

Welcome to the Winter 2014 edition of The National Archives' research newsletter. With the new academic year well underway, we have been busy with a wide range of collaborative events and projects. We recently hosted an Academic Open Day to showcase the research being done at The National Archives and discuss possibilities for working with Higher Education Institutions through schemes such as Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships. The day provided some interesting conversations and helped plant the seeds of future partnerships.

Collection-based collaboration was the theme of the recent conference organised by The National Archives, Research Libraries UK and Arts Council England, in partnership with The Library of Birmingham and the Cadbury Research Library, at the University of Birmingham. You can read more about the event on [page 8](#).

The recent 'All At Sea' conference in October was organised by the European Prize Papers network to discuss records from the High Court of Admiralty, and provide a spotlight on the collaborative research going on to open up this hugely rich resource. You can read more on [page 3](#).

We are looking forward to bringing academics and archivists together for another collaborative event in February. The 2015 Gerald Aylmer Seminar will take place at the Institute of Historical Research and will focus on 'Secret Histories'. You can find out more about booking a place on [page 5](#).

The Education and Outreach teams have been working with the Victoria and Albert Museum to devise an innovative new research project to dramatize the

Russian Revolution. You can read more about the project and plans for future events on [page 7](#). We have also been collaborating with the wider archives sector to compile a new research study around digital services for online audiences. You can see more on [page 11](#).

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition.

Victoria Lain

Editor and Research and Academic Liaison
The Research Team
The National Archives



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West India Relief Commission Accession

Following extensive conservation work by The National Archives' Collection Care Department, colleagues in Advice and Records Knowledge and Information Management Policy have completed the accession of **PWLB 11, West India Relief Commissioners: Mortgage Indentures**. Each document is now described on Discovery and available for viewing in our reading rooms.



▲ PWLB 11/25/3 Dominica: Gomier (Labadie's) Estate: grant of 10 acres to Alexander Labadie by Elizabeth Labadie - list of slaves.

In August 1831, a storm which became known as the Great Barbados Hurricane swept across the Caribbean. It destroyed Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados, killing some 1,500 people and causing extensive damage on other islands. The hurricane heightened the crisis in the sugar plantation economy, already hit by the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire and by insurrection. In response, the British government established the West Indian Relief Commission, empowered to make loans to beleaguered plantation owners. It was intended that the loans would enable owners to rebuild their estates and return to profitability. The plantations themselves were used as surety.

The documents in PWLB 11 were submitted to the Commission as evidence of ownership to support applications for loans and mortgages. They include mortgage indentures and related documents relating to some 120 plantations in Jamaica, Barbados, St Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad, British Guyana and Dominica from the 1760s onwards. Visually impressive, many of the mortgages include inventories and lists of slaves.

This series is an important source on the financing of plantations in the Caribbean. They complement the slave registers in series **T 71**, which have been used extensively by UCL's current **Legacies of British Slave Ownership** project and other financial records in Treasury series.

Please see the **West Indian Relief Commission** page on the UK Government Web Archive for details of related records.

All At Sea - Prize Papers

▶ HCA 30/274: mail captured and never delivered.

From 6-8 October 2014, The National Archives hosted the international conference *All at Sea: the Prize Papers as a source for a global microhistory*. Organised by the European Prize Papers Network, the conference drew together researchers from across the UK, Europe and the USA who had a common interest in the High Court of Admiralty records in series HCA 30 and HCA 32 known as the Prize Papers. Amanda Bevan and Randolph Cock from The National Archives are currently working to catalogue and widen access to this tremendously valuable resource.

In the age of sail, the aim of war at sea was not to sink the enemy's ships, but to capture them. Warships could be prestigious prizes, but it was the more humble merchant ships with their often valuable cargoes that made up the bulk of the captures, preyed upon as they were both by naval frigates cruising for a prize and by privateers - privately owned and funded warships with legal authority to wage war on enemy shipping and on neutrals trading with the enemy.

