Town Council Archives
Sandwell Community History & Archive Services
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
Shropshire Archives
Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Archive Service
University of Keele Special Collections
Warwickshire County Record Office
Wolverhampton City Archives
 Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service

Affiliate members:
Birmingham City University
Coventry University
Culture Coventry
Harper Adams University
Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Library and Archive
Rubery Owen Holdings Ltd
Rugby School
Solihull Heritage and Local Studies
University of Warwick (Modern Records Office)
University of Worcester
Walsall Local History Centre
Worcester Cathedral

Join Us

AWM aims to complement and enhance the work of its constituent services by enabling and supporting work that is best achieved collectively, such as digital preservation. We welcome members from all archives and archive services in the region who share these aims. To find out more contact archiveswestmidlands@gmail.com or visit our website: archiveswestmidlands.wordpress.com

There are two types of AWM membership - subscription and affiliate. The subscription year runs from 1 April to 31 March.

Benefits of Subscription membership:
• attendance at and participation in, free of charge or at a subsidised rate, all membership forums, training and development workshops and networking opportunities such as on digital preservation and funding
• input into templates and guidance documentation produced by AWM
• promotion of service achievements, events and celebrations through the AWM social media accounts and in the Annual Review
• Friends and volunteers of subscribed members have their own development and networking day
• input into deciding future priorities for AWM

Although Affiliate members do not pay a subscription, they are only eligible to attend the AGM in July.
## Funding

The National Archives support AWM and provided funding to set up and develop our organisation.

### RECEIPTS/PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR YEAR TO 310319

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**Excess Receipts**: £7,933.02 £7,541.78

**Balance Brought Forward**: £29,191.91 £29,191.91

**Current Balance**: £21,258.89 £29,191.91

### Support

*AWM values the support of these organisations and individuals:*
- Archives and Records Association (West Midlands Region)
- British Records Association
- Mag Astill
- Mike Jackson
- The National Archives
- West Midlands Friends of Archive Services
It was an excellent meeting. The presentations were conducted by knowledgeable and informed members. The AWM group utilised their experience to work towards a plan going forward.”

“Found AWM to be a very welcoming and supportive group.”

“An enjoyable and positive event. Thank you for continuing to organise events like this!”

“Thank you for the wonderful lunch, too. It is always a pleasure to be invited.”

Get in touch and get involved

Contact us: archiveswestmidlands@gmail.com

Please follow Archives West Midlands at:

@ArchivesWM

facebook.com/Archives-West-Midlands

Website: archiveswestmidlands.wordpress.com