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The National Archives' Opening Up Archives project given cash boost by Heritage Lottery Fund support

An innovative project by The National Archives to tackle skills shortages in the wider archives sector has been allocated additional funding of over quarter of a million pounds from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Opening Up Archives, which puts into practice the Workforce Diversification strand of The National Archives' *Archives for the 21st Century* policy www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/aft21c/archives-for-the-21st-century.pdf, offers a non-graduate route into the archive sector and also allows non-humanities graduates to move into an alternative work area.

Speaking about the additional funding, Nick Kingsley, Head of Archives Sector Development, The National Archives said:

"This is fantastic news for the archives sector. HLF's continued support and financial backing for this essential project helps us open up a career in archives to a wider more diverse group of individuals. The hands-on experience equips a new generation of archivists with practical skills from traditional interpretation and online engagement to collection development and digital preservation-skills and learning that they will be able put to professional practice in the future".

A joint venture between The National Archives and the Archives and Records Association (ARA), *Opening Up Archives* focuses on work placements across England and implements a programme to develop a more diverse and skilled archives workforce.

Now in its second year, the project programme ensures:

- Specialist skills-trained individuals able to contribute to agendas in the archive sector
- A more diverse skilled workforce, in terms of ethnicity and educational background
- Archives recruit a broader range of skills, with staff that is more reflective of their community
- Shared learning on non-graduate routes into working with archives

Jill Shonk, Opening Up Archives, Gloucestershire Archives, 2011 trainer, said:

“Opening Up Archives has made it possible for Gloucestershire Archives to gather and share documented history from people who live and work in Barton & Tredworth, an ethnically diverse part of Gloucester. Our collections are now more representative of the communities living in this area providing a truer picture for people researching local history, both now and in the future.

We’ve been able to invest time in developing relationships with people and communities in Barton & Tredworth. During the second year of the programme we plan further work with this community, helping them gather, preserve and share their unique heritage and, at the same time, develop our collections”.

Ollie Taylor, Opening Up Archives, 2011 trainee commented:

“The Opening Up Archives scheme gave me hands on experience of working in a learning and outreach role. I’d come from a teaching background, but I learnt loads of new skills from real experts who made me feel part of the team at Gloucestershire Archives. Most of my year was spent managing an oral history project which told the story of two multicultural areas of Gloucester in the words of the people who live there (www.bartonandtredworth.org.uk). The experience I gained through Opening Up Archives was a real springboard for my career in the heritage sector.”

Katarzyna McCabe, Opening Up Archives, 2012 trainee said:

“This project provides many opportunities for people from a diverse range of backgrounds to learn about and explore the world of archives. What’s also brilliant is that it ensures trainees can look forward to finding out about the important work that goes into preserving heritage, also, they get to be trained on all the different ways of sharing our history with the wider community”.

The extension grant awarded as part of HLF’s *Skills for the Future* programme, will guarantee a third year of the project runs in 2013.

– Ends –

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Notes to editors

- **Additional funding** awarded for third year of project: **£269,320**.
- The first round of Opening Up Archive programme began in April 2011.
- First cohort (2011) Opening Up Archives trainees completed training placements February 2012
- Second cohort (2012) Opening Up Archives trainees on training placements
- Third cohort (2013) Opening Up Archives trainee placements will run April 2013-March 2014

Opening Up Archives projects, 2011

The purpose of Opening Up Archives is to provide an alternative route of entry in archives and heritage work for people with non-traditional archival backgrounds. This goal actively influenced The National Archives recruitment process for both the first and second years of traineeships, with a wide range of people applying for the programme. The trainees have brought a wide range of skills and life experiences into their placements.

In 2011 The National Archives worked with 13 trainees, in ten host organisations across the country. The work developed from the project ranged: from 3D modelling bringing archival documents to life, to Bengali History Month, and on to the transcription of medieval documents. There have also been digitised collections of photographs on Flickr in Manchester, diary entries from the 18th century on Twitter in Nottinghamshire, and children curating exhibitions in Birmingham. Additionally, work undertaken by The National Archives trainees has informed other projects in their host archives.

Birmingham Archives and Heritage: Children's Lives

- Children's Lives focused on interpretation skills, community engagement and collections development, with core skills of online interpretation, digitisation and digital preservation. The trainee's work revolved around an exhibition of archival material, along with fine art and three dimensional objects which tells the history of childhood from the eighteenth century to the present day. The trainee was involved in digitising the online content for the project including book, manuscripts, posters, letters, and a large number of photographs. The website which appears on the archives' resource site www.connectinghistories.org.uk continues to provide an invaluable resource for people interested in the history of childhood.

Gloucestershire Archives: Hidden Lives

- Hidden Lives centred on community engagement and audience development for an oral history project. It focused on two underprivileged, multicultural areas of Gloucester City called Barton and Tredworth. Once the heritage material was collected, the trainee Ollie Taylor worked with young actors from Gloucester Theatre Company to produce a piece of reminiscence theatre whose script is based on the oral history interviews.

Borthwick Institute for Archives York University

- Amy Butler and Steven Williams, trainees placed at the Borthwick Institute for Archives York University, utilised interpretation skills learned on the programme to make materials more accessible. Their project concerned outreach and online engagement: creating an introduction to doing archives-based research in the form of an e-learning course called '*Documents are Different*'. Being able to produce transcripts and translations meant they were not restricted when it came to choosing interesting material – the preparation for one section saw the trainees tracing connections between inter-war chocolate advertisements and 16th century sorcerers. The online material was adapted by the trainees into a series of face-to-face sessions aimed at the wider community, which were booked out within an hour of being made available.

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

- Trainee, Shahera Begum, engaged with the Bengali community, and was responsible for Bengali collection development, all aspects of acquisition, cataloguing, providing access to the collections and building links with the Bengali community. Shaherawent out into the community, building lasting relationships and raising awareness of the importance of preserving these materials.

Surrey History Centre

- Jen Coates' traineeship with the Surrey History Centre meant that amongst other activities, she celebrated Gypsy Life on the Epsom Downs an event that included Gypsy vardos (wagons), live music, a photographic exhibition, and traditional cooking over a campfire. Other highlights included craft activities for children and dressing up in knickerbockers for historic re-enactments.

The National Archives

- For the record, for good...The National Archives is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). As the official archive of the UK government and England and Wales, we look after and make available to the public

a collection of historical records dating back over 1,000 years, including records as diverse as Domesday Book and MI5 files.

- Our 21st-century role is to collect and secure the future of the record, both digital and physical, to preserve it for generations to come, and to make it as accessible as possible. We do this by devising technological solutions to ensure the long-term survival of public records and working to widen access to our collection. The National Archives also advises on information management across government, publishes all UK legislation, manages Crown copyright and leads the archive sector. We work to promote and improve access to public sector information and its re-use.
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
- For more information about The National Archives training programme please contact Rachel Rachel Briscall, Programme Manager at Rachel.Briscall@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Follow the press office on Twitter @TNApressofficer and for general news @UkNatArchives.

Archives for 21st Century

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/aft21c/archives-for-the-21st-century.pdf>

Heritage Lottery Fund

- Launched in July 2009, *Skills for the Future* is an HLF programme supporting organisations across the UK to create new training places. HLF has awarded grants totalling £26.8m under this programme enabling traineeships with an emphasis on high-quality work-based training.
- Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 30,000 projects, allocating £4.9billion across the UK www.hlf.org.uk. For more information, please contact Katie Owen, HLF Press Office, on tel: 020 7591 6036.