¹ mostly in HCA 32

² e.g. HCA 32/12/438

³ HCA 32/10/79

The concept of *prize*, as captured ships and cargo were termed, was formalised in law and administered, in Britain, by the Prize Court, within the High Court of Admiralty. The purpose of this court was to determine whether a captured ship and her cargo were legitimate legal prize, in which case the court would order that the ship and her cargo be sold and the proceeds distributed among the captors. This was the origin of the fortune of more than one successful sea-captain who retired to his newly-acquired country seat at the end of one or other of Britain's lucrative eighteenth-century wars. On the other hand, if the court found, as it sometimes did, that the prize had not been taken lawfully, it would order it be restored to its owners and appropriate compensation paid them.

The Prize Court in London based its decision on documents supplied to it by vice-admiralty courts convened in overseas ports, or local commissioners in ports in the British Isles. The statements of witnesses made to these courts or commissioners¹, usually crew-members of both the prize and her captors, tell us, among many other things, that while the crew of a ship often attempted, naturally enough, to avoid capture by trying to out-run



their pursuer, and that gunshots were sometimes exchanged, there was not very frequently a spirited resistance, and more often than not, knowing themselves to be out-gunned and in a slower vessel, the unlucky captives made no real resistance. Several accounts tell of the crew abandoning ship and taking to the ship's boat when an English privateer hove in view². Some tried to bluff it out, posing as innocent neutrals - such as the Dutch *White Dove* in the second Anglo-Dutch War that hoisted French (neutral) colours when sighted by an English privateer, only to be undone when a subsequent search discovered the Dutch flag hidden in the steersman's bedroll, where the captain had ordered it be put (as that crewman declared in his testimony to the court³).

[Continue overleaf ▶](#)

Other statements tell of bundles of incriminating papers being thrown into the sea from ships which were about to be boarded⁴. This is significant, because whenever a vessel was taken the captors were careful to collect all the papers and documents on board, for use as evidence in the subsequent court case. Along with the legal papers, these now form the The National Archives' prize papers. In another case, the master of the French *Chasseur* suspected of trading with Britain's North American colonies during the American War of Independence, claimed that she had been headed for the French West Indies when she was blown off course by a storm and forced to seek shelter in Chesapeake Bay. But the prize-master who sailed her into New York told the court there that in his opinion the damage to the rigging — supposedly storm damage — appeared to have been caused deliberately with an axe; and the Frenchman's story finally fell apart when he was confronted with a bundle of papers which the ship's carpenter identified as the papers that the master had ordered him to conceal in a wine container before the ship had been boarded⁵. These papers detailed the real owners of the cargo (American rebels), and are now among the prize papers⁶.

⁴ e.g. HCA 32/10/79

⁵ HCA 32/292/15

⁶ HCA 30/278/1

In addition to ships' logs and journals, bills of lading, cargo manifests and many other seized papers, HCA 30 also contains many thousands of letters that were in the mail in transit on board captured ships. These letters are particularly valuable because, unlike many other historical sources, they were mostly not written for posterity but reveal the thoughts and feelings, hopes and concerns of ordinary people going about their everyday lives. As well as being a treasure chest for social, economic and imperial historians, many of these letters are framed in language which is closer in character to the forms of speech than are other written sources. They are therefore ripe for linguistic analysis, and as we heard at the conference, more than one research team has already used them to study the development of European languages in the early-modern period. There is also a substantial body of business correspondence among the captured mail that is contributing to a new level of understanding of the workings of international commerce in the long eighteenth century.

The papers and letters are written in fifteen or more languages, reflecting the nations with which Britain was in conflict and the even more cosmopolitan character of trade in the period. Judging by the participants in the *All at Sea* conference, the prize papers are getting to be well-known among academic communities in the Netherlands and Germany, but more still needs to be done to publicise this resource to the English-speaking, Iberian and francophone worlds, and to researchers in and of Asia.



▲ Participants at the All at Sea conference examine documents (photo: Anna Brass).

Prize Papers Films

In the 18th-century, thousands of ordinary people put quill-pen to paper to write across the seas to family, friends and business partners, in Europe and across the colonised world. Most letters arrived, were read, and eventually vanished over time – and with them went their writers' voices and experiences. In these letters, people speak directly from the globalising world of the 1700s.

The National Archives commissioned some short exploratory films about these letters from the artist filmmaker Anna Brass. Anna chose to focus on the Hamburg ship *Franciscus*, captured in 1745 off Dover on her way from Tenerife to Dunkirk, carrying letters from the English, Irish and other residents. You can find them at vimeo.com/annabrass/videos and they are free to use.

