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**GLASGOW**

**Archives & Records  
Association  
CONFERENCE**

# **ABSTRACT BOOK**

**Radisson Blu Hotel Glasgow**

5 - 7 August 2026

## Abstracts

### 60 Minute Workshops

Day 1 Wednesday 5 August 2026  
Day 2 Thursday 6 August 2026  
Day 3 Friday 7 August 2026

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# Abstracts 60 Minute Workshops

## Workshop

### 12 Personal Values and Authenticity: A Zine-Making Workshop

Ms Louise McAward-White, British Film Institute

Session: A1

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 12:25 PM - 1:25 PM

#### Abstract:

To make our archives authentic, we as archival professionals need to be authentic too. While battling the wider political and economic climate, as well as our own organisational struggles, we can each keep a core of knowledge about ourselves, our values and our hopes that transcends our specific circumstances and can galvanise us in our work.

This workshop will guide participants through a series of creative prompts about personal values, working in archives and records-keeping, and what it means to be authentic at work to generate a personal zine. The workshop will be entirely interactive, with no two participants generating the same outcome. The workshop will give a space for personal reflection in a busy conference schedule; and allow participants to dig deep and understand what authenticity means to them.

## Workshop

### 52 From Chaos to Clarity: Digital Archive Collection Strategies Workshop

Miss Rachael Orchard<sup>1</sup>, Miss Laura Peurt<sup>1</sup>, Ms Rachel MacGregor<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Nottingham, <sup>2</sup>University of Warwick

Session: C1

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 12:25 PM - 1:25 PM

#### Abstract:

As collections become increasingly digital, our sector is encountering stumbling blocks unique to processing digital collections including how to manage expectations with depositors when they have different skill levels, transfer of records, and appraisal. Issues include disorganised files and folders, inaccurate file names, duplication, inclusion of sensitive or personal information, and the difficulty of appraising large amounts of digital data. There are also difficulties when dealing with inaccessible digital media, and whether migrated digital data remains authentic.

Within our own organisations (The University of Nottingham and The University of Warwick) and our regional networking group MiDiPres we are finding that there is not a 'one size fits all' solution to digital collections, and that we have all needed to use different methods to approach these challenges. This can be confusing and is certainly time consuming in some cases. Following group workshops held within our respective organisations to discuss these problems and identify potential solutions, it was agreed that bringing this to a wider audience would be beneficial not just to our own teams but to others facing similar issues. Opening up discussions after highlighting some of the problems we have faced and future actions to address them will hopefully lead to new ideas and solutions for all to take away.

#### Methodology / activities

There will be three presenters, and we will look at specific stages in the acquisition of digital collecting:

- conversations with depositors
- transfer and appraisal of the material

With each of these sections we will highlight issues we've encountered and potential solutions, then ask small groups to discuss these and other problems and possible ways forward.

We'll use PowerPoint slides to focus discussions and flipcharts/digital whiteboards for the brainstorming sessions. We anticipate an introduction, 25 minutes per topic – a 5 minute presentation of each topic and 20 minutes of focussed brainstorming, which will allow time for a wrap up. During these discussions we will go around each group to encourage their interactions and to make sure they are documenting everything!

#### Target audience

We welcome all levels of expertise from a varied background to engage with finding solutions to these common problems.

#### Learning objectives

Working with digital and hybrid collections is an ongoing learning experience and we hope to get valuable feedback on how other organisations have tackled these issues. We are hoping to produce a suite of solutions that we can tailor to specific depositors and collections and which the participants can use for their own organisation. We propose to share a summary of the workshop with any participants who sign up for this update at the end of the workshop, and we will also write up our findings for sharing with the wider ARA community, for example via the ARA magazine.

## Workshop

59 "Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?": Recognising the disabled lives in our collections

Dr Iida Saarinen<sup>1,2</sup>, Dr Philip Milnes-Smith<sup>1,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Archives and Records Association Diversity and Inclusion Allies, <sup>2</sup>National Records of Scotland,

<sup>3</sup>Shakespeare's Globe

Session: D1

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 12:25 PM - 1:25 PM

### Abstract:

The target audience for this workshop is the broad archival profession working or intending to work with archival collections, whether early-career or senior. It is aimed especially at those interested in highlighting disability in our archival collections alongside other protected characteristics, advocating for subject-specific guides, clear and transparent cataloguing, and making the inadvertently hidden more accessible.

This workshop is aimed at supporting any delegates to, firstly, recognise evidence for past disabled lives, and secondly, to grapple with questions such as

- What 'counts as' disability?
- How would I (re-) write the catalogue description for this?
- What words should I use? What words should I not use?
- How can I avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes?
- How do I manage gaps and silences?
- How could co-production help?

Following a short introductory presentation, workshop participants in small groups will first be asked to discuss and evaluate real historical sources. They will then be asked to critique anonymised but genuine examples of cataloguing entries, considering, for example, whose perspective is centred (a disabled person's or someone else who had power over them). They will also be asked to think about how they might manage historic but now offensive language. In the final section we will look at telling disability stories in our public engagement and exhibitions in ways that do not cause harm to living disabled people, and that acknowledge and address the authentic reality of what is not in our collections because it was, at the time, deemed insufficiently important.

The goal of the workshop is to encourage informed thinking about the silences in our collections. Although it focuses on one minority, the intention is not only to equip attendees to think intersectionally, but for them to be able to extrapolate the process to other minorities.

## Workshop

68 Re-moistenable tissues: An efficient and minimal intervention conservation methodology.

Mr Lou Blackmore, The National Archives

Session: B3

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 4:15 PM - 5:35 PM

Workshop time: 4:35 PM - 5:35 PM

### Abstract:

Recent publications include a book review on 'The Conservator's Cookbook' for Archives and Records journal (2026). A chapter in 'Written heritage: new challenges and perspectives' on 'plastics in the archive: a case study on the degradation of historic plastic storage material'. He co-led a workshop with colleagues at the 2025 ICON BPG conference on the use of remoistenable tissues in conservation treatment for digitisation. In 2026 he presented at the INCLUSION in the heritage sector conference at TUBA on 'Paper based facsimiles as a tool for improving visitor engagement and experience through universal design'.

The National Archives conservation for imaging team works across multiple large scale digitisation projects. This requires an approach to conservation treatment that is scalable, efficient, and in line with current ethical guidelines. To appropriately conserve working documents the team approaches treatment through a decision-making framework that centres on minimal intervention. This allows us to balance the efficiency required on such large projects without compromising the material authenticity of the collection. As such, the team at TNA have utilised and continued to develop re-moistenable tissues as our primary repair method. Re-moistenable tissue creates repairs that are subtle, lightweight, easily reversible, and requiring minimal moisture for activation. With relatively low time investment to create batches of long-lasting stocks of repair material, it is both efficient in production but also in the breadth of substrates and media it can be applied to.

This workshop will cover how to prepare different types of re-moistenable tissue, and the types of historic material it can be used on. This will then be followed with practical experimentation using re-moistenable tissues with wheat starch/methylcellulose and gelatine bases to make test repairs on different substrates. Building on positive feedback received from the first workshop hosted at the ICON BPG conference in October 2025, this iteration of the workshop aims to build on providing a comprehensive overview of a repair methodology that is highly effective and easy to prepare. Demonstrating the range of applications and adaptability of tissue making, participants will leave the workshop with a toolkit to create their own re-moistenable tissue best suited to the needs of their collection. The use of re-moistenable tissues may appeal to institutions looking to increase the value of their collection through digitisation, archival staff, emerging conservation professionals or private practitioners interested in streamlining their own processes.

The first half of the workshop will focus on how TNA has developed and refined its methodology of creating re-moistenable tissue over the course of a decade, looking at how to prepare tissue, the different adhesive bases that can be used, how the tissue can be applied and the longevity of repairs that have been conducted at the archive. This part of the workshop will also include discussion on how the use of re-moistenable tissue has influenced the team's decision-making processes, balancing the need to preserve material authenticity whilst ensuring documents are both readable and physically stable enough to undergo the imaging process. The second half of the workshop will give participants the opportunity to examine and test several types of re-moistenable tissue, with different adhesive bases and tissue weight on a variety of test substrates and media to gain an understanding of the potential applications and adaptations that can be made for collection needs. Participants will come away from the workshop with the knowledge to implement this repair method to their own collection, a comprehensive booklet containing preparation guidelines and further reading, and a sample pack of different re-moistenable tissues for participants to take away and experiment with.

## Workshop

96 The K2-Book Cover: Developed and Used in the Lower Austrian State Archive and Lower Austrian State Library especially (but not only) for Poisonous Books

Dr. Christa Gattringer, Nö Landesarchiv und Nö Landesbibliothek

Session: B4

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

### Abstract:

As in many institutions, the department K2 i.e. the Lower Austrian State Archive and Lower Austrian State Library had to face the issue of so-called poisonous books, containing hazardous pigments. After initial testing confirmed the suspected arsenic content of the books, we also realized that there are a multitude of heavy metal containing pigments present in our collection.

Several health and safety measures were taken to protect our staff and readers. One of them is the newly developed K2-book cover. It can be made of acid-free, archival quality paper or clear PET-foil. The paper versions are just folded and do not need any adhesive. Through an efficient and novel way of cutting and folding, this cover uses less wrapping material than conventional book covers. Nevertheless, the book cover sits tight against the book boards and spine and covers them completely.

In the workshop, different versions of the K2-book cover will be presented. The first version (K2A) covers the spine and front and back boards. A second version (K2B), used to conserve books with poisonous paint on the top and bottom edge, as well as the fore-edge, also securely wraps and conceals the text block.

In our department we have successfully secured various types of (previously tested) hazardous books with the new cover. Furthermore, these books are made instantly recognizable by labels and a specific cord lock. There are also other additional useful applications for the K2-book cover.

The new K2-book cover is low-cost, quick and easy to make. It protects both the reader and the book, as well as it does not alter the book's authenticity by remaining reversible.

The workshop will start with a brief PowerPoint presentation (15 min).

Then the participants of the workshop will be able to try and make a simple paper version of the K2-bookcover for themselves (45 min).

## Workshop

### 61 Introducing the Neurodivergent Access Guide to your Service

Dr Ann-Marie Foster, Robert Gordon University and Ms Rhiannon Phillips, Gwent Archives

Session: D6

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 2:55 PM - 3:55 PM

#### Abstract:

This session introduces the customisable 'Neurodivergent Access Guide', a freely-available template document developed by and for a neurodivergent audience, which prompts archives to consider how to offer access to this community of users. The term 'neurodivergent' emerged from autistic activism, designating those whose styles of thinking, communicating, or processing information diverges from the accepted norm, such as people with ADHD, dyslexia, Tourette's, dyscalculia, or learning disabilities. Approximately 15-20% of the UK population is estimated to be neurodivergent, representing a substantial number of service users.

This workshop has three aims:

1. Encourage colleagues to discuss how they accommodate neurodivergent people's experiences of access, and showcase 'best practice' in this area.
2. Allow for participants to start thinking about how they might create their own version of the guide, supported in the room by people who developed it.
3. Develop a community of practice around neurodivergent inclusivity.

At the heart of this work is an attempt to make neurodivergent people feel able to show up more authentically within archive spaces. Neurodivergent people often mask heavily in public spaces, which is exhausting and can increase feelings of isolation. Making clear what support you put in place for neurodivergent people, describing sensory information, social rules, and other information ahead of time increases confidence when visiting your service.

The work of the 'Divergent Minds in the Archive' project, from which this guide emerged, attempted to trace barriers, opportunities for best practice, and create resources to increase understanding of how neurodivergent archivists and archive users experience the spaces in which they work. The project was funded by the EDI Caucus and the guide was developed by colleagues from Gwent Archives, Imperial War Museums, and Robert Gordon University.

Session structure:

- 15 minutes – Welcome, including access notes and ways of engaging with the session. Quick introduction to neurodiversity. What is the guide and why is it needed?
- 10 minutes – Task 1 – What's in place? Here we ask what access provisions you currently offer neurodivergent service users? Are there any 'best practice' examples you know about or can imagine? If you worried that you currently have nothing in place, you might have more than you think!
- 10 minutes – Task 2 – Look at the Neurodivergent Access Guide template, and attempt to fill it in.
- 10 minutes – Task 3 – Reflect where you might need more support as an organisation or individual? More training? Further reading?
- 15 minutes – What one thing will you take away from the session as an action point? Final reflection and close.

Access notes:

This will be a relaxed session. Stimming and movement are encouraged. We will provide verbal and non-verbal ways of engaging with the session. While there will be interactive parts of the session, you are very free to work on your own during these, or in small groups or pairs. We will make sure there are different ways of working throughout so you can choose what will suit you.

## Workshop

87 Towards authenticity aware visual practice for the archive.

### Speakers:

Dr Zoe Bartiff and Dr Yunhyong Kim, University of Glasgow

Professor Frank Hopfgartner, University of Koblenz

Session: A7

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 4:25 PM - 5:25 PM

### Abstract:

This workshop explores how data driven and visual methods of representation can support and perhaps even enhance archival practice. Whilst visualisations have been explored for usefulness already, more targeted research is needed to understand how they can be effectively designed, implemented, and integrated into archival workflows.

As the archival landscape becomes increasingly digital, archivists face the dual challenge of managing growing volumes of complex data while also supporting others to make sense of that data, informing archival practice, research and decision making. Data visualisation has emerged as a promising tool to assist with these challenges, offering new ways for archivists to map the scope, content, and context of collections, and to reveal underlying structures, trends, and relationships. This can aid collection management as well as fostering communication for engagement and informing policy. In short, they can orient us in digital spaces in much the same way as our senses orient us in physical spaces. Visualisations can further foster storytelling with cultural collections (Vane, 2017), describe complex processes (cf. 'Prix Ars Electronica') and bring content to life (e.g. The National Archives' visualisations of the First World War diaries).

In this workshop we will co-identify ways in which visualisations might elicit new conversations around the archival record, particularly with regards to considerations of authenticity. It is intended that the workshop will form the first steps to allow the participants to co-create a roadmap towards authenticity aware visual practice within the archive. Discussion will centre around a series of visualisations created from data available in the public space that is relevant across the archival workflow. Participants will engage in critical discussions around the role such visualisations have within their own practice, particularly with regards to considerations of record authenticity.

NB: This workshop is intended to both provide training for participants and to gather data in an anonymous and aggregated form to support future research and publications in this area. No personal or identifiable data will be gathered. Attendance at the workshop is taken to indicate consent.

## Workshop

133 What to include in Inclusion? The Inclusive Archival Practice Network

### Speakers:

Mrs Laura Cotton, Glamorgan Archives

Storm Patterson, Film London

Philip Milnes-Smith, Shakespeare's Globe

Session: D7

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 4:25 PM - 5:25 PM

### Abstract:

Authenticity in archival practice is inseparable from inclusion: records cannot be truly authentic if the communities they document are excluded from how they are collected, described, or accessed. The Inclusive Archival Practice Network, launched in April 2026, aims to create events, resources, and a supportive space for practitioners to share expertise, address professional isolation, work through challenges and learn collaboratively. With The National Archives acting as facilitators rather than leads, authentic ownership of the network and its decision-making lie with sector practitioners. With the theme of authenticity in mind, we define inclusive archival practice as various ways of working that support an inclusive service to nurture a sense of belonging, opening up access to records by addressing barriers, working with others to bring meaningful change, and enriching the workforce, users, and collections through diversity of thought and experience.

This interactive workshop will introduce the network, featuring case studies from the steering group on their inclusive practice. Building on the network's launch event on 30th April, this workshop will explore themes to prioritise forthcoming work and identify barriers and challenges for those working in archives. This session is designed for professionals and volunteers in the recordkeeping sector to influence the direction of the network. It provides an opportunity for participants to network with colleagues, share their own practice, and co-shape a network in its infancy. This workshop creates a space for practitioners to reflect on challenges and provide critical friendship, generating ideas in generosity.

This workshop will be interactive and collaborative, involving case study presentations, break-out groups, and facilitated conversation. Speakers will present key findings from the launch event and participants will discuss possible inclusive practice themes, including:

- Trauma-informed and person-centre practice
- Inclusive cataloguing and cohesion of language
- Contemporary collecting on local and national levels
- Accessibility of reading rooms practically
- Addressing colonial histories in archives
- Revising problematic descriptions with combined and updated approaches
- Inclusive recruitment and communication
- Safeguarding approaches for both readers and staff

This workshop aligns with the conference theme by treating authenticity not as a single problem to be solved. The workshops' participatory model enables practitioners to co-create the network's direction, to ensure its outputs have the greatest impact, by actively responding to sector needs. Participants will gain practical insight into current approaches to inclusive archival practice through peer-led case studies and facilitated discussion. Participants will reflect on shared challenges, exchange experiences with sector colleagues, and identify realistic actions to be applied within their own organisations, regardless of scale or resource level. Participants will contribute to prioritising future thematic areas for the Network, ensuring that its outputs respond directly to sector needs. Attendees will also benefit from dedicated networking time, and access to a post-session resource pack containing prompts, example approaches, and signposts to further support. By the end of the workshop, attendees will leave with new professional connections, clearer language and frameworks for discussing inclusive practice, and a set of practical ideas to support more equitable and accessible archival services.

## Workshop

89 Advocating for Access: being confident and authentic in the archives?

Dr Rachel Bright and Dr Esme Cleall, Keele University

Session: D8

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

### Abstract:

Disability raises critical questions about how archives function. This is both about access and what historians Hunt-Kennedy and Barclay call the 'machinations of archival power' (Hunt-Kennedy and Barclay, 2025). With both archives and academic institutions facing financial pressure, archive-work is heavily imbued with ableist ideas related to production costs and efficiency, ideas which we struggle to meet. To what degree do archival and educational spaces prioritise accessibility, in what gets funded, in what is recognised within workloads, and within ideas of what is 'justifiably excludable' (Barden, 2022)?

This workshop builds on our personal experiences of creating a network, 'Accessing Archives'. We will explore what it is like to build and use archives as disabled scholars, and discuss findings from our project so far, including 'masking' in archival spaces (rather than being 'authentic'). We then will open up discussion around how we can work together as advocates across academic, archival, and heritage spaces, and what it means to disclose disability publicly.

### Learning objectives:

- Feedback to archivists about the project and our findings;
- Learn from archivists about their perspectives on barriers to accessibility;
- Discuss together about masking, ableism, and the challenges to being 'authentic' in archival spaces;
- Use the discussion to finalise an article and to update OA advice documents; aimed at archivists and archive users.

### Activities and participant engagement:

- 20 minutes: Introduction, Rachel Bright and Esme Cleall.
- 10 minutes: break and forming small groups, with space to work individually if more appropriate.
- 20 minutes: Discuss the following questions, similar to ones already asked of our network:
  - To what extent do you feel it is easy to disclose needs within your institution, either your own or others?
  - How confident do you feel about knowing what access support is available, and how to access it, for yourself or archive users?
  - Do you have particular challenges when trying to be accessible (e.g. legal understanding, money, institutional buy-in, too many complex disabilities and needs which you may not understand)?
  - HistoryUK has identified three major barriers to doing History research: physical, sensory, and financial. Have you experienced or witnessed particular challenges related to these or other barriers?
  - To what extent do you feel your institution embeds accessibility in what they do (e.g. staff training, digital archiving projects, catalogues, exhibitions and other outreach events, quiet rooms, desks)?
  - Can you give any positive examples of steps taken to remove barriers (e.g. pre-recording videos explaining how to access and use the archive)?
  - Do you have opportunities to discuss access challenges with colleagues and users (disabled or otherwise)? If so, is this recognised within workloads, promotional opportunities, or other ways?
- 10 minutes: entire group reflects on findings, makes sure comments shared with Rachel and Esme, and time for any concluding comments or thoughts.

PARTICIPANTS: A consent form will be provided to participants, along with a request not to provide any identifying personal statements.

## Abstracts Panel Sessions

## Panel Session

### 51 Storage Projects: What Should We Prepare For? Authentic Perspectives from Practice

#### Speakers:

Ms Saya Honda Miles, Historic England/ UCL Institute for Sustainable Heritage

Ms Sirpa Kutilainen, University of Brighton Design Archives

Ms Erica Kotze, University of St Andrews Library & Museum

Ms Meagan Smith, Lambeth Palace Library.

Session: B2

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 2:25 PM - 3:45 PM

#### Abstract:

Storage projects—whether new builds, refurbishments, or shifts in environmental strategy—are becoming increasingly complex as institutions balance collection care, sustainability and energy reduction.

Conservators must work closely with consultants and project teams, navigating technical standards and modelling while ensuring the needs of their collections and organisational contexts are understood.

This panel reflects the conference theme of authenticity by highlighting real, practice-based experiences rather than idealised case studies. It examines how storage projects develop within institutional constraints—through collaboration, negotiation, and evolving understanding—and includes both completed projects and those still in transition, where outcomes remain undecided and the conservator is actively shaping future environments.

Chaired by Saya Honda Miles (also a panellist), the session brings together practicing conservators including Sirpa Kutilainen, Erica Kotze, and Meagen Smith. Their experiences span passive, semi passive, and still fully HVAC controlled storage environments, representing a spectrum from early planning to post project reflection.

#### Discussion topics include:

- early assumptions and preparation
- environmental strategy choices and institutional risk tolerance
- communication with consultants and stakeholders
- practical and operational challenges during implementation
- post project realities and lessons learned

Designed as a discussion led session rather than formal presentations, the panel will use shared themes and brief visual prompts (up to two minutes of PowerPoint per topic) to support comparison, reflection, and open exchange.

By sharing authentic experiences—including uncertainty, ongoing consultation, and learning over time—the panel aims to help conservators articulate their priorities with confidence and contribute effectively to collaborative project decision making. Delegates will be invited to consider authenticity in storage projects as a continuous process grounded in dialogue, transparency, and practice-based insight.

## Panel Session

102 Shared Principles? Generally Recognised Standards and the interplay between data protection and archives/records management

### Speakers:

Mr Peter Monteith, Keble College, Oxford  
Mrs Jess Pembroke, Naomi Korn Associates  
Mrs Rebekah Taylor-Mason, IRMS  
Mrs Liz Taylor, TKM Consulting

Session: C3

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 4:15 PM - 5:35 PM

### Abstract:

Hosted by the ARA's Legislation and Standards Working Group, this session will start with a paper by Jess Pembroke, entitled 'From Principles to Practice: Data Protection and the Generally Recognised Standards for Archives', focussing on the Generally Recognised Standards for archives, which she developed with Judith Curthoys in response to data protection changes brought about by the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025.

It will then broaden out to a panel discussion on the relationship between data protection and archives/records management, for which Jess will be joined by the guest editors of the upcoming 'Data Protection and Privacy in Archives and Records Management' special issue of Archives and Records.

Topics for consideration by the panel may include whether record keeping principles and data protection principles are aligned; what areas of our work are most affected by data protection; the extent to which recent changes will affect our daily work; whether data protection is driving a convergence of record keeping professions or greater collaboration between them, etc.

## Panel Session

### 38 Authenticity on display

#### Speakers:

Dr Alan Crookham, The National Gallery

Dr Kate Dorney, University of Manchester

Ms Victoria Lane, Royal Museums of Greenwich

Session: A4

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

#### Abstract:

The concept of authenticity, or truth, in the archival record continues to exert a strong hold on public imagination. However, an understanding of the complexity and nuances of authenticity in archives needs to be situated within the social constructions that they inhabit. This issue can be examined through the lens of exhibition-making practice.

The importance of authenticity in creating meaning and value in an artwork has long been acknowledged. Within art exhibitions, a connection between the art object and the artist establishes authenticity by its emphasis on the moment of original creation. However, this understanding denies the influence of many other factors in determining meaning, not least the curatorial hand. Archives can also be used as powerful display tools delivering the curatorial message. How can we understand a perception of archives as authentic objects of truth within the exhibition context?

In this panel, three speakers will consider this question at the intersection between archives, art, and performance. Alan Crookham will address the relationship between aura and authenticity, how auratic presence can be migrated from originals to surrogates (Latour and Lowe 2010) and how this impacts the meaning created when copies of archives are used in the exhibition space. He will consider this subject within the wider context of canon construction, object hierarchies and the performative role of archives in exhibitions. Kate Dorney will discuss the relationship between the archive and the repertoire (Taylor 2003) in exhibitions about the performing arts and the ways in which the inclusion of archival items can be used to draw attention to, or mitigate, the absence of embodied practice and marginalised groups whose presence is not recorded in the archive. She will also consider the role of archival items in contributing to the aura of celebrity costumes in exhibition displays. Victoria Lane examines how authenticity operates when artists incorporate archival material into their practice. Drawing on case studies, including Jacqueline Bishop's *The Keeper of All The Secrets* (2023) and Sharon Walters' *The Many Invincible Ones* (2025-26), she explores processes of decontextualisation and reconstruction, and how these produce or destabilise meaning by foregrounding archival absences and reconfiguring notions of authenticity.

Those attending the panel will have the opportunity to share their own perspectives on the concept of authenticity in archives and its relationship to performance within the exhibition space. As archivists are frequently asked to contribute to exhibition-making or to curate displays themselves, the panel will encourage reflection on the different meanings that the archives can be used to generate and the impact that they can have on the narrative communicated to the visiting public.

## Panel Session

97 Charities, a 'radical force' in archival thinking: Approaches to diverse and contested histories in voluntary sector archives

### Speakers:

Dr Paul Beard, The Salvation Army, Dr Philip Milnes-Smith, Shakespeare's Globe, Hayley Whiting, Royal National Lifeboat Institution, Professor Alison Searle, University of Leeds

Session: C5

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

### Abstract:

Voluntary action has been at the heart of almost every social, political and cultural movement in Britain and Ireland. Their archives provide unique accounts of individual and collective experiences of those often marginalised in society and that are often overlooked in 'official' records. Charity archives are therefore essential to maintaining an authentic archival eco-system by acting as a counterbalance to the 'official' narratives in governmental records. In this panel, we consider the unique contributions that charities and voluntary organisations can make to archives and records management studies and practice through a series of case studies. In addition, this panel celebrates 30 years of the contributions and impact of the Charity Archivist and Records Managers Group (CHARM).

### Introduction/Chair

Paul Beard, Records Manager, The Salvation Army UK and Ireland Territory/Institute of Education, UCL

Writing in the 2000s, Carl Newton declared that charities could be a 'radical force' in archival thinking. What did Newton mean by this and in what ways are archives and records management practices in charities 'radical'? In this introduction, I propose how person-centred approaches to record-keeping observed in the voluntary sector can provide new ways of challenging the archival status quo.

### Case Study 1: Shakespeare's Globe

Philip Milnes-Smith, Digital Archivist, Shakespeare's Globe

In 2024, Shakespeare's Globe recruited and worked with an inclusion advisory panel on a project to develop thematic research guides to our collections ahead of the opening of a new research and collections centre. This presentation reflects on our continued relationship with the panel after the completion of the guides, and why we are recruiting a new panel to support us in our new premises.

### Case Study 2: Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Hayley Whiting, Heritage Archive and Research Manager, RNLi

The RNLi is the charity that has been saving lives at sea since 1824 across the UK and Ireland. When the Irish Free State was established in 1922 the charity continued to operate there, creating new challenges which echo to this day. Recent RNLi heritage projects are ensuring that the unique history of the RNLi in Ireland and the voices of Irish volunteers is being captured and celebrated, particularly in our National Lottery Heritage Fund project focussing on the Second World War.

### Case Study 3: United Society Partners in the Gospel - Authenticity, Excrement, Eschatology: Can ethical archival engagement nurture hope as a virtue?

Professor Alison Searle, University of Leeds/USPG

This paper explores how theological, political, and colonial experiments and extractive activities across the early modern British Atlantic, disrupting complex ecosystems and social infrastructures, are evidenced in the United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG)'s early eighteenth-century archives. It focuses specifically on the form and genre of the letter as a literary technology, asking: What does it mean to sit within the ruins of the white imperial colonial project, inextricably entangled with Protestant missionary ambitions, and negotiate discomfort, dissonance, and potentially irreparable harms? It explores the regenerative potential of engaging with mess (even excrement) to nurture hope: immanent, rooted, and eschatological.

Panel Session: Is it Okay?

Panel tbc

Session: B8

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Panel Session Time: 11:25 AM - 12:25 PM

Abstract

The return of the Is it Okay? session - this year's topic is neurodiversity.

The Is It Okay? session at our conference (now in its fourth year) provides an opportunity for an open and heartfelt discussion of different kinds of diversity, and how they affect us in the workplace. This session is about sharing lived experience with our friends and colleagues to promote better understanding and drive change in our sector to improve all aspects of equity, equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

## Panel Session

113 Whose Truth? - The challenge of authenticity within Social Work records.

Facilitator: Jennifer Perry-Roach, City of Edinburgh Council

Speakers:

Gaynor Clarke, Social Work Scotland

Karl Magee, University of Stirling

Lydia Cunningham, City of Edinburgh Council

Linzi MacLean, City of Edinburgh Council

Session D9:

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

### Abstract:

The need for official narratives to be accurate and true has never been more important. As archivists and record keepers, we expect the official record to be an accurate reflection of the past, but our work with Care Experienced People and the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry has drastically questioned this expectation. The current work by the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry has highlighted deep disconnects between what is recorded in official records and the lived experience of Care Experienced People.

This panel session will examine the divergence between care records as the 'official narrative' of what is recorded about a person's early life in care, and witness testimony of lived, often harrowing experience provided by Care Experienced People to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. We will discuss how we, as Archivists, navigate this dissonance when carrying out work related to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry as well as when providing access to records requested under a Subject Access Request whilst also working within the constraints of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018. We will consider the lived experience of Care Experienced People against what has been recorded in their official Children and Families client file and explore the support offered by social workers when the lived experience narrative is so different to the care record.

Through facilitated discussion we will examine how Care Experienced People engage with their own records, how social workers support them in this and how record keepers can do likewise. Consideration will be given to the role of the archivist in ensuring accurate experiences are collected, recorded and preserved for the future. We will then look at ways in which both Archive and Social Work services can work together in insuring authenticity in the official narrative. The discussion will then consider ways in which Care Experienced People would like to address this disconnect by using lived examples, and what this means for the future of record creation within Children and Families Social Work.

## Abstracts Individual (20 minute) Presentations

Individual Paper

81 Asking the audience - authentic treatment decision making

Mrs Shirley Jones, West Yorkshire Archive Service

Session: B1

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 12:25 PM - 1:25 PM

Presentation Order: 1

Abstract:

Authenticity is a key value which guides conservators when developing treatment options.

But evaluating the relative authenticity of conservation proposals is nuanced, subjective and complex, and further challenged by considerations of cost, access and preservation.

Centred on an early 20th century recipe book featuring damage and dilemmas that archive conservators will recognise, this interactive presentation will outline potential treatment options and explore aspects of their relative authenticity.

Delegates will be invited to help evaluate these options and contribute views on how authenticity may be effectively expressed in the conservation of a typical stationery binding.