A Frolicksome Ditty is a first look at the *Franciscus* papers, and the first attempt to play some music found within them. *Without a Dollar in My Pocket* is a letter from an adventurous but unlucky young Irishman. *This Goes By Captain Lawrence* weaves together letters from the Russell family to their children being educated in English convents in France. *The Best Vermillion* is a fascinating shopping list. We would be delighted to receive any feedback to research@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Save the date

Gerald Aylmer Seminar 2015: Secret Histories

The Gerald Aylmer Seminar was a huge success this year and we have started working on assembling the programme for next year.

The event will take place on Friday 27 February 2015 at the Institute of Historical Research at Senate House in London. The day will bring together a mixed audience of archivists, historians and scholars to discuss 'Secret Histories'.

You can read more about past seminars on [Material Culture](#) and the [Global Archive](#). Further information and a programme will be available over the next few months.

If you would like to reserve a place, please email research@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk for a booking form.

Academic Open Day

The National Archives hosted an Open Day in October for academics, researchers and research managers. With a vast array of documentary resources currently housed at The National Archives, there is considerable potential for collaboration with academics to unlock the untold narratives residing here, making them accessible and audible to a wider audience. The event was also designed to highlight the wide range of research activities, support for students and training currently underway at The National Archives, whilst encouraging networking and discussion with the wider academic community.

It was an important opportunity to find out more about issues the Higher Education Sector is facing, the research that underpins their work and current trends in funding. The programme featured [discussions about the Collaborative Doctoral Partnership](#) studentships, Doctoral Training Programmes and the outreach work of our Engagement and Education teams. It also provided a forum to introduce new ideas coming out of our [Academic Engagement Strategy](#). These include plans to develop a collaborative MA Programme and Research Fellowship scheme. It was wonderful to have such positive and informative feedback from the communities about their needs, as well as about how The National Archives could work to develop research across the disciplines. We look forward to working with as many partners as possible in the future.

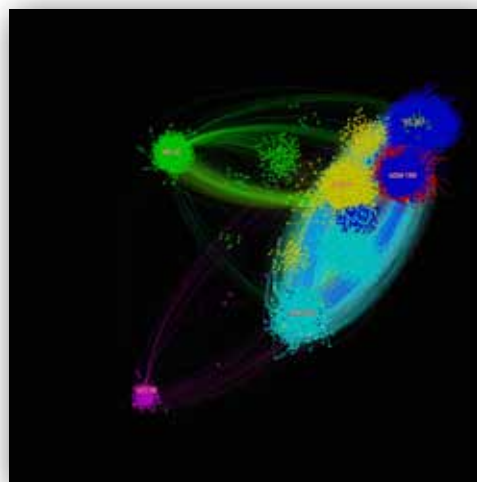
Traces through Time

In the **Spring 2014 newsletter** we announced that we had been awarded funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). One of these projects, **Traces through Time**, aims to bring together international research experience in the digital humanities, natural language processing, information science, data mining and linked data, with large, complex and diverse 'big data' spanning over 500 years of British history.

The National Archives has been working with the Institute of Historical Research, the University of Brighton and the University of Leiden on the project to identify and link individuals across large historical datasets spanning a wide timeframe. Research is being carried out to identify the relationship between individuals appearing in different datasets across time, including the 'fuzziness' and varying levels of confidence that are features of historical data.

To ensure that the project's outputs remain focused on real data and real-world impact, the project team are holding a workshop in January 2015. Workshop attendees can either work with datasets from The National Archives or use their own.

Further details will be available on our website soon; in the meantime, if you have any questions or would like to express an interest to attend this event please email Jane.Winters@sas.ac.uk.



▶ Joining the dots: an example of connecting people across big data.

Latest batch of MI5 files released

October saw the 31st release of Security Service records, containing a total of 157 files. As with previous releases, the majority of the records are personal files which relate to individuals (KV 2). The rest are list files (KV 6). The records cover a range of subjects and span the First World War, Second World War and post-war periods. You can listen to an **introduction to the files** by Professor Christopher Andrew.

Key files include:

- seven files on British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm and his activities as a member of the Communist Party
- more on the remarkable wartime story of British fascist sympathisers and 'Fifth Columnists' exposed by an MI5 agent posing as a representative of the Gestapo
- the colourful activities of a Spanish agent working in London on behalf of German intelligence during the Second World War
- three files on the communist sympathiser Robert Oppenheimer who had worked on the Manhattan Project to build an atomic bomb
- three files on an American husband and wife arrested and jailed in 1957 for their role in a New York Soviet spy ring.



▶ Released files - kv2-3875-2.

Dramatising revolution: a new outreach project

"Revolution"! Cries of students sounded out through the corridors of The National Archives recently. It is February 1917, and revolution stirs in Petrograd. Actually, it is a balmy Friday afternoon in Kew. We are observing some of the events of Russia's February revolution, as imagined by a group of Drama and Art students of **The Wren Academy**, who have just participated in an education-led workshop on the Russian Revolution.

The students, aged between 14 and 16, have never visited an archive before and their visit is a little different from that of most school groups passing through our doors. They have come to learn about the Russian Revolution and its context within the First World War. They are exploring the motivations and actions of a British Armoured car squadron, stationed in Petrograd to assist the Tsarist Government, and especially of Commander Oliver Locker Lampson. The students' workshop at The National Archives will help inspire a piece of theatre which will be showcased at the Victoria and Albert Museum later this year.

The project was developed with support from The Friends of The National Archives and was developed in conjunction with the V&A's Learning Department and The Wren Academy in Barnet, North London. The Outreach team at The National Archives used our collections to inspire and engage new users to bring new perspectives and interpretations on the documents we hold.

This project is inspired by a fascinating report that Commander Locker-Lampson wrote hurriedly to Admiralty on 19th March 1917, held in our Foreign Office files - **FO 371/2996**. It is a description of events at the military Hotel Astoria in Petrograd.



▲ FO 371/2996: Locker-Lampson's report

"Many were killed in the hall, and thoroughly roused, the revolutionaries mounted the stairs, the soldiers asking for revenge, the mob scenting loot in the carpeted corridors and luxurious flats of the hotel". During the course of that evening, the squadron rescue two women in fear of their lives, one of whom, Princess Eugenia Tumanishvili, has been shot in the neck."

These narrated events alone are exciting enough for dramatization but there is a development of further interest beyond one historical account. Eugenia, aged about 18 at the time of rescue, later marries and flees Russia for Shanghai, giving birth on a train in Siberia. Her baby daughter, Tamara Tumanova,

becomes at 13 years of age, one of the 'baby ballerinas' or the "Black Pearl" of the Ballets Russes and enjoys a career of well over 30 years after settling in the United States and being discovered by choreographer George Balanchine. Tamara danced in a number of films, including Alfred Hitchcock's "Torn Curtain" and with Gene Kelly in "Invitation to the Dance" and after her death in 1996, is buried in Los Angeles' Hollywood Forever cemetery.

Locker-Lampson's historical account, surprising in the unusual informality of its language, has provided an important and exciting insight into the wide theatre of the First World War and some of the causes of the Russian Revolution. It has fuelled the imaginations and creativity of a talented and enquiring group of young people. From here, the students are taking their research forward to build their ideas into art and performance. This work will complement the V&A's exhibition **Russian Avant-Garde Theatre: War, Revolution and Design 1913 - 1933** which runs until 25th January 2015.

▶ Students at the workshop



Discovering Collections, Discovering Communities: Forging collection-based collaboration between archives, museums and academia

On 29 and 30 October The National Archives came together with Research Libraries UK (RLUK) and other supporters to deliver a two day conference exploring ways to further collaboration across the heritage and higher education sectors. The conference grew out of the success and popularity of last year's event, 'Enhancing Impact, Inspiring Excellence' held at the University of Birmingham and reflected the emerging partnership between The National Archives and RLUK embodied by the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations.

Unlike last year's conference, which examined collaboration specifically between archives and academia, this year saw Arts Council England join as a supporter and the participation of colleagues from across the heritage and cultural sectors. The conference brought together more than 270 delegates from over 160 organisations to share experiences of cross-sector collaboration and explore ways of making it more effective. Beyond its presentations and workshops, the conference witnessed the launch of new research into the processes of effective collaboration and

The National Archives' publication, *A Year in Archives* which showcases work from across the archive sector. Throughout many of conference papers and presentations key themes continually emerged. The necessity of enhanced collaboration during the current climate of austerity was regularly referenced and that we all (whether as sectors, institutions or individuals) need to be prepared to take risks and embrace challenge.