Individual Paper

142 Keeping Authenticity in Conservation Despite Difficulty: Assessment of Books Bound with Padded Boards and Treatment Options  
Miss Katharine Ellender, West Dean College

Session: B1

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 12:25 PM - 1:25 PM

Presentation Order: 2

Abstract:

The inclusion of padding between boards and their covering material before binding is a method of binding that plagues conservators. The results of this technique are padded boards that indent upon the application of pressure, creating cushioned books. (For the purposes of this proposal, the boards will be described as padded, whilst the books themselves will be described as cushioned.) This board structure can be found on photo albums, carte-de-visite albums, visitors' books, hymnals, bibles, diaries, and more, throughout the years since the first successful binding of a cushioned book during the Victorian era, and one can find examples of them in most archives. Despite the abundance of this type of binding, there is relatively little written on the topic of padded boards with reference to book conservation.

Inspired by this lack of available research, this author's thesis aims to identify both common patterns of degradation found across cushioned books and treatment options available to conservators and archivists. The conservation of this type of binding requires much skill and patience, and it is tempting to simply store them in boxes out of sight and accessibility, especially when matters of safety arise when dealing with unknown materiality. Yet that would be a disservice to their history. Cushioned books may not be the grandest of book structures, but they contain information relevant to daily life of those whose hands they passed through. Their very nature invites touch. The padding is an invitation to squeeze the book. By understanding the degradation that occurs with them and how to conserve them authentically, conservators can help preserve both the history of what is written within and the tangible history of how they were handled by those who passed before. In conserving these books, we can preserve their authenticity and our tangible connection to how they were handled in the past. This presentation will discuss the author's findings and summarise her thesis, with special attention paid to authenticity in conservation when dealing with difficult binding and conservation methods.

## Individual Paper

35 Tracing originals: transparency in treatment decisions for Thomas Mawson's garden plans

Dr Claire Dean, Cumbria Archives

Session: B1

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 12:25 PM - 1:25 PM

Presentation Order: 3

### Abstract:

Tracing paper's primary function is its use in tracing, and therefore making a copy of, an original drawing. We might therefore expect all the tracings we encounter in an archive to be reproductions and not the original record. However, this changed with the introduction of photo-reproduction techniques to architects' drawing offices in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. To produce blueprints, for example, a drawing had to be executed on tracing paper or tracing cloth. Over time, architects began to cut out the initial step of drawing a plan on good quality paper first and instead committed the original drawing in pencil or ink to tracing paper.

This presentation uses the example of our 2025 National Manuscripts Conservation Trust-funded pilot project to discuss the challenges of preservation and providing access to fragile tracing paper originals. I'll explore and reflect on how conservation decision-making can impact on the perceived authenticity or the authentic experience of accessing such records.

At Cumbria Archives, we care for more than 14,000 plans in our Thomas Mawson collection. Thomas Mawson (1861-1933) was an internationally important garden designer, landscape architect and urban planner and this is one of our frequently requested collections. Unfortunately, it's not unusual for searchroom staff to retrieve a bundle of these plans and encounter shattering, or what we refer to as tracing paper confetti.

For this pilot project, we selected a single bundle of plans (WDB 76/118) as a characteristic example of the materials and deterioration we expect to find across the whole collection. Of the 27 plans in the bundle, 16 were on tracing paper, 9 on paper, and 2 on tracing cloth. The bundle had previously been stored on its end in the firm's garden nursery. As well as the fragility of the paper, damage included smoke deposits, gnaw marks, rodent droppings and copious urine stains.

This presentation aims to make visible the ethical considerations and treatment decisions for this project. This includes:

- a consideration of appropriate cleaning methods including dry and aqueous cleaning and the potential removal of 'authentic' damage from what were originally working drawings.
- a consideration of the scale and visibility of repairs and their relation to authenticity. In our wider practice, we often leave paper repairs visible, so as not to invisibly alter the record and negatively impact its authenticity. However, visible repairs can obfuscate detail on tracing paper, as can the introduction of any moisture during treatment. This led us to explore a range of repair methods including novel treatments using nanocellulose film for localised repairs in place of lining.
- a consideration of the role of conservation in stabilising a record for digitisation and how future access can best be achieved with the resources available.

The learning and insights from this project will be of interest to any archives that, like ours, have numerous architects' collections in their holdings and who encounter tracing paper confetti when trying to provide access to records.

## Individual Paper

## 40 Towards an Authentic History of Authenticity

Geoffrey Yeo, University College London

Session: A2

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 2:25 PM - 3:45 PM

Presentation Order: 1

## Abstract:

Issues of authenticity have come to the fore in an age when digital technology has made fakery and falsehood easier to perpetrate and harder to detect. But concerns about the authenticity of records date back long before the digital revolution, and this paper addresses them from an historical perspective. Building on research I have recently undertaken, it poses questions such as: When did concerns about authenticity begin? How far were concepts of authenticity explicitly articulated in past societies? What kind of steps did people take to ensure that records were authentic? Archivists today sometimes distinguish between authenticity, accuracy, reliability, and trustworthiness: were such distinctions recognised in the past?

In ancient Rome, jurists and legislators knew that records performed important roles in society by sustaining rights and obligations and reinforcing relationships. But they also knew that record-keeping was fallible, and that doubts could arise about the credibility of the records that individuals created, preserved, or sought to use. Written records were sometimes inaccurate or ambiguous, and not every record was exactly what it purported to be.

Long before the days of the Romans, people had recognised that records might be falsified. Even in the earliest age of written record-keeping, some documents were known or suspected to be fabrications. In ancient Egypt, more than 4,000 years ago, one of the earliest known legal disputes revolved around a will that was claimed to be a forgery. Recording practices in early China provide further examples.

To many commentators today, ideas that records can or should be authoritative, authentic, and reliable seem fraught with difficulty. Notions of 'authoritativeness' are associated with rationalist modes of thought that are now deemed questionable, and sceptical reviewers doubt whether records can ever be truly authoritative. Some remind us that records that seem authoritative to one observer may be viewed very differently by another. Instead of seeing a dichotomy between records that are authentic and those that are not, commentators may prefer to see a range of intermediate possibilities. This paper asks: Did perceptions of records in earlier societies also allow for relativities of this kind?

The paper also considers how records now thought inauthentic were viewed in the past. Was forgery of records always censured? It has sometimes been argued that, in the Middle Ages, the intentions of those who forged records were not necessarily fraudulent. Might even 'inauthentic' records have been legitimate expressions of beliefs or traditions, constructed in good faith to replace documents that were absent or thought to be lost?

Attempts to counteract forgery indicate the importance attached to records in the past. Rulers were aware that records could promulgate edicts, make commitments, or confirm grants of privileges, and they did not want anyone to suppose that they had ordered or promised things that they had never ordered or promised, or had granted privileges that they had never granted. They saw good reasons to condemn forgery and to promote the creation and maintenance of records and archives whose authenticity, they hoped, would be beyond dispute.

## Individual Paper

### 78 The Committee of Valueless Documents: Making History in the Nineteenth-Century Public Record Office

Professor Kevin Linch, University Of Leeds

Session: A2

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 2:25 PM - 3:45 PM

Presentation Order: 2

#### Abstract:

This talk explores the history of archival practice in the early years of the Public Record Office. Particularly focusing on that institution's 'Committee of Valueless Documents', this talk will share insights from the policies, notes, and practice of nineteenth century archivists. It will examine their construction of historical value and their decisions on the retention of records that continue to shape the UK government's archive today.

In situations familiar to all who work in archives, the first archivists at the Public Record Office faced huge volumes of records and limited space to store them. The result was the destruction of government records that were measured in tonnes. It was also well documented and regularly reported on to Parliament. Underlying this were emerging processes of archival practice. Decisions were taken on 'historical value' judged by a few individuals working at the Public Record Office. An etymology established itself of 'valueless documents', which — perhaps inevitably for an institution at the time — began to be formalised in a committee. The decisions that this committee made were, in some ways, not surprising in what they privileged. The narratives they envisaged were orientated towards decisions and decision-makers, but also in their minds were clarity, avoiding duplication, and sometimes material considerations.

This talk explores the rationale and processes taken by the early PRO archivists. Based on research in the underused PRO 30 series at the UK's National Archive, the talk analyses the practice of these early archivists' work, exploring how they collected, appraised, and then either retained or destroyed government records in this archive's first hundred years of existence. Employed without established policies and protocols, these archivists worked very closely with government departments. Their work was heuristic and synchronised with notions of historical value from the time. By the end of the nineteenth century, and after successive Public Records Acts, the scheduling of records (as appraisal was referred to) had become a well-established practice.

The work of these archivists at the Public Record Office is more than just the history of archival practice. Their processes and decisions continue to shape history and archival use today. This talk reflects on this, not just the effect the documented destruction of records has on what history can be done, but also how their decisions about arrangement and the catalogue descriptions they created influence the use of records. As such, these archivists have been, and continue to be, the silent architects of a large part of Britain's history.

## Individual Paper

76 The Ship of Theseus to Trigger's Broom to digital preservation and authenticity

Miss Helen Symington, Open Fifth

Session: A2

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 2:25 PM - 3:45 PM

Presentation Order: 3

### Abstract:

In the thought experiment of the ship of Theseus, otherwise known as Theseus' paradox, people are encouraged to consider whether or not the ship of Theseus remains the same ship despite any rotten or worn out wood being replaced in order to preserve it.

The character Trigger in *Only Fools and Horses* receives a reward from the council for saving them money by using the same broom for 20 years. Not mentioning the 17 new heads and 14 new handles it has had over the course of those 20 years.

For archives:

What of inevitable changes to the item to preserve them and/or make them accessible? Is accessibility the enemy of authenticity? Do these treatments change the fundamental nature of collection material?

And when comparing the digital record vs. the original record - what is the reader seeking to experience? Is one 'more' authentic than the other?

I would like to use my experience as a former Special Collections Assistant, John Murray Archive at the National Library of Scotland to discuss these questions because during my time there I assisted in a project with AM Digital (previously known as Adam Matthews) to digitise a selection of the archive that was packaged and sold to other institutions.

In addition to this, I frequently took items that were to be loaned to other institutions for exhibitions to the digitisation department so that they could create digital preservation copies.

In the Special Collections Reading Room, I took orders from readers to make copies, of various levels of quality, of material within the collections.

Some of these items needed conservation work before they could be copied or digitised.

I think that we could argue philosophically and endlessly about the authenticity of materials that have been copied, conserved, preserved or digitised in a similar vein to the ship of Theseus or Trigger's Broom paradoxes. As much as I love philosophy (discovered late on and a total shock to myself), I'd rather go back to my practical roots and propose a way to triage how we think about these things.

## Individual Paper

### 71 Tackling threats to authentic digital records from human behaviour – a Risk Management approach

Emily Edwards, Royal College of Nursing

Session: C2

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 2:25 PM - 3:45 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

Ordinary human behaviour can present a significant risk to the authenticity of files alongside technology. While considerable attention has been given to procedural, governance and technological systems for preserving authenticity—such as metadata standards, audit trails, and system designs—far less focus has been given to the routine human behaviours that shape records long before formal controls are applied. We need to re-frame authenticity as an issue beyond compliance and tech, to one of people and behaviour. Individuals constantly reshape and alter records, whether intentionally or not, through everyday habits, workarounds and shortcuts. Authenticity can be lost through manual edits without traceability, poor naming conventions and copy/paste habits to name but a few. Drawing on examples observed across diverse situations within the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Group, we will examine common patterns of behaviour that inadvertently undermine authenticity. Through categorising these behaviours and habits, and re-framing them within a risk management matrix, we can be better positioned to monitor, communicate and mitigate these risks.

The Royal College of Nursing is a professional body and nursing union representing over half a million nurses, midwives, healthcare support workers and nursing students across the UK and internationally. It supports its members through professional advice, legal and employment guidance, training and development opportunities, and workplace representation. The RCN also influences health policy by lobbying governments and advocating for better working conditions and high-quality patient care.

## Individual Paper

### 49 Appraising the Record: A Case Study in Managing Legacy Record Keeping

Anne Grzybowski, Heriot-Watt University

Session: C2

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 2:25 PM - 3:45 PM

Presentation Order: 2

#### Abstract:

This paper will present a case study of a large records appraisal project which became urgent because of the need to clear space as part of a record store move. The service had originally been a combined archives and records management service without a clear delineation of functions. As a result archives and semi-current records were stored together with a significant backlog of appraisal and cataloguing. As part of the project it became clear that there were also legacy issues with how the service had been run, collecting and what was regarded as a permanent record. There was also a loss of the essential provenance when there were no records of transfer and papers from various departments were randomly boxed together, therefore an inability to show that these were authentic records. The project prompted a back to basics approach of applying core archival standards of evaluating what is a record and what is a permanent archival record. This is an opportunity to share what we've learnt through the process and the positive outcome of having a much clearer and defined collecting policy, record transfer procedures and a clarification of what is an authentic archival record.

## Individual Paper

67 Destroying records whilst telling an authentic story how the rate of destruction changed the way we select records.

Mr Joseph Armstrong, FCDO Services

Session: C2

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 2:25 PM - 3:45 PM

Presentation Order: 3

### Abstract:

How balancing the rate of destruction vs. public interest changed the way we selected records from 1996 to 1997. Record keeping institutions are often imagined as places that simply preserve history, but in reality, they are also shaped by the records they destroy. Every decision about what to keep and what to remove influences the stories future researchers will be able to tell. These choices force us to think carefully about whose voices are carried forward, what pressures shape those decisions, and what “authenticity” in the historical record truly means.

This talk explores these questions through the example of Foreign Office record selection during 1996–1997 a politically charged period marked by the end of nearly two decades of Conservative government and the arrival of New Labour. During this time, diplomatic posts around the world were generating unprecedented volumes of material. Navigating the challenge of overwhelming record quantities and the ethical responsibility to preserve a meaningful, balanced historical record became a real issue.

At the centre of this work was the Sensitivity Review Service. Reviewers operated in a landscape shaped by emerging Freedom of Information expectations and limited capacity, making their decisions far from straightforward. Their judgements directly influenced the national historical record: what would eventually become public, what would remain closed, and what would be destroyed entirely.

A key argument in this talk is that responsible destruction is not a barrier to transparency it is a prerequisite for it. Without selective appraisal, the sheer volume of retained material would delay public access for years, if not decades. In this way, destruction becomes a practical tool that supports timely disclosure rather than undermining it.

Ultimately, this session shows that authenticity in the archive is not something passively inherited; it is something actively constructed. By looking at how reviewers balanced competing pressures in 1996–1997, the talk invites today’s archival professionals to reflect on how they can uphold transparency, practise ethical stewardship, and shape a historical record that is both accessible and genuinely reflective of the past.

### Individual Paper

82 El pueblo unido jamás será vencido: Crafting Resistance and Solidarity within the Documenting Chile Archive.

Mr Paul Dudman, University of East London

Session: D2

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 2:25 PM - 3:45 PM

Presentation Order: 1

### Abstract:

Archives can often be defined by the interplay of power, funding and politics whilst retaining the ability support participatory heritage, community memory and notions of individual community and identity. The Archive can often be a contested space into reach the authenticity of history, and the very nature of the archive, can be open to challenge.

This paper will focus on the nature of refugee archives our approaches to the development and stewardship of the collection in contested times, both in relation to the archive's content but also the institutional challenges involved to actively curating refugee archives. This paper will take as a case study an ongoing participatory archiving project co-curated with the Chilean community in London. It will address the living archive methodology we have developed through community-informed practice with the Living Refugee Archive at the University of East London. Projects like Documenting Chile raise important methodological questions about how Archival institutions should approach the collection of community histories, especially within a contested space where issues of under-representation; resistance and solidarity are contested notions. The Living Archive also questions established philosophies of how we define the very notion of an archive and how we can successfully integrate community agency into the archival process.