To ensure the longevity of these discussions many of the panels and workshops were recorded and a considerable online resource will be available from mid-December [here](#). As a part of their new partnership, The National Archives and RLUK have agreed to deliver an annual conference to continue discussions surrounding cross-sector collaboration. Details will be announced of next year's event in the New Year and we are actively seeking thoughts and ideas for its possible theme and content.

- ◀ **Juergen Vervoort, The National Archives outlines how the organisation is working with volunteers to open up its collections in new ways.**



Recent staff publications

Inventions that didn't change the world by Julie Halls

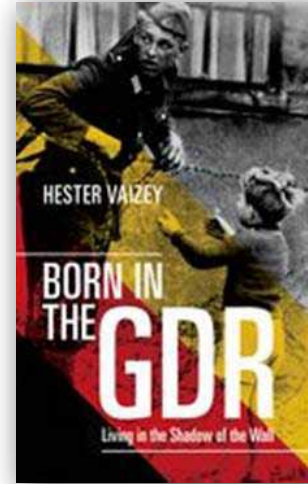


Inventions that didn't change the world highlights some of the fascinating records held at The National Archives. Julie Halls explores domestic and professional designs registered in the 19th century for such delights as the anti-garotting cravat, a self-ventilating hat, the corset with an inflatable bust and artificial leeches.

Although many of these designs seem bizarre, they often make more sense within their historical context. As Britain led the world in technological innovation, these quirky lesser known ideas were put to paper with beautifully graphic illustrations and sometimes amusing descriptions giving an insight into the world of amateur inventors.

Many of the inventions were thought up by people trying to make their day jobs easier and were lodged with the Designs Registry. These designs, in huge leather-bound volumes, are now held at The National Archives, because the Designs Registry was part of the Board of Trade, a government department.

Born in the GDR: Living in the Shadow of the Wall by Hester Vaizey



After the Berlin Wall fell, 25 years ago this November, East Germany (the German Democratic Republic or GDR) was effectively abolished as it was incorporated into West Germany as part of the reunification process. This was a huge change for East Germans. *Born in the GDR* investigates what this was like for East Germans.

What was it like to grow up in a country that disappeared? What was it like to swap Communism for Capitalism? The book captures eight contrasting experiences of how the collapse of Communism was felt in individual lives.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Doug Brown who completed his doctoral thesis and passed his viva in July. Doug undertook a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership with The National Archives and King's College London provided by ESRC. The title of Doug's thesis is *Pauperism and profit: financial management, business practices and the new poor law in England and Wales, 1834-c. 1990*.



The National Archives Library

Helen Pye-Smith, Head of Library and Deployment Services

The Library at The National Archives is a rich resource that is accessible to all researchers. Located on the first floor at the far end of the Research and Enquiries Room, with some material on the second floor in the Map and Large Document Reading Room, the Library contains thousands of printed and online sources that compliment and support research. The Library was founded at the time the Public Record Office was established in 1838. It incorporates two early collections; that of the Record Commission, which provided its original nucleus, and that of the State Paper Office, which

was absorbed into the new Public Record Office building in Chancery Lane in 1854. The collection includes printed materials from the 16th century onwards. Many of the early publications are listed on the English Short Title Catalogue.

The Library is a good starting place for research into the records held at The National Archives, from the medieval period onwards. Subjects covered include histories of government departments, work on the military forces, politics and government, social and economic history, the intelligence agencies, trade and commerce, transport, the history and working of the English law courts, and British policy overseas.

A selection of online resources is available via the eLibrary including full text of Parliamentary Papers, newspapers online, and digitised collections of records such as the Adam Matthew archives collection and State Papers Online. Journals are also available online. The eLibrary is available onsite only and can be found on the public computers in the reading rooms.

Any visitor to The National Archives can browse the open access shelves in the Library. A reader's ticket is required for access to the Rare Books collection and a small amount of material is stored offsite, but can be retrieved within three working days upon request. The Library Catalogue is available online through The National Archives **website** and through the universal library catalogue **Copac**. If you need help using the Library you can ask at the enquiry desks or email us using the **Contact Us** page on our website.