For over twenty years the University of East London has been the home of the Refugee Council Archive, one of the largest collections focusing on refugee and migration issues in the UK from 1951 through to the present. This paper will explore the complex interplay of inter-generational activism, collective memory and the curation of new archives through participatory methodologies. It will consider how the development of the refugee history within the Chilean context and reflect on notions of shared solidarity and resistance have helped shape ongoing discourses on migration. Considering the impact of Reform and growing negative rhetoric on the perceived dangers of immigration, the importance of participatory projects like Documenting Chile, where exiled and displaced communities can help shape the preservation of their own cultural heritage, are vital. Our living archive ethos supports ethically documenting, preserving and making accessible reliable, accurate and trustworthy archives which genuinely reflect the testimonies and life histories of refugees and asylum seekers.

## Individual Paper

75 Newham Heritage Centre: Building an Authentic Community Archive Experience

Ms Hirra Ateeq and Ms Lucy Rumble, Newham Heritage Service

Session: D2

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 2:25 PM - 3:45 PM

Presentation Order: 2

### Abstract:

In early 2027, Newham Council is set to open a brand-new cultural hub, Newham Heritage Centre (NHC). This will provide a home for and totally transform access to our archive and museum collections.

As one of the most culturally diverse and youngest areas in the country, providing a welcoming space for Newham's residents to access records exploring their own heritage is a core goal of NHC, alongside ensuring the borough's communities feel represented in our collections and programming. Like many archives, we are faced with the question of how to achieve this goal of creating authentic community experience through the curation, presentation, and use of our collections.

This presentation will address two key challenges:

- Absence of provenance: limited information on the origins and history of our collections.
- Scarce contextual information: insufficient detail of how the collection was used and by whom.

We have found when archive material has been donated, the wishes and needs of the donor have not always historically been fully captured. As a result, the important contextualised information that places a record within a wider narrative is lacking. This layer of information is arguably the most authentic voice, as it strongly connects to the community identity and lived experience.

Once an item has been 'processed', both physically (its arrangement in the store or digital repository) and intellectually (its placement within the cataloguing hierarchy), more and more contextual links can be lost. Cataloguing from scratch where no previous information exists has significantly increased this challenge. Community co-curation can help recover a record's identity. While it cannot fully recreate the information that has been lost, it does allow us to rebuild meaning through shared memory and interpretation. These steps ensure that even without provenance, an authentic community experience will be achieved in the new centre through collaboration, representation and respect.

This project will create a space which is less culturally partial and more inclusive and representative of Newham's communities, by recognising everyone's value and role in shaping its history.

Attendees will benefit from:

- Looking at how to work with and set up relationships with community groups in a way that informs collection work, by considering the learnings from the Heritage Roadshow engagement programme.
- Learning how to contextualise present objects whose histories have been lost.
- Learning how cataloguing from scratch can become an advantage rather than a hindrance to creating an authentic community experience, shaped by multiple voices.

## Individual Paper

### 41 The Right to Belong: Developing a Toolkit for Artists' Archiving at the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL)

Ms Ruth Hallinan, National Irish Visual Arts Library (nival)

Session: D2

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 2:25 PM - 3:45 PM

Presentation Order: 3

#### Abstract:

The National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL), based at the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, collects stories of the development of art across the island of Ireland from 1900 to the present. NIVAL collects, stores and makes accessible for research an unparalleled collection of material about Irish art and design in all media. It has become the foremost centre for the documentation of contemporary art and design in Ireland, providing access to over 150 special collections and archives and thousands of files.

NIVAL works to the benefit of artists by providing a secure and permanent place for the deposit of information related to their careers. The library is a 'democratic' project: its acquisitions policy does not discriminate between professional or amateur artists and designers and passes no judgement on quality, proficiency or reputation when archiving materials.

Despite the organisation's democratic approach, there is as yet a lack of information on projects by artists and designers coming from diverse ethnic, cultural and gender backgrounds and from different nationalities. To address this, in early 2023 NIVAL worked with researcher-in-residence Dr Alessia Cargnelli on a project titled Archiving Plurality which interrogated the idea of 'the right to belong', inspired by Achille Mbembe's text 'Decolonising Knowledge and the Question of the Archive'.

Archiving Plurality proposed that, to tackle inequality of representation, it is imperative to give agency to artists and provide them with tools to directly shape how they would like to be remembered. Those who contribute to NIVAL should be facilitated in representing their own histories in a manner that is authentic to themselves, moving narrative control away from the institution and into the hands of the subject of the archive. This format also helps the institution to learn from the people they have – unconsciously or purposely – excluded.

From the results of Archiving Plurality, NIVAL undertook a number of steps in 2024-25 to communicate more clearly with potential donors and to encourage artists to think about their own legacies. One of these steps was the development of a toolkit for artists' archiving with practical templates and prompts to help artists of any level of experience or background.

This toolkit was developed with the assistance of a focus group of practitioners from all over Ireland who offered personal insights, ideas and opinions to help to frame the approach. NIVAL staff also contributed tips and advice to help smooth the process of self-documentation. A workshop around the toolkit's development that took place at the Art Libraries Society (ARLIS) conference in Limerick in 2025 provided further insight into peer archives' approaches to communicating with artist donors.

To ensure the accessibility of this toolkit, the document is free to download and will be supported by a series of workshops for artists across Ireland in 2026. Through this process, NIVAL aims to challenge the disproportionate representations in its collections, ensuring that the plurality and cultural richness of contemporary Irish art and design is well documented and freely available for research.

## Individual Paper

126 Building Digital Capacity: Evaluating Our Digital Century and Future Planning for the Sector

Mr David Heelas, The National Archives

Session: A3

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 4:15 PM - 5:35 PM

Presentation Order: 1

### Abstract:

The National Archives' digital capacity building strategy, Our Digital Century, has been running for three years and is ending in 2026. This strategy was based upon the findings from the evaluation of Plugged In Powered Up (2019-2023) to build skills, resilience, and confidence in digital archiving. More so than ever we are at a time when archives are navigating rapid technological change and increasing expectations around the delivery of their service in relation to digital records including trustworthiness and integrity of records in their care.

The aim of Our Digital Century was to continue building digital capacity in the sector. Focusing on three key areas:

- Advocacy - This area of work will empower archivists to digitally engage with the communities they serve and to help them advocate digital archiving best practice to key decision-makers in their organisations.
- Discovery - This area of work will help archives to enable their users to find and access digital archive collections.
- Enrichment - This area of work will help archives to unlock their potential to enhance and enrich our society intellectually, economically and culturally.

In 2026 we undertook a comprehensive evaluation of the programme's 24 strands. Using a combination of statistical analysis, direct surveying, and focus groups, we assessed both the programme's impact and broader shifts in the sector's approach to digital capacity.

We are now looking ahead, drawing on the evaluation findings and extensive sector feedback, we will explore what the next stage of digital capacity building strategy should prioritise. Key questions include how to support more advanced digital skills, how to embed digital thinking into organisational culture, how to ensure equitable access to training and resources, and how archives can continue to uphold the integrity and reliability of digital records in an increasingly complex digital environment.

This paper will present the evaluation findings, reflect on the sector's evolving needs, and outline potential directions for future capacity building initiatives with the aim of inviting further discussion and feedback from the sector.

## Individual Paper

### 65 Developing Supervised Automation to Enhance Born Digital Processing Authenticity

Miss Jemma Singleton, Newcastle University Library

Session: A3

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 4:15 PM - 5:35 PM

Presentation Order: 2

#### Abstract:

There has been a lot of uncertainty about how to process these types of material from the initial deposit through to user access in a timely manner, whilst adhering to the principles of authenticity and integrity that is required for appropriate record keeping. This challenge, coupled with the knowledge of the growing quantity of unprocessed born digital material held within special collections, had created a large backlog of unstable and unexamined born digital material which needed to be treated with appropriate digital preservation practices.

One of the issues with born digital processing at Newcastle University Library has been its granular manual nature. Human interaction was required at every step of the process, especially pertinent without a digital preservation system. Each digital object was manually ingested into servers after a series of virus and fixity checking and proof of action was conducted manually. File format migration decisions and actions were also conducted manually, along with the creation of file naming structures and born digital access administration metadata. Not only is this process time-consuming it is also prone to human error due to its repetitive nature, further invalidating end user confidence in record authenticity.

Utilising approved university resources, special collections staff started experimenting with powershell scripts for specific digital preservation activities to complement the manual workflow. Initial ideas for this came from the Novice to Know How training which had a small section on using the command line. Scripts were created for the recursive unzipping of folders, converting Microsoft office products to PDF/A, weeding unnecessary files, along with mass folder renaming. Additional modifications to these scripts, included transcript output, error catching for later review, and the preservation of original creation date and time stamps for migrated file formats.

This method resulted in a reduction of the born digital backlog by 50% within 18 months, creating over 600 digital object ID's that are now available for public access, numbering hundreds of thousands of individual items. This 'supervised automation' provided general success in processing common digital file types, freeing up human time to investigate more complex and ongoing born digital processing challenges. Additionally, by enhancing the scripts with file integrity in mind, there was a reduced risk of human error coupled with an enhanced ability to maintain original filing structures within born digital identifiers. The use of powershell is valuable for organisations who are aware of the growing digital component when it comes to record keeping but who do not yet have a digital preservation system.

Individual Paper

103 AI and Environmental Sustainability

Miss Georgina Robinson and Dr Clare Horrocks, ARA Environmental Sustainability Group

Session: A3

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 4:15 PM - 5:35 PM

Presentation Order: 3

Abstract:

This paper explores how emerging uses of AI intersect with environmental sustainability and archival authenticity. As recordkeeping institutions adopt AI tools to improve efficiency, access, and scale, the environmental cost of these systems, from energy-intensive computation to long-term digital storage, is often invisible. The speakers from the ARA Environmental Sustainability Group ask whether authenticity can be ethically separated from sustainability, and whether traditional models of archival authenticity privilege carbon-heavy infrastructures and well-resourced institutions. Drawing on the research conducted by the group as part of their research agenda for 2026, this paper will present their findings and will share perspectives on archives, records management, conservation, and digital preservation.

## Individual Paper

119 Heavy petting in the archives: access versus preservation of the Anne Lister diaries

Elizabeth Stettler and Ruth Cummins, West Yorkshire Archive Service

Session: B3

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 4:15 PM - 5:35 PM

Presentation Order: 1

### Abstract:

Not every archive service holds records that have inspired an internationally beloved television drama with an active fandom. Anne Lister is considered to be the “first modern lesbian” and her diaries detail her most private thoughts and her romantic relationships with other women in the early 19th century.

The West Yorkshire Archive Service receives many requests to access Anne’s diaries. Some are research focussed, but a significant proportion are from those with an emotional connection to Anne Lister who want to experience being close to a diary in person. However, the diaries have been fully digitised, transcribed and made available online.

Are the digitised diaries an authentic experience for every user? How much access is too much access? Are some requests more authentic than others?

This talk will explore the sometimes very different opinions between archivists and conservators on providing access to the original diaries of Anne Lister. The age-old debate of access vs preservation discussed under the lens of authenticity.

## Individual Paper

### 73 Balancing the Scales: The Question of Truth in Archive Engagement

Dan Copley, Edge Hill University

Session: D3

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 4:15 PM - 5:35 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

When we are sharing our archive collections with the public, we are making choices about what we present and the story we think they tell. If we accept the subjective nature of planning and facilitating engagement activities, what role do we have in trying to represent the 'true' voice of the archive collections?

At Edge Hill University, we regularly run sessions for students where we introduce them to the archive collections and try to encourage them to see the potential in the materials for their own learning and research. I find myself enthusing about our early female students who were left-wing political radicals, taking part in suffragist activity, marches and campaigns. I tell them stories about one 19th century student sneaking out of her bedroom to go and speak with the Liverpool dockers about socialism; a student who would later go on to become a well-known human rights campaigner and reformer. But is that just my own bias and prejudice showing? All those things are in the archive, but there are also records of students expressing horrendously racist opinions or viewpoints mired in misogyny. Should I be giving equal space to those voices in a session designed to create interest in the collections?

If record keepers are regarded by many as 'custodians of truth', then perhaps we should be utilising opportunities like engagement sessions to try to represent as broad a range of voices from the archive as possible? On the other hand, these sessions are planned with specific audiences in mind: if a female student is visibly moved by the revelation that she is part of a long tradition of female students that includes social reformers and political radicals, then doesn't it make sense to emphasise those voices?

In our archive displays around campus, we will often tell the stories of our inspirational former students, hoping that the positivity on show will draw attention and curiosity. Is there space for also highlighting individuals or viewpoints that might be regarded more negatively by contemporary audiences?

As an institution, we want our students to develop critical thinking and research skills. If we directed students to a greater range of voices and records that challenge their own opinions and experiences, we are surely supporting that mission. With that in mind, should we be trying to move beyond our own bias as the archive's 'custodians' and encourage exploration of the collection's more unsavoury voices?

In this paper I will reflect on the conversations the Edge Hill archive staff and volunteers have been having in response to these questions, the ways that we have addressed the issues raised and how this has impacted our work and the students we support.

## Individual Paper

91 Restoring Memory or Reconstructing Authenticity? Affective Authenticity and Reflexive Engagement in Taiwan's National Archives Gamified Experience.

Chih-li Lien, National Archives Administration Taiwan

Session: D3

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 4:15 PM - 5:35 PM

Presentation Order: 2

## Abstract:

In an era where “truth” is increasingly contested, national archives face the dual challenge of safeguarding original records while offering authentic experiences to diverse audiences. The opening of Taiwan's first National Archives in 2025 marked a turning point in the nation's archival practice, accompanied by the special exhibition "Return to 1987: Martial Law Archives", the centerpiece was "Memory Restorer", a self-directed digital game specifically designed to align with the exhibition's theme. Developed to immerse audiences in the contested histories of the martial law period, the game integrates authentic archival materials into its interactive framework, guiding participants to engage with historical narratives through play. By employing a gamified interface, the project transforms visitors from passive recipients of information into active constructors of meaning. This paper explores how archival records, when reconfigured as interactive clues within a virtual environment, elicit affective authenticity and stimulate reflexive engagement with historical truth.

In "Memory Restorer", players assume the role of agents in a fictional Bureau of Time Travel, entering a digital repository of martial law archives to restore fragmented memories. Progress requires reading and interpreting authentic documents—such as the Film Censorship Act and regulations on unconventional attire—to reconstruct the memory contexts of historical figures. The design emphasises the influence of personal choice: players' differing stances on events such as the Kaohsiung Incident lead to divergent narrative outcomes. By embedding archival materials into the lived experiences of social roles—students, workers, police officers—the game demonstrates that authenticity is not a static template but a plural construction shaped by social context and individual perspective.

Audience feedback collected through questionnaires (2025–2026) reveals that interaction with archival records effectively elicited affective authenticity. When the act of reading documents was linked to memory-restoration puzzles, participants reported personal associations and emotional resonance. Some noted that archival scenes “restored parts of [their] own memories,” while others described experiencing “the childhood of [their] elders.” These responses illustrate how ambiguous recollections were reframed into comprehensible understandings of truth, bridging national history and private life.

Through digital mediation, the National Archives are repositioned not merely as custodians of truth but as facilitators of dialogue. The metaphor of “memory restoration” underscores that archival authenticity requires public participation, interpretation, and re-creation. Authenticity thus extends beyond the physical preservation of records to encompass the meaningful connections forged with contemporary audiences. By integrating virtual and physical modes of interaction, the National Archives provide a navigational framework for engaging with contested histories, enabling audiences to piece together fragmented temporal memories and cultivate shared social understanding.

In conclusion, "Memory Restorer" illustrates how authenticity in archives can be dynamically co-created. Rather than static relics of the past, records become catalysts for collective reflection, empathy, and dialogue in a post-truth world.

## Individual Paper

### 63 Authenticity vs Engagement

Caroline Gould and Ms Jen Patterson, Museum of English Rural Life, Reading University

Session: D3

Date: August 5, 2026

Session Time: 4:15 PM - 5:35 PM

Presentation Order: 3

#### Abstract:

Museums, archives, and galleries do not preserve collections for preservation's sake; they exist to foster connection, understanding, and participation. Without audiences, even the most carefully safeguarded artefacts remain silent.

However, when does the concept of authenticity become affected or even forgotten about when it comes to engagement? Is it only real engagement if the film's authenticity, however this may be defined, is kept in its full integrity?

The Museum of English Rural Life, for a BFI funded project Inclusive Approaches to Accessing Rural films, will find itself asking these questions and more.

A collector of films, Richard Watts, had left his collection of about 670 rural films to the museum after his death, we now want to make those films accessible and connect them with communities across Britain. However, this will mean sharing short clips rather than full films at community screenings, raising questions about whether fragmenting a work diminishes its contextual integrity and narrative authenticity. If a film's meaning is embedded in its pacing, structure, and cumulative emotional arc, what is lost or gained when only selected excerpts are shown?

Our presentation will also consider accessibility interventions such as subtitles and audio description. While these tools are essential for inclusion, they introduce additional layers of interpretation, prompting reflection on whether accessibility enhances a work's substance or subtly reshapes it.

We will also look at the use of content warnings and facilitated screenings, does preparing audiences in advance influence emotional response and alter the authenticity of audience reactions? Or does ethical engagement require some level of framing and care?

Our presentation invites discussion on whether these and other engagement-driven changes necessarily compromise artistic meaning, or whether they can be understood as extensions of the artwork's intent allowing these rural stories to be experienced, interpreted, and valued by a broader and more diverse audience.

By positioning adaptation as both an artistic and ethical act, authenticity may not be a fixed quality but rather a negotiated one.

## Individual Paper

### 72 Pop-Up Displays and the Illusion of Safety: Conservation Decision-Making, Authenticity, and Temporary Archive Exhibitions

Mrs Ela Gorska-Wiklo, Archives & Special Collections, University of Glasgow Library

Session: B4:

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 2 (12:05 PM - 12:25 PM)

#### Abstract:

Presented by Ela Gorska-Wiklo, this paper explores pop-up and temporary archive displays as a routine but critically under-examined aspect of archival practice. Such displays often involve a mix of original archival material, facsimiles, and digital surrogates. In some cases, exhibitions rely entirely on copies; in others, original material is displayed in public or semi-public spaces. Within the context of Authenticity and professional responsibility, this hybridity raises important ethical and conservation questions for archivists and conservators alike.

Pop-up displays are frequently perceived as low risk because of their short duration. This paper challenges that assumption by introducing the concept of the illusion of safety: the belief that limited display time compensates for reduced planning, limited resources, or informal installation practices. Drawing on professional experience in archive and special collections environments, the paper argues that temporary displays often expose the most consequential conservation decisions, particularly in institutions where small teams manage exhibition planning, handling, and installation alongside core archive functions. This paper advocates for exhibitions as an essential part of archival practice—but only when supported by clear conservation rationale, proportionate risk assessment, and a firm commitment to long-term preservation. The widespread use of copies is examined not as a neutral solution, but as a conservation and interpretive decision that shifts authenticity from material presence to transparency, context, and intent. When clearly identified and thoughtfully integrated, surrogates can reduce cumulative risks such as light exposure, handling, and transport. The paper examines how decisions relating to light levels, display duration, opening angles, support systems, and object rotation shape how authenticity is preserved and communicated. Light exposure is identified as a key cumulative risk, reinforcing the need to situate pop-up displays within an object's broader preservation history. The paper concludes by reframing pop-up displays as moments where authenticity is actively negotiated through everyday archival and conservation practice. Visible preservation measures—such as restricted openings and supportive mounts—are presented as indicators of good stewardship, strengthening trust between institutions and their audiences.

## Individual Paper

58 Ensuring Authenticity in a continuous evolving archival Practice: musings from our decolonisation initiatives.

Miss Miidong Daloeng, Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru

Session: C4

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 1

### Abstract:

The National Library of Wales embarked on its Decolonisation projects in 2022 and like many archives' projects, it has been one which has provided us an opportunity to learn, unlearn, commune, advocate and most importantly have the difficult conversation on the legacies of empire, our collections and our user's perception and engagement.

Since then, we have delivered exhibitions, participated and supported community lead activities, organised outreach events, developed educational materials, created digital resources, measured the impact of our various initiatives, and have moved from projects to imbedded practice. All of this has been driven by and aligned with the policies and legislation from the Welsh government particularly the Wales Anti-Racist Action Plan and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Archiving, like many professions, has been governed by rules, standards, and principles developed for best practices in preservation of history, order, and the ease of access and retrieval of information for archive users.

For instance, it is often said, and it is true that "Without catalogues, archives are without a voice —just full of stories, but with no way to hear them." However, over the years it has also been observed that these catalogues have limitations in how items, people, and events have been described. These limitations stem from the language used at the time they were created, the prevailing prejudices and biases, the standards that guided cataloguing, or simply a lack of awareness about the diversity of the world. These limitations have been the reason behind the call for the Revision of Archival description with the foreknowledge that no catalogue is perfect, language is changing and so is the world.

With Language evolving, awareness deepening, and communities demanding a more accurate representation. Decolonisation of archives and archival practices have become imperative. But the processes have raised important questions such as: How do we maintain authenticity? How do we balance transparency with the need to correct harmful or outdated terminology? And how can institutions adapt responsibly in a time of rapid cultural change?

In this presentation, I will be sharing my personal insights from over three years of work at the National Library of Wales. With suggestions on how archives/ archivist can ensure authenticity in a time of so much change and uncertainty highlighting what has worked, what has not and a space for participants to ask those tough questions as we build more accountable, community informed practice.

Individual Paper

64 Whose Story Do We Tell? Re-examining the Cyprus 'Emergency' in the Imperial War Museums Collection

Megan Joyce, Imperial War Museums

Session: C4

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 2

Abstract:

This paper will examine conflict related archives held by the Imperial War Museums (IWM) relating to the Cyprus 'Emergency' (1955-1959) to explore broader questions around authenticity, archival power and the representation of contested histories in the archive. As a custodian of a national collection, IWM aims to develop public understanding of war and conflict – but a re-examination of IWM's post-war archives has revealed archival silences and omissions, shaped by the socio-political and colonial contexts in which they were created, acquired and interpreted. This has informed how the museum has historically presented the conflict to its audiences, reflecting broader tendencies to sanitise or reframe aspects of British imperial history. Historic acquisition and cataloguing practices, largely derived from British government and colonial sources, foregrounded the experiences of soldiers and officials fighting to suppress an insurgency during this period, while records relating to Cypriot perspectives have remained unrepresented. As a result, records and historic interpretive frameworks have been framed through a colonial lens.

Whose story do we tell? And how does prioritising certain narratives establish a "hierarchy of authenticity"? This paper will argue for a reimagining of traditional archival and curatorial practice – through critically interrogating provenance and language of historic records – and a move towards a more collaborative approach which ensures fair and balanced representation of lived experiences and engages more critically with the legacies of empire.

## Individual Paper

107 Challenging colonial narratives: the role of museum archivists in decolonisation debates

Anke Hellebuyck, University of Antwerp

Session: C4

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 3

### Abstract:

This contribution seeks to bring museum archives into debates on decolonisation. In recent years, museums have been grappling with their past, as the colonial histories of museum objects, buildings and the museum as an institution have been increasingly contested. In these debates, the museum archive is often seen merely as a tool for researchers which can be mined for information when needed. However, little attention is paid, both in academic literature and in museums, to the role that museum archivists can play in these debates or to the practices of recordkeeping in museums with contested (colonial) pasts. The aim of this contribution is therefore to consider museum archives from a truly archival perspective.

I rely on my research in the archive of the largest museum in Belgium, the Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH), which had a close connection with infamous Belgian king Leopold II and used to house an extensive collection from Belgium's former colony Congo. My research shows that colonial epistemes are omnipresent in the RMAH archive, for example in the acquisition records of Congolese objects. More specifically, the archive promotes a certain narrative which is strongly Eurocentric and hierarchical. Classifications of ethnic groups are directly borrowed from the colonial system and the archive displays a (deliberate?) avoidance of discussing the original Congolese owners of the museum objects or the moment of 'collection' by Belgians in Congo. This narrative serves to justify the presence of these objects in the museum and to conceal power imbalances and colonial violence behind the veneer of scientific objectiveness.

Both in academic literature and in the archival field, it has been argued extensively, especially concerning displaced colonial archives, that recordkeeping practices such as description and digitisation can reactivate and reproduce the colonial violence inherent in the records, which can be harmful for the subjects of the records as well as users. Based on these insights and on my research results from the RMAH, I argue that museum archivists should address and even challenge the colonial narratives present in the archive. To aid museum archivists in this endeavour, I advocate for the application to museum archives of the ethics of care framework, as developed for archives by Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor. This approach, with its emphasis on affective responsibilities for archivists, can provide both a theoretical framework to guide thinking and a solid basis for coming up with concrete interventions in recordkeeping practices in a museum context. Such interventions can include contextualising and denouncing harmful colonial ideas in the archive through disclaimers or research guides. I argue that such practices do not detract from the authenticity of the records. Rather, they provide a fuller picture of the records and the context in which they were created and in this way support users to get a more 'authentic' experience through a better understanding of the archive. Thus, the contribution brings museum archives into the spotlight and provides inspiration for archivists caring for records that deal with all kinds of contested histories.

## Individual Paper

### 86 Authenticity Beyond the Archive: Professional Authority, Human Voice, and Advocacy in Scottish Business Records

Audrey Wilson, Scottish Council on Archives

Session: D4

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

Authenticity in business archives is founded on professional archival practice. Records are verified, preserved, and interpreted by archivists who ensure their provenance, integrity, and reliability. This professional authority is essential. Yet when business archives are relied upon to tell wider stories of work, place, and community, technical authenticity alone can result in accounts that are accurate but partial.

This paper is based on the pilot project *Made in Scotland: Building Connections between Business and Community Archives*, which explored how Scottish business archives contribute to community identity, cultural heritage, and economic understanding. Through commissioned research and a series of case studies across sectors including textiles, tourism, and green energy, the project examined how professionally authenticated collections can be enriched by engaging with the people most affected by them.

Central to the project was engagement with former and retired employees and with communities shaped by industrial activity. These individuals occupy an ambiguous position within archival practice: neither official record creators nor external audiences, yet holders of lived experience that cannot be recovered from documents alone. Their contributions add context, interpretation, and emotional truth, helping archivists and organisations to understand records within the realities of working life.

Drawing on case studies involving major Scottish businesses, the paper explores how production records, photographs, and administrative files gained new meaning when read alongside personal memories of routine, pride, loss, and local identity. Authenticity emerged not as something replaced or challenged, but as something strengthened through the relationship between verified records and human voice.

The paper also reflects on questions of hierarchy and authority. Decisions about access and narrative framing remained with the business, shaped by governance and responsibility. Acknowledging these boundaries openly is presented as a key component of authentic practice.

The project's emphasis on trust and transparency has led directly to an advocacy strand, culminating in an MSP-supported event at the Scottish Parliament. This work positions business archives as credible, evidence-based resources that can speak honestly to policy, heritage, and community value.

## Individual Paper

### 115 Authentic Voices at Risk: Community-Generated Digital Content and the Crisis of Authenticity in UK Heritage

Professor Lorna Hughes, University of Glasgow and Professor Hannah Barker, University of Manchester

Session: D4

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 2

#### Abstract:

Community-Generated Digital Content (CGDC), born-digital and digitised materials created by and for communities, represents one of the most authentic forms of heritage in the UK today. From oral histories of migration and grassroots music-making to documentation of disability rights activism and Gaelic-speaking island life in Scotland, CGDC captures voices, languages, and lived experiences that exist nowhere else. Yet despite its extraordinary value, the Digital Preservation Coalition has classified CGDC as "critically endangered" since 2019. This paper argues that we face not only a preservation crisis but an authenticity crisis: if these materials are lost, the most authentic community voices in UK heritage will be silenced. Drawing on findings from Our Heritage, Our Stories (OHOS), a three-year AHRC-funded research project that engaged over 130 community organisations across the UK, this paper explores five interconnected dimensions of authenticity in CGDC.

- First, the paper examines the corrective power of CGDC and the question of "whose truth?" OHOS research demonstrates that community heritage can complement, contradict, and challenge official sources and received historical narratives, overcoming historical patterns of content manipulation and censorship, and challenging the 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006). Through case studies including the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People Archive, the Manchester Hip Hop Archive, and the Kinloch Historical Society on the Isle of Lewis, whose work preserves Gaelic language and crofting heritage that exists in no institutional collection, the paper shows how communities create authentic counter-narratives that rebalance the historical record.
- Second, the paper interrogates hierarchies of authenticity through the concept of the "liminal archive." OHOS found that CGDC exists in threshold spaces, between official and unofficial, professional and community-led, institutional and independent. Rather than a weakness, this liminality challenges conventional hierarchies that privilege institutional collections over community-held materials.
- Third, the paper explores language, metadata, and authentic description. OHOS research revealed that when community archivists describe materials using local dialect and specialist terminology, the resulting metadata is itself a heritage object, a signifier of cultural practice and therefore heritage in itself. This raises urgent questions about what is lost when description is automated.
- Fourth, the paper considers AI, automation, and the ethics of authenticity. As AI tools promise to simplify metadata capture and transcription, OHOS findings suggest this risks stripping away the layers of community knowledge and linguistic specificity that make CGDC authentically different from institutional collections.

Finally, the paper addresses digital sustainability as the precondition for authenticity. Without sustained investment in preservation, the question of authenticity becomes moot. OHOS found that CGDC creators, predominantly volunteer-led, precariously funded, and operating outside sustaining institutional infrastructures, face impossible odds in keeping their materials accessible. Post-custodial approaches, where communities retain narrative control while accessing institutional preservation support, offer the most promising model for sustaining authentic community heritage. The paper concludes with recommendations for the archives and records sector, arguing that authenticity is not a static quality to be verified but a living relationship between communities and their heritage, one that requires active stewardship to survive.

## Individual Paper

92 Adding authentic voices to Kew Gardens' Persian collections through community engagement  
Isabel Lauterjung, Royal Botanic Gardens and Shabnam Balouch, Leighton House and Sambourne House

Session: D4

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 3

### Abstract:

By highlighting the importance of community engagement, this paper will explore how we can and, in some ways, even have a responsibility to challenge and expand an archival record's authenticity. We will review Kew Gardens' Persia Reimagined project's methodology, address opportunities and challenges, and look at ways this could be implemented at a wider scale or with other collections.

In autumn 2025, we launched a new display in our Reading Room: Persia Reimagined – From Herbarium to Heritage, which was open until January 2026. This exhibit was co-curated with Shabnam Balouch, who is herself Persian and has, for the past three years, been one of our Archive volunteers.

Kew Gardens' archive collections relate to the history of worldwide botanical exchange and extraction, documenting a long history of colonial and economic botany. Whilst volunteering, Shabnam was surprised at how many Persian and Iranian materials she came across in our collections; after all, Persia was never colonised. Shabnam encountered non-standard anglicisations and alternate spellings based on regional accents; these are just some examples of the heavy Western lens through which Persian culture and geography was portrayed. Her perspective provided context and catalogue enrichment. And so, the idea of putting these materials on display for a wider audience was born with Shabnam's voice ensuring the project's authenticity and embedding her perspective in our collections.

Due to the focus on the social and the cultural histories - the non-botanical - it was important to find ways to extend the reach of the display beyond our standard visitor demographic, which is heavily shaped by our opening hours and location. We wanted to bring people, particularly those of Persian heritage, in touch with the collections and add their voices back into the archives.