Legislation survey

Your feedback is important to us and will help us monitor and improve the legislation.gov.uk website. Please take part in a short survey to help us understand more about the needs and expectations of researchers.

The survey should take approximately five minutes to complete. It can be answered entirely anonymously and your responses will only be used for statistical purposes. There is an opportunity to provide us with your contact details if you would like to help us further. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact us at **legislation@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk** with 'survey' in the subject title.

The survey can be accessed via the following link: **<http://legislation-gov-uk.surveyanalytics.com>**



Digital Services for Online Audiences: a research study by The National Archives

Dr Thomas White

Are archive search-room audiences in decline? Who is going online to look at archive collections? What are the online audience trends? How is social media influencing archive audiences?

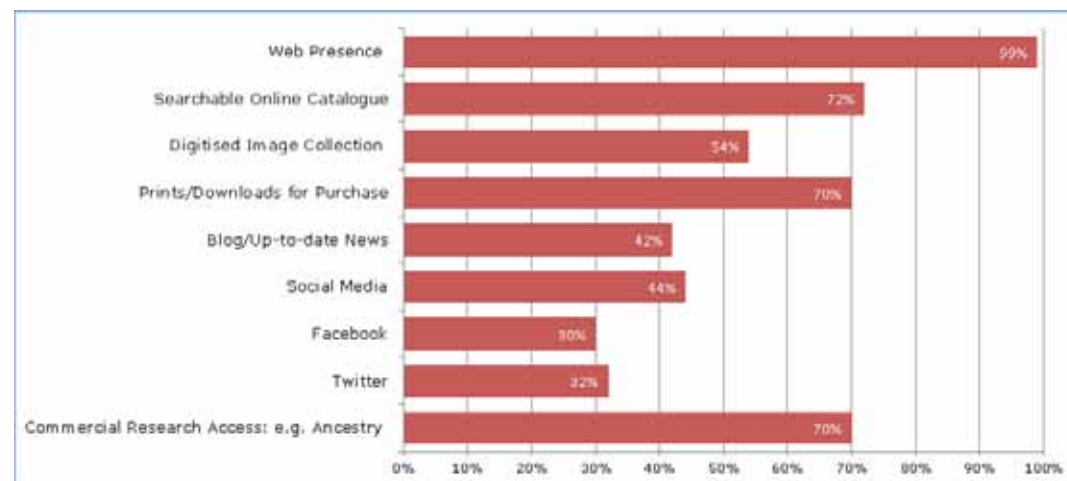
The National Archives is clearly aware these are some of the key questions facing all archives, and they form part of a new research study by Thomas White and Jane Shillaker in the programmes team. **Digital Services and Online Audiences 2014** examines the range of online services provided by 115 local authorities on their websites, from online catalogues to social media. It combines this original quantitative research with the latest government and market research data to place local authority archive online services and digital audiences in a national context, charting the broader trends of online and search-room audiences.

Digital Services and Online Audiences demonstrates that the archive audience for online services is increasing. Though fewer people are visiting archives in person, there is now greater demand than ever for online services. Those who do visit archives are also using online services more often. The study argues that this rise in use is linked to the national rise in internet usage, supported by ever more affordable, versatile, and accessible mobile technologies.

Analysis of our data revealed that users of archive websites can expect to find a website for local authority archives. It is likely they will be able to search an online catalogue for what they are looking for, and they will usually have the option to access premium research tools at the archive. Online audiences will more often than not be able to order copies of material in print and digital format, and have a good chance of viewing some digital material.

Supporting research at The National Archives | Winter 2014

Audiences may not find as much up-to-date information on archive events and services, and they may find it difficult to connect with archive services via social media. However, it is acknowledged that there are restrictions on social media usage in local authorities that may go beyond the control of archive services. Overall, it is apparent that connecting with audiences is an area which will see considerable growth at local authorities as they increasingly embrace these tools for online audience engagement, and this will likely to be the case for the wider archive sector. The research is in the final draft stages and will be published shortly on The National Archives' website.



▲ Percentage of 115 local authority archives offering online services in England (2014)

If you would like to get in touch with us, or if you have ideas for inclusion in future issues of this newsletter, email us at [**research@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk**](mailto:research@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk). Please note that we reserve the right to edit articles.

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