With an outreach grant from The National Archives, we ran workshops for members of Persian communities in which they could artistically engage with the collections and express their own plant memories and heritage, which would be added to the archives. The grant also allowed for payment of our co-facilitator Shabnam, creating a more equitable partnership. In this paper, we will review our approach to these workshops, expand on the experience for both participants and organisers, and will assess how this approach could or should be replicated in future to reassess or expand the authenticity of our records.

## Individual Paper

### 21 Metadata Quality in Pakistani Archives: AI Bias and Authenticity Concerns

Dr Muhammad Tehmash Khan, The Aga Khan University

Session: A5

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

This paper investigates how artificial intelligence influences authenticity, representation, and trust in a low resource archival environment, using the Sindh Archives as a case study. The presentation examines how machine learning systems used for metadata extraction reshape descriptive practices, alter provenance signals, and create new risks for evidential integrity in a developing country context. The study focuses on three questions. Can AI supported metadata generation improve access while maintaining the chain of custody and contextual accuracy. How do biased or incomplete training datasets influence description quality for multilingual collections in Sindhi, Urdu, and English. What information governance controls are required to preserve authenticity when imported tools operate on sensitive public records.

The study evaluates a six-month pilot on digitised photographic collections and colonial and post-colonial administrative correspondence. The analysis includes a structured metadata quality audit, human in the loop review using existing controlled vocabularies, and a comparison of two AI approaches, a commercial vision and OCR service and an open-source model deployed locally. Accuracy is measured against a human curated baseline with attention to script recognition errors, incorrect subject classification, and loss of context in complex file structures. Inter annotator agreement among senior archivists in the Sindh Archives provides a measure of descriptive reliability. The governance assessment examines workflow design, auditability, confidence thresholds, and documentation of model behaviour using preservation metadata principles drawn from international standards.

The findings show measurable gains in routine tasks such as place name extraction and date normalisation, which reduces processing time and supports responsiveness to user requests. However, the results also show systematic errors that carry authenticity risks. The AI tools perform poorly on Sindhi and Urdu scripts, misidentify individuals from minority communities, and flatten locally meaningful terms into broad subject categories. Imported tools also show drift when applied to Pakistani administrative terminology, which leads to inconsistent descriptive outcomes across series. These issues introduce noise, weaken provenance signals, and create vulnerabilities in contested historical collections.

The paper proposes a decision model for Pakistani public archives that defines where AI tools can be applied safely and where human review remains essential. The model includes requirements for dataset documentation, risk-based review, and auditable metadata interventions. It also outlines a practical workflow for low resource environments that links AI usage with preservation metadata, quality control sampling, and clear accountability structures within information governance processes. The contribution of the paper is a context specific protocol that supports the use of AI without compromising authenticity, user trust, or representation in a major regional archive.

## Individual Paper

### 48 Collection Authenticity in the Context of AI and a Cyber-Attack

Mrs Amy Adams, National Museum Of The Royal Navy

Session: A5

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 2

#### Abstract:

What does collections data and digital collections authenticity look like when you are spearheading AI use in collections information practice? How does this change when you are hit by a massive cyber-attack? The National Museum of the Royal Navy has just the experience to share.

The National Museum had trialled a number of uses of AI in collections practice including:

- keyword generation to increase searchability
- automatic transcription generation for handwritten documents
- brief description generation of photographic archives
- automation of de-duplication of digitised archives.

The business was determining which of these interventions were best for permanent inclusion in its working practices when it was hit by an extensive ransomware attack at the end of 2024.

This presentation by Amy Adams, the National Museum's Collections Information and Access Manager, will explore these initial AI trials: why the National Museum was interested in these tools, the goals in using them and our experience of their accuracy, validity, and usefulness. We will also unpick how staff grappled with the idea of the authenticity of AI-generated data, setting accuracy thresholds, validation and how to differentiate between 'curator-created' and 'AI-generated' data.

Attendees will then hear about the significant cyber-attack the National Museum suffered at the end of 2024 and the impact this had on its collections data, digital collections and collections accessibility. We will share thoughts on whether it is possible to maintain authenticity in your collection when you lose your whole database, locations movement control, online collection, digitised collections and digital object history files overnight. Also, we will unpack what it means when you have to recover or recreate this data and digital assets and whether AI can help in that process. Finally, we will reflect on the reaction of our audiences and how staff coped with demand during the 'build back better' process.

The National Museum has been a recipient of The National Archives' Resilience grant in 2025/6 and can explore the importance of sector wide support and funding during such a fraught period. Historically there has been a degree of taboo surrounding cyber-incidents and we wish to challenge this practice and encourage authentic, open and honest behaviour in the aftermath of such events.

Ultimately, participants will come away with a sense of how fragile collection data is today, gaining strategies, points to consider, thoughts on how to safeguard their own collections data as well as ethical considerations, conversation, best methods and practices to think about when approaching AI enhancements.

## Individual Paper

### 53 You Should Have Hired an Archivist: the Missing Link of AI

Dr Yunhyong Kim, University Of Glasgow

Session: A5

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 3

#### Abstract:

In 2023, authors discovered that their copyrighted books had been included in a large training dataset known as Books3, part of The Pile, a corpus widely used to train large language models. The dataset was subsequently removed from public hosting. Yet the models trained upon it remained operational. No authoritative public account could specify which model versions had incorporated which texts, under what legal authority, or with what retention logic. The data had been absorbed into model parameters and rendered infrastructural. Its provenance had effectively dissolved. The episode was framed as a copyright dispute. However, at its root it was a failure of documentary governance.

Artificial intelligence systems are frequently described as suffering from “data problems”: bias, opacity, irreproducibility, lack of traceability. These concerns are often treated as novel consequences of computational scale. From the perspective of archival theory, however, they are familiar. They concern appraisal and selection decisions without considerations regarding provenance and content, authenticity and reliability, order and completeness, preservation strategies and responsibilities, and intrinsic value. Archival thought defined records not as isolated informational objects but as by-products of activity preserved within documented chains of custody. Hilary Jenkinson argued that authenticity derived from the integrity of those chains rather than from content alone. Theodore R. Schellenberg later foregrounded appraisal as a deliberate determination of enduring evidential and informational value. Records, in this view, are structured selections designed to stabilise institutional memory across time.

The Books3 case illustrates what occurs when such structuring principles are absent. Large-scale ingestion preceded institutional reflection. Data were scraped, normalized, and incorporated into model architectures under the assumption that computational transformation neutralised documentary origin. Once embedded in model weights, records lost visible contextual anchors. What remained was performance, fluent output detached from reconstructable evidentiary lineage.

Archival scholarship has consistently emphasised that records derive meaning from context and documented processes of selection. The principle of provenance, subsequently expanded by scholars such as Terry Cook and Anne Gilliland, positions records within layered administrative and social frameworks. Provenance is not ancillary metadata; it is the condition under which records function as evidence. Appraisal is not merely ethical intervention; it is the mechanism through which evidential value and future interpretability are secured.

AI development often inverts this logic. Data lakes expand, model iterations proliferate, and documentation initiatives emerge after foundational design decisions. Governance follows incorporation. The archival order, appraisal before preservation, documentation before access, retention schedules before accumulation, is reversed. The consequences are increasingly visible. Recruiting algorithms reproduce historical inequities. Language models fabricate legal citations. Foundation models strain against regulatory frameworks such as the General Data Protection Regulation, which presuppose granular control. The difficulty appears technical, but the real problem is structural absence: no clear documentary responsibility within AI pipelines. This paper argues that archival thinking and practices surrounding authenticity offers the missing foundational theory.

Put simply: AI systems were built to learn, not built to remember responsibly. That is, “you should have hired a archivist”.

## Individual Paper

123 The adventures of original archives: Bringing documents from the archive into public spaces.

Sarah Graham, PRONI

Session: B5

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 1

### Abstract:

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), as the official archive for Northern Ireland, has a statutory remit to provide access to the collections they hold. Over the last couple of years, Conservation have engaged in a programme of events to make original documents available throughout Ireland.

Inspired by the joint project with the National Archives, UK and the Northern Ireland Office to tour the Belfast Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, PRONI has developed its processes to create a safe environment for original records to be viewed. Last year, this included large events at Parliament Buildings to mark VE Day and the Battle of Britain, local library outreach and the anniversary of a primary school.

In addition, PRONI has reviewed its loaning-out procedures in response to increased requests for loans. This has clarified the roles of different business areas and the point at which the loan can be agreed. In 2025, PRONI loaned documents to the Ulster Museum, Ulster American Folk Park, Limavady Museum, North Down Museum and Dublin Castle where PRONI documents had an audience of over 200,000 visitors.

PRONI's facilitation of this access to original documents is possible through active preventive conservation. The safe conditions are determined by carrying out pre-visits, condition assessments, and working to adaptable display criteria. It has resulted in improved relationships with the host organisations and wider engagement with PRONI's preservation objectives. The events often include the addition of digital or surrogate material to support and contextualise the archival records.

The public has responded enthusiastically to the discovery that authentic original documents have been made available locally, in particular with those who may be unfamiliar with PRONI, or perceive it as Belfast-centric.

## Individual Paper

79 Portrait, Pixel, Print: Conservation Ethics, Curatorial Practice and Digital Reproduction

Dr RJ Wade. University Of Leeds

Session: B5

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 2

### Abstract:

This paper examines how digital technologies can support, challenge or complicate conservation decision-making in relation to historic sculptural records. Centred on the current exhibition *Who am I to you?* at the Treasures of the Brotherton Gallery, the project explores how the University of Leeds' collection of portrait busts reveal the material, ethical and interpretive complexities inherent in conserving three-dimensional heritage in an archival context.

The portrait busts, accumulated inconsistently over more than a century, embody shifting institutional values and practices of care. Their history of relocation from prominent display to marginalised sites demonstrates how material objects accrue and lose authority through changing spatial, environmental and organisational contexts. Such movements raise questions about how alterations in setting affect the perceived authenticity and significance of an object, and what responsibilities arise when institutional narratives obscure, overwrite or neglect earlier material histories?

The project's structured-light scanning initiative served as a form of non-invasive examination, enabling close surface analysis while involving staff and students directly in processes typically reserved for conservation or technical specialists. The digital surrogates produced extend access while foregrounding the legal and conceptual standing of digital records, the tensions between original and surrogate, and the challenge of providing an 'authentic' experience when engagement is mediated through technology.

3D printing functioned as an experimental conservation-adjacent intervention. Printing selected busts in green glow-in-the-dark PLA deliberately subverted expectations associated with traditional sculptural materials. This choice highlighted the racialised art-historical privileging of whiteness in marble and plaster and posed critical questions for conservation practice: When material substitution is intentional, interpretive and irreversible, does it broaden or compromise authenticity? What responsibilities do conservators bear when choosing contemporary materials whose manufacturing processes and long-term stability differ significantly from those of the original object?

A particularly salient case study involved a damaged plaster statuette missing its head. Through collaboration with Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, scans of both the surviving object and the intact full-scale version at Kelvingrove enabled the creation of a scaled surrogate and a hybrid digital reconstruction. This raised fundamental ethical questions: Should missing elements be digitally recreated? What constitutes an authentic reconstruction? Does the digital surrogate risk superseding the original? And under what circumstances (if any) might such a reconstruction be physically reintegrated or displayed alongside the historic work? These discussions underscore the broader debate concerning reversibility, digital intervention and the boundaries between preservation and reinterpretation.

Taken together, these interventions argue for a conservation approach that views authenticity not as a fixed material state but as a dynamic, negotiated relationship between object, context and audience. Digital tools do not undermine authenticity; rather, they expose the complexities of conserving fragmentary, politically charged and historically uneven records, inviting a more reflexive and ethically attuned conservation practice.

## Individual Paper

### Another Layer: Authenticity, Repair and Narrative in Archive Conservation

Rebecca Goldie, Book and Archive Conservator

Session: B5

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 3

#### Abstract:

Fourteen years ago, I carried out a conservation treatment that I still question today. This talk is a personal reflection on conserving archive collections, and on how the changes conservators make, however carefully, alter the story of the items in our care.

Authenticity is not a fixed quality. It expands and thickens as layers of history attach meaning to an object, and the conservator enters that process at a particular moment, making decisions that will themselves become part of that history. Drawing on two projects from my own practice, I explore how the repairs we find - and the new repairs we make - tell us about an object and its history. Historical repairs have always fascinated me: evidence that someone cared for an item before us, and a physical record of an object living through a cycle of deterioration and repair, accumulating meaning over time. And yet whether to preserve or remove them is rarely straightforward, in fact we are often compelled to take them out entirely and equally compelled to make our own repairs as unobtrusive as possible, as though our work sits outside that narrative rather than within it.

What biases make that seem necessary? In looking for answers, I want to explore the idea of disruptive conservation - an approach that challenges our instinct towards blending in and asks what might be gained when intervention is made deliberately visible, even confrontational. If authenticity builds through layers of history, then perhaps our own repairs should be a more visible part of that record. From taking no action at all to being intentionally disruptive, I want to ask what our interventions will say about conservation when they are examined a hundred or two hundred years from now.

## Individual Paper

### 85 Child-Authors and Artists in Archives: A School Case Study

Ms Maya Frampton, Chigwell School

Session: D5

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

The role of the child in archival collections has come under increasing discussion and scrutiny in recent years. Such development is signified in the opening of new archives, museums, and galleries dedicated to childhood. The field of childhood studies is growing; debates rage about defining children as a marginalised group. Nevertheless, it remains a challenging area of work for a variety of contextual, ethical, and legal reasons. Not only this, but the concept of a child-as-author challenges archives to reconsider the concept of authenticity: after all, in which other contexts are a child's words believed? In English courts, children can be witnesses, but perceived youth creates assumptions of unreliability. Consideration of a child's perspective is generally turned to as a 'last resort', not only for ethical reasons, but because of doubts about children's authenticity.

Similarly, children's accounts and artefacts have also been excluded from most archives. Deconstruction of this fact might, firstly, identify children's perspectives and creations as beyond the scope of some collections. However, in others, it would likely identify a 'hierarchy of authenticity' in archiving minds and practices: certain experiences and perspectives are and have historically been prioritised due to perceived authenticity and value. A child's word or product is frequently considered to hold neither. Furthermore, in the context of larger county or nationwide, archives, deconstructing the assumption that a child's word is less authentic would also destabilise definitions of 'formal' records as 'professionally' and 'institutionally' produced, and 'personal' records as private, independently-realised expressions of selfhood: in other words, adult-authored. Finally, in certain archives, the absence of the child-author in archives should be made glaring by this deconstruction, and illuminate hierarchies of authenticity, for example, in school archives, in institutions where children are the whole purpose. When children's perspectives do appear in material evidence, they deserve greater attention as unique keyholes into experience.

Therefore, this paper will aim to consider and suggest some approaches to questions about the meaning of authenticity in archives through a focus on children as the authors or artists of certain records and artefacts in a school archive. This will be achieved through four areas and case studies:

1. Children's epistolary correspondence (1790s)
2. Children's epistolary correspondence (1930s)
3. Children's photographic albums
4. Children's cartoons

The first two, being of similar type, will provide a comparative insight into children's self-expression through what (in most adult contexts) would be private communication. The authenticity of this personal dialogue will be questioned, and not because of its child-authorship: to what extent were children, in the form of pupils, guaranteed autonomy and privacy in the past, and did this change over time?

Meanwhile, the photographic album's mixed media will prompt discussion of 'mixed' authenticity, due to interpretations of 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' forms. This is a discussion which the children's cartoons of teachers will continue: these caricatures offer a funny and fascinating glimpse into authentic young perspectives on the adults who try to write them and their stories into, or out of, the archive.

## Individual Paper

### 30 Return to Tenderness: Archiving Living Syrian Stories in Exile

Fan Du, Qisetna

Session: D5

Date: August 6

Session Time: 2026, 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 2

#### Abstract

Qisetna is an award-winning community initiative dedicated to documenting and preserving the living heritage of groups impacted by conflict, with a particular focus on Syrian and wider Middle Eastern diasporas. Our work is grounded in community collaboration, ethical storytelling, and long-term care for the material and digital traces of people's lives and memories.

We recognise that any archive or heritage project can easily reproduce unequal power dynamics if it does not consciously address who speaks, how they are represented, and who gets to curate and interpret their stories. To ensure fair and balanced representation of the diaspora, our team:

1. Co-designs projects with community members. We invite participants, community organisers, artists, and researchers to help shape themes, questions, and formats rather than imposing a fixed curatorial frame from outside.
2. Prioritises diverse voices within the diaspora. We actively seek contributions across gender, age, class, region, language, religion, and migration status, ensuring that our material does not reflect only a narrow or elite experience.
3. Uses participatory methods instead of extractive ones. Interviews, storytelling workshops, and digital submissions are designed as conversations and collaborations, where participants retain agency over what they share, how it is framed, and how their contributions are credited.
4. Embeds informed consent and ongoing dialogue. Participants are briefed clearly on how their stories, images, and recordings may be used; acknowledging that people's circumstances and comfort levels can change over time.
5. Encourages self-representation and multilingual expression. Wherever possible, contributors speak in their own words and languages, with translations presented alongside rather than instead of the original, supporting nuance and resisting homogenisation of the diaspora.
6. Maintains a reflexive editorial practice. Our editorial team regularly reviews how and whom we feature, looking for patterns of absence or overexposure, and adjusts outreach and commissioning strategies to address gaps and potential biases.

Through these practices, the archive becomes a collaborative space where representation is negotiated with communities, rather than decided about them. We aim to give audiences an authentic and embodied sense of the material we publish, recognising that authenticity arises not only from factual accuracy but from texture, voice, and context. To achieve this, we:

- Present first-person narratives and testimonies. Stories are published with minimal interference in voice, structure, and tone, preserving pauses, idioms, and emotional registers that convey a lived reality rather than a polished, neutral summary.
- Combine text, audio, and visual material. Where possible, users encounter not just a written transcript, but also the sound of a person's voice, images of objects, landscapes, or everyday scenes that anchor narratives in specific places.

Authenticity, is grounded in the relationships, processes, and material contexts from which records emerge. Community storytelling workshops, interviews, and collaborative documentation practices play a crucial role in building this authenticity. Archives are socially constructed: what is collected, how it is described, and how it is interpreted are all shaped by the values and power structures of their time. This has important implications for how we understand the authenticity of our material and data.

## Individual Paper

### 31 In the Veins: Digging deep for authenticity

Mr Graham Relton, Yorkshire and North East Film Archive

Session: D5

Date: August 6

Session Time: 2026, 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 3

#### Abstract:

Four decades on, the long-term impact of the Miners' strike still resonates today. How did a regional film archive tell an authentic story of the proud but often forgotten coal mining communities.

Telling the story of the coal industry, but significantly the human experience, through only archive footage and found voices in the vaults of the Yorkshire and North East Film Archive, was a massive undertaking.

The team were acutely aware that this wasn't 'our' story, we had a responsibility to produce a respectful production that would represent generations of coal mining families with integrity.

This session will help any archive services looking to share collections in a way that is authentic and representative of the communities they come from.

To ensure that we embedded that authenticity we needed those who had lived and worked in mining communities, at the coalface, in the community. We recruited a diverse 13-strong volunteer 'community curator' group, who helped us shape the production.

This session will outline how we worked with the volunteers, some of whom were sceptical, to deliver a film that was meaningful and authentic. It will also cover how we then successfully shared that film and reached a wider audience.

From those who worked the mines to their children and grandchildren a few steps removed, 'In the Veins' connected with people, enabling audiences to remember and experience anew how coal still runs through the veins of their heritage; to feel included, engaged, and validated with their cultural heritage, authentically.

Delegates who attend this session will leave with an understanding of how they can use their holdings – whether film, audio or documentary – in an authentic way to widen their audiences and tell the stories of the communities they serve.

## Individual Paper

### 25 Victorian Visions, Digital Mirrors: Exploring Authenticity in PRONI's Early Photographic Collections

Mr Brett Irwin, PRONI

Session: A6

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 2:55 PM - 3:55 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

Authenticity in Victorian photography was often shaped by technical limitations and societal conventions. Images involved staging and the constructing of props and backdrops that signalled respectability. Early processes in photography meant that prolonged exposure times could not align themselves with movement or spontaneity and therefore render a relationship between the camera and subject as a construct and a complicated interplay of cultural expectations, photographic processes, and later archival interventions.

The Victorians used the camera as a tool of memory, discovery and identity; street photography documented the growth and transformation of towns and cities, landscape photography gave us stunning images of the countryside, family portraits showed connections between generations, carte de visites became the first mass-produced images of self-representations – much like a digital profile image today, and ethnographic and colonial photographs showed people the wider world. But in this period of new and developing technology were visual clues that reinforced social hierarchies, idealised representations, cultural narratives, and the manipulation of the image. One could argue that authenticity in images was a performance that was formed by evolving techniques, culture, and the intentions of the photographer and how photographic 'truth' was always extremely complicated. These historically complex ideas around authenticity and visual truth find relevance in contemporary digital photographic practice. Whereas Victorian photographers manipulated images to achieve a particular aesthetic or an ideological effect, contemporary photographers and digital technologies operate within a visual culture that takes head-on the idea of photographic truth and renders it ambiguous at best. Tools like Photoshop, smartphone photography, and AI blur boundaries of truth. This contemporary uncertainty reflects a continuity with the Victorian age: both periods ask questions regarding authenticity; does it happen in the moment of capture? or does the visual outcome reinforce the viewer's belief in the truthfulness of the image?

My talk, using some stunning visual material from PRONI's early photographic archives, will look at the tension between visual truth and construction and explore the following ideas:

- How cataloguing shapes meaning
- How archivists decide what information to include and what to leave out
- How categories affect how images are described and compared
- How order and hierarchy of cataloguing 'tells' viewers what to see
- How staged portraits show a 'typical' family
- How a retouched landscape becomes 'evidence' of rural life
- How a commercial historical photograph becomes 'documentary evidence'
- How a colonial image avoids context and power imbalances
- How digitisation helps authenticity by protecting the original archive and often revealing contextual clues by zooming that would otherwise be missed.

PRONI's early photographic collections remind us that every generation of photographers has faced the similar challenges of how to understand images and how to read photographs with a critical eye.

## Individual Paper

60 Photographic authenticity through digital surrogacy and digitisation skills: Collections integrity during the implementation of the “Digital Revolution” in heritage archives.

Ms Emma Hyde, De Montfort University

Session: A6

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 2:55 PM - 3:55 PM

Presentation Order: 2

### Abstract:

Photographic authenticity through digital surrogacy and digitisation skills: Collections integrity during the implementation of the “Digital Revolution” in UK heritage archives.

The Implementation of the “Digital Revolution” during the 1990s facilitated the development of new digitisation tools, skills and practices. This technological and cultural disruption enabled a re-evaluation and assessment of institutional photographic collections and their digital surrogacy. A subsequent move to mass digitisation generated an enormous legacy of photographic digital surrogates now circulating in our image-led society today. The proliferation of photographic images has conditioned the ways people encounter, consume, and understand the historical past (Pasternak 2021).

Such scale and abundance have provoked many questions within the field of photographic history scholarship and for archival staff tasked with the care and digitisation of photographic materials, e.g., their materiality, integrity and authenticity. Academic discussion has pivoted around photographic materiality (e.g., Crane 2020; Edwards 2014; Schwartz 2020) and how photographic materials function within the wider ecosystems of heritage organisations (Edwards and Ravilious 2022). Sassoon’s (1998; 2004) seminal texts ‘Photographic Meaning in the Age of Digital Reproduction’ and ‘Photographic Materiality in the Age of Digital Reproduction’ instigated debates surrounding the tensions between the analogue photograph (a print or negative) and the challenges institutions face navigating the conversion processes of the physical media to digital reproductions, along with questioning the loss of information in the digitisation context. More recently Schwartz (2020) has questioned the organisational structures associated with institutional photographic collections, along with the “human causes”, highlighting the impact archival professionals have on the care of photographic collections and their digitisation, which warrant further analysis. However, only sparse attention has been given to how staff expertise and skillsets have affected the integrity and authenticity of digitised photographic collections (Conway 2009; Sassoon 2004). As Pasternak indicates (2021), even less is known about the impact of new digital literacies on the creation, authenticity and cultural value of digital/digitised photographic collections.

This paper explores how far digitisation skillsets, evolving digital literacies and staff expertise has impacted on the authenticity, integrity and understanding of photographic collections in UK heritage archives. Examining their reuse, (re)circulation and interpretation in the early experimental days of the digital revolution and the subsequent move to mass digitisation (1990s-2000s), I will question how far staff digitisation process and practice expose inherent and underlying questions about how we understand photographs in archive institutional settings today as authentic objects. Drawing upon PhD primary research from semi-structured interviews (photographers, conservators, technicians, archivists) and visual collections analysis, my paper charts a largely undocumented period of major historical shift from analogue to digital skillsets. I will examine: What happens when photographs are rediscovered through staff digitisation processes and skills within institutional environments? How does digital surrogacy offer new insights into the authenticity of photographic collections for cultural heritage institutions? How can custodians (photographers, conservators, technicians, archivists etc.,) of photographic collections be ever more purposeful when tasked with the digitisation of photographic collections in the future?

## Individual Paper

150 Heritage Science for All: Building Sector Capacity Through RICHeS at The National Archives

Dr Marc Vermeulen, The National Archives

Session: B6

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 2:55 PM - 3:55 PM

### Abstract:

The Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science (RICHeS) is a major UK-wide initiative designed to make scientific tools, expertise, data, and training more accessible to archives, libraries, museums, and heritage organisations of all sizes. As one of the programme's national facilities partners, The National Archives hosts the Written Heritage Science Laboratory (WHSL), specialising in the analysis of documentary and written materials.

This presentation will introduce the RICHeS infrastructure and outline how TNA's facilities, staff expertise, and planned developments, including upgraded laboratory spaces, scientific access pathways, and sector-focused training, will support practitioners across the UK. It will highlight common challenges faced by the archival sector, demonstrate how scientific methods can inform preservation and interpretation, and explain how organisations can engage with the RICHeS network.

The session aims to show how expanding access to heritage science can strengthen preservation planning, unlock new narratives, and build long-term sector capability.

## Individual Paper

## 23 Authenticity, Authority, and Absence: Decolonising the Archive at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

Mr Ian Sudlow-McKay, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

## Session C6:

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 2:55 PM - 3:55 PM

Presentation Order: 1

## Abstract:

The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) is undertaking a decolonisation project that critically interrogates its early institutional history, and archival collections by exploring LSTM's origins, practices, and activities. Founded in 1898 as the world's first school of tropical medicine, LSTM occupies a significant position within global medical history. Its archival holdings, however, are inextricably linked to the colonial contexts in which tropical medicine emerged and developed. These records reflect the power imbalances embedded in imperial knowledge production, extractive research practices, and unequal relationships between institutions of empire and colonised communities. Using the LSTM decolonisation project as a case study, this paper examines how authenticity is problematised, contested, and reconfigured through decolonial archival practice, and what this reconfiguration demands of contemporary archival professionals.

Drawing on practical experiences from the project, the analysis focuses on record description, cataloguing language, contextualisation, and interpretive interventions as key mechanisms for engaging with contested histories. It explores the tension between maintaining evidential integrity and introducing critical frameworks that foreground the social, political, and epistemic conditions under which these records were created, circulated, and preserved. Authenticity is therefore conceptualised not as an intrinsic or static property of archival records, but as a relational and ethical process that requires transparency regarding provenance, power, and bias. This reframing positions archivists not as neutral custodians, but as active participants in shaping how historical knowledge is produced and understood.

The paper further examines the implications of digitisation and access within decolonial archival work. While increased access is often framed as inherently progressive, this discussion questions whether digitisation undertaken without critical mediation risks reproducing colonial epistemologies at scale. It interrogates whose knowledge is prioritised within discovery systems, whose perspectives are rendered visible or legible, and whose remain marginalised or absent. By doing so, the analysis underscores that access alone cannot function as a corrective to archival injustice without accompanying ethical responsibility and reflexive practice.

Archives are frequently positioned as authoritative custodians of historical truth; however, the archival record at LSTM demonstrates that such "truth" has been unevenly constructed and preserved. Colonial-era records overwhelmingly privilege institutional, scientific, and administrative perspectives, while marginalising or excluding the voices of research subjects, local practitioners, and communities in colonised regions. Attending to archival silences, absences, and incompleteness is therefore presented as a necessary professional practice rather than a supplementary interpretive exercise.

Ultimately, decolonising archival practice is argued not to undermine authenticity but to expand it. Authenticity emerges as an ethical commitment to confronting institutional authority, acknowledging power relations, and making visible both presence and absence within the archival record. By foregrounding reflexivity, discomfort, and accountability, the LSTM decolonisation project offers a model for how archival institutions might move beyond symbolic commitments to decolonisation and towards sustained, critical engagement with the unequal histories and ongoing legacies embedded in their collections.

## Individual Paper

112 Inseparable heritage: Reflections on sharing and exchanging the archives of the historic Penrhyn Estates across Jamaica and Wales  
Mr Alex Ioannou, Bangor University

Session: C6

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 2:55 PM - 3:55 PM

Presentation Order: 2

### Abstract:

At its height the Penrhyn Estate in Northwest Wales incorporated hundreds of farms, rural settlements and major industrial ventures centred on the extraction of slate, underpinning the recent award of UNESCO World Heritage Status to the Slate Landscapes of Gwynedd. The capacity of the Pennant family to amass, manage, improve and exploit their land in north Wales was underpinned by a wealth initially accumulated from the enslavement of African people on their Jamaican sugar plantations. The Penrhyn Estate Archive features records relating to all these spheres.

Within this paper I reflect on two processes of sharing and exchanging archival records of the historic estate. Firstly, the process and challenges of digitising a representative selection of records pertaining to the Pennant family's centuries-long involvement in Jamaica and in the enslavement of African people; the management of their sugar plantations; the lives of enslaved Africans; the politics of colonialism and abolition; and the wealth generated through the sugar industry. Secondly a series of mixed-method sessions focused on physical archive records held/organised to engage local people with the large-scale historical changes across the agricultural, industrial, political and civic institutions of Northwest Wales funded by the Pennant family's accumulated capital.

Both processes are critical within the development of research and public engagement about the Penrhyn Estate and landed gentry – their power and influence, business and trading operations, community and landscape shaping. Through digitisation and free access, the Penrhyn Jamaica Papers project allows the showcasing of the realities on the Pennant's Jamaican estates and enables future work to build connections between North Wales to Jamaica. The Reframing Eryri project brought together community members, strengthened links between BUASC and its collaborators and enabled the locating and sharing of multiple histories of place. Both projects widened access to archive material and broadened collective understandings about the importance which landed estates had within Welsh and Jamaican history.

However, the focus and delineation of the projects within their respective geographical countries - or spheres of influence - speaks to the difficulty of designing projects which can encompass the complexity and interconnectedness of landed estates and transatlantic slavery. Additionally, the projects reveal a tension between the digital record (which is distant) and the original record (which is grounded) within discussions and engagement with local communities in Britain. This paper asks: How can future projects engaged with the Penrhyn Estate Archive minimise any perceived separation between types of records and so between North Wales and Jamaica, whose heritage as the archive itself reveals, is inseparable.

## Individual Paper

### 84 The Role of Facsimiles in Balancing Preservation with Public Engagement

Mr Richard Hawkes, Artworks Conservation Ltd

Session: B7

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 4:25 PM - 5:25 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

Artworks Conservation, a paper conservation studio, also create archival-quality facsimiles of documents and manuscripts and supply exhibitions around the world. Over the years, technology such as high-resolution imaging and pigmented, inkjet printing as well as 3D scanning and printing have enabled us to make increasingly realistic, lightfast, display and handling copies that can take the place of original, delicate exhibits and help extend the life of exhibitions and enhance interpretation and visitor interaction. These technologies are combined with our intimate knowledge of paper, parchment and media alongside our hand-skills to assemble 3-dimensional replicas. We can manipulate, construct, re-create the look of and mount replicas or facsimiles of diverse items, including their folds, handling creases and even tears. This can make the difference between a flat, printed copy and a life-like facsimile.

Due to factors such as light sensitivity, fragility, the difficulty of extended loan agreements or security, for example, we have been involved in an increasing use of facsimiles. These have included Shakespeare's will, Royal charters, Roald Dahl's ideas books, Nelson Mandela's trial card and acetates from the Beatle's animation, 'Yellow Submarine'.

The presentation examines the variety of ways in which facsimiles can be used in exhibitions and archives. These include direct copies, sometimes used after the original has been on initial display or individual pages from manuscripts laid on top of the original. Handling copies can allow viewers to engage more in displays, especially with manuscripts, or within educational activities. Presentation copies of important documents, such as Royal Charters complete with replica pendant seals, allow long-term display whilst the original remains in an archive. Facsimiles allow for the inclusion in displays of material not available for loan or to be sent to multiple overseas locations.

Technology now exists to make near indistinguishable copies of archival material and artworks which can stand in for the original. As archivists, curators and conservators we must decide how to balance their use with the need to maintain engagement with the authentic original. There is also an ethical issue around making facsimiles that incorporate some original material, of which examples will be discussed. Labelling and marking of facsimiles is required to inform where copies have been substituted and a balance is recommended so that visitors to exhibitions are not denied the opportunity to see authentic material.

## Individual Paper

### 141 Wire-Stitched Bindings: Restoring Authenticity Through Collaboration

Domonique Alesi and Miss Eleanor Smith, West Dean College

Session: B7

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 4:25 PM - 5:25 PM

Presentation Order: 2

#### Abstract:

The conservation of wire-stitched bindings is among the most interventive and over-conserved areas of book conservation, in which evidence of authenticity is frequently compromised or lost. The widespread practice of removing the original staples in the pursuit of stability has led to the silent destruction of technological and historical evidence contained within mass-produced books from the late nineteenth century. Introduced during a period of rapid industrial experimentation that prioritised speed and economy in book production, wire stitching embodies not only structural function but also technological innovation, economic conditions, and the material identity of mass-produced books. Yet contemporary conservation treatments often regard these metal elements as expendable. While removal may appear to improve stability, it risks erasing evidence of manufacturing processes, structural intent, and historical use.

This research advocates a reassessment of default removal practices and supports the preservation of wire stitching in situ. Wire-stitched bindings are among the few structures where metal components are fundamental to the internal binding formation. Metallic elements have been incorporated in bindings since the beginning of the codex structure, as fastening and protective mechanisms or as decorative elements. In a typical codex structure, the attaching material is a form of organic thread. Wire-stitching is unique in that the metal components are found within the internal binding structure, fastening the gatherings of folios together. This poses very specific conservation challenges, with ferrous staples and acidic paper creating complex deterioration pathways. This material combination draws upon two contrasting disciplines within conservation that has fostered collaborative problem solving.

Drawing on practical case studies through collaboration between a library materials and metals conservators at West Dean College, this research examines the ethical and technical conflicts faced by book conservators when addressing corroding metal elements. It will highlight the limitations of addressing metallic deterioration within an organic-based conservation framework and demonstrate how collaboration can help expand available treatment options.

Through cross-disciplinary approaches, diagnostic, environmental, and stabilisation strategies are explored, enabling the evaluation and treatment of deteriorated metal elements rather than their automatic replacement. The collaboration of two conservation specialisms challenges inherited assumptions about risk, stability, and acceptable loss.

Rather than treating staple removal as a default conservation treatment, this presentation proposes an authenticity-based decision-making model. One which weighs material evidence, technological significance, and long-term preservation alongside condition and use. In doing so, this presentation contributes to broader debates within conservation and addresses the complexities in preserving the authenticity of books and their production.

## Individual Paper

### 55 Authenticity as Practice: Guiding Principles in National Trust for Scotland Conservation Decision Making

Mrs Julie Bon National Trust for Scotland

Session: B7

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 4:25 PM - 5:25 PM

Presentation Order: 3

#### Abstract:

Authenticity in conservation practice is a fundamental pillar of our profession's ethical framework. Although not explicitly referenced in ARA's competency framework or Code of Ethics, it permeates every aspect of our work.

At the National Trust for Scotland, our approach is guided by a codified set of Conservation Principles that inform decisions around the care and presentation of our historic interiors and collections. First published in 2003 and inspired by the Burra Charter, these Principles were updated in 2018 as the Conservation, Learning, Access and Enjoyment Principles. They have recently undergone a further internal review, with a new edition due for publication later this year. Across all iterations, the concept of authenticity has remained central - expressed in evolving ways as the organisation's understanding and priorities have developed.

The Trust's Conservation Principles encompass all areas of conservation across the charity, including buildings, collections and interiors, archaeology, nature and gardens. Their strength lies in offering a coherent framework that supports decision-making across this wide range of disciplines. While this talk will focus primarily on how the Principles relate to collections and interiors conservation, there may be a few images of mountains, plants and wildlife thrown in for context and colour.

This talk will trace the evolution of the Trust's Conservation Principles, placing them within the wider heritage sector and their historical moment. Drawing on the Trust's corporate archive, it will provide insight into the organisation's thinking in the early 2000s—when the need for a structured, guiding framework was first articulated.

The Principles will be examined through the lens of authenticity: identifying where it is stated explicitly, where it is implied, and how its role has shifted over the past 23 years. The discussion will explore how authenticity has developed from being a standalone principle in 2003 to becoming embedded as a foundational element of the Trust's entire conservation philosophy. It will also consider broader questions about authenticity in conservation and how effectively this value is defined, expressed and enacted within the Trust's work. Case studies from collections and interiors conservation will illustrate how authenticity has shaped key decisions in practice.

## Individual Paper

42 Who Defines the Record? Social Change and Authenticity in The Archive of the Irish in Britain

Mr David Baldwin, London Metropolitan University

Session: C7

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 4:25 PM - 5:25 PM

Presentation Order: 1

## Abstract:

Archives are often viewed as neutral spaces that preserve the 'authentic' record of the past, serving as static repositories of historical evidence. However, our work in London Metropolitan University's Special Collections supporting academic and public research, demonstrates that archives are shaped by social and institutional processes. These include choices about what to collect, preserve, catalogue, and make accessible. As social perspectives, identities, and values are changing, the idea of authenticity in archiving, which has historically been based on provenance and original order, needs to be reevaluated. This paper argues that shifting social contexts have an impact on both the interpretation of archives and what communities consider to be genuine proof of their lived experiences. Using The Archive of the Irish in Britain (AIB) as a case study, this presentation explores how archives facilitate collective memory, identity, and belonging within diasporic communities.

The AIB was collected in the early 1980s by the Irish Studies Centre at our predecessor institution, the Polytechnic of North London, to preserve the experiences of Irish migrants and their descendants settling in Britain - a community whose stories have not always been fully reflected in mainstream British histories. From the outset, choices about what to collect were shaped by contemporary understandings of Irish identity and culture. Records such as oral histories and community newsletters were actively gathered because they captured everyday experiences often absent from official records. The AIB therefore highlights how archival authenticity extends beyond traditional documentary sources, such as government or legal records, to include grassroots and ephemeral materials recognised as meaningful and representative by the community itself.

This evolving relationship between social change and archival practice raises wider questions: How can an archive meaningfully represent a community when both the archive and the community continue to change? How can archival institutions balance respect for historical context with responsiveness to contemporary ethical considerations? And how might community members play a more active role in shaping ideas of authenticity and representation?

As social perspectives on migration, ethnicity, and transnational identity have evolved, so too have the ways in which materials in the AIB are understood. Growing interest in intersectional approaches, diverse forms of expression, and participatory heritage has encouraged the Special Collections team and our researchers to consider how earlier collecting practices may have highlighted some experiences while others were less visible - for example, emphasising political activism while under-representing women's working lives or LGBTQIA+ experiences within the Irish in Britain community. These reflections have prompted renewed discussion about what constitutes authentic representation and has informed the ongoing development of archival practice.

Drawing on archival theory, post-colonial perspectives, and community-focused heritage approaches, this presentation suggests that authenticity in archives is best understood as something shaped through dialogue and ongoing negotiation, rather than as a fixed quality. The AIB demonstrates how archives can function as living records, where past and present are in conversation, and where changing social perspectives continue to enrich our understanding of what is meaningful and worth preserving.

## Individual Paper

99 All Change! Gathering and displaying complex, conflicting records representing railway privatisation

Mrs Alison Petersen, Science Museum Group

Session: C7

Date: August 6, 2026

Session Time: 4:25 PM - 5:25 PM

Presentation Order: 2

### Abstract:

Building an authentic archive of recent events is incredibly challenging. It is impossible to represent pivotal moments in time, such as changes to the nation's transport networks, to large audiences in a genuine way without gaining the trust of a variety of communities, networks and organisations, and by curating content they pass on.

But how can trust be built with depositors? How can the recordkeeper refine their methods of communication with individuals, huge corporations, whole communities and how does being part of a museum influence these conversations? How do museums choose which archival story is told to visitors, and when does the potential display of archives damage or bolster the trust of donors? This paper will explore the answers to these questions by drawing on the experience gained from collecting recent railway archives.

In the 1990s, privatisation totally changed the face of railways in Britain, 30 years later the introduction of Great British Railways has again brought the organisation of railways into sharp focus. There are few people who do not have a strong opinion on the current railway system and how it impacts their lives. One of the Science Museum Group's five core values - 'Share Authentic Stories' - combined with the National Railway Museum (NRM)'s focus on recent and future rail developments, means the privatisation story needs careful unpicking to be told.

The NRM's archives are packed with detail which this paper will draw upon to explore both methodologies and content.

Professionals right from the top of the industry describe their place in privatisation in oral histories; drivers, caterers and station staff describe on-the-ground how franchising changes affected them; enthusiasts record changing vehicle liveries at the trackside by filming and photographing; campaign groups strategise and lobby for the rights of passengers. These recent acquisitions have required tailored, individual approaches to foster trust and will contribute to powerful, delicately curated displays.

And our collecting continues - we are laying the foundations for the long-term acquisition of 'official' core business records of the now shrinking privatised railway industry, with some franchise records already acquired. This involves building relationships with over 30 railway operating companies, and trying to ensure that their archives do not disappear in line with liquidations, retention schedules or via large-scale archival digitisation programmes. Conversations are often dominated with concerns about release of commercial data and require further tailored approaches. These corporate archives, if saved, will remain closed for decades.

Drawing on this vast array of material and collecting practices, this paper will examine thematic, contemporary archive collecting within the context of a large, subject-specialist museum group. It will provide delegates with practical take-home advice including contemporary archival lessons of working with individuals, groups, and businesses, learnt from direct museum practice.

## Individual Paper

## 77 Digital Concrete: Reconstructing 'Frog, Pond, Plop'

Ms Jo Castle, The University of Manchester

Session: A8

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 1

## Abstract:

Like many cultural heritage institutions, The University of Manchester's Special Collections Library (The John Rylands Research Institute & Library) holds many objects which are not on display and are too fragile to be handled by visitors. This has prompted an increase in using 3D modelling to make objects visible to a wider audience.

In many cases it can be difficult to create a perfect 3D representation of an object. This might be due to the materiality of the object which can be difficult to capture, if the item is reflective, translucent or transparent, is non-rigid or has moving parts, etc. An example of this is an important work by a British pioneer of Concrete poetry, the poem 'Frog, Pond, Plop' by Dom Sylvester Houedard.

Dom Sylvester Houedard (1924–1992)—better known as dsh—was a Benedictine monk, theologian, and pioneering figure in British Concrete poetry. The John Rylands Library holds his archive, including the poem Frog, Pond, Plop, one of Houedard's most significant experiments in the visual-poetic form. Houedard's works sit within the tradition of Concrete poetry, where spatial arrangement carries equal or greater interpretive weight than the words themselves.

Frog, Pond, Plop reimagines a well known haiku by 17th century Japanese poet Bashō as a three-dimensional poem in the form of a paper fortune-teller. The item's fragility means that we cannot display it in operation nor allow handling, so it is not possible for visitors to experience the poem as intended.

This paper outlines a project to create an animated 3D model of Frog, Pond, Plop so that viewers can see it digitally in operation, and describes the process of recreating the item, the problems encountered and how they were dealt with before showing the end result.

Initial attempts involved photographing the sheet flat and digitally folding it in 3D modelling software. However, the modelling process proved technically complex. Ultimately, the model was built directly in its final folded form with the image textures applied afterwards. This approach enabled animation and online display, but the model does not replicate the object's true materiality or structure.

While the model effectively communicates the poem's intended experience, it is not a digital facsimile or archival version of the item. As 3D representation becomes increasingly integrated into heritage workflows, this project underscores the need for transparency around modelling methods, decisions and compromises, and for more thought around how digital construction fits into digitisation teams' practice of 'faithful' representation.

## Individual Paper

127 Copies, copies everywhere: Rethinking authenticity and access in the absence of originals

Mr Maxim R J Wilson and Ms Louise Pichel, Lloyd's Register Foundation

Session: A8

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 2

### Abstract:

If all you've got is a copy of a copy, can that ever be truly authentic? Is there anything we can do to make the material more authentic? Should we even bother?

Lloyd's Register Foundation (LRF) is looking to answer these questions and more as part of a large-scale digitisation and cataloguing project, due to finish in 2027. LRF is an independent global safety charity formed from the world's first marine classification organisation, founded in 1760. It provides survey, inspection, and certification services to vessels globally, in some cases generating thousands of records per vessel.

From the 1960s-2010s, surveying records, including reports, drawings, plans and correspondence, were all transferred to microfilm or microfiche, creating a substantial collection estimated to generate 50 million images. LRF is working to preserve, digitise and catalogue this material, now the only surviving evidence as the original paper records were destroyed. The timing of the project is especially important as the microfilm and fiche are starting to degrade.

The source microfilms pose a challenge in terms of authenticity. The material has never been appraised or indexed, the image quality is occasionally patchy and original order has been lost. Given the scale of the collection, we're committed to using AI to surface metadata and drive usability, which raises further issues over authenticity.

This paper will outline the questions we're having to ask ourselves around how authentic this collection is, address whether authenticity has already been lost and describe how we've navigated a disconnect between archival theory and a need to make the collection as accessible and useable as possible. We will invite you to consider how valuable authenticity is in the context of this collection and offer an opportunity to examine whether, where originals have been lost, access should be prioritised over authenticity.

## Individual Paper

145 Bringing archives' physical evidence and qualities into the digital sphere

Dr Alison Spence

Session: A8

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 3

### Abstract:

When archivists and archive users encounter and interact with physical documents, they see their form, appearance and what material they are made of, they feel the texture of the paper and hear it rustle as they fight to undo centuries-old folds and may even smell whiffs of coal dust or perfume. As they untie a bundle of letters and leaf through them, or survey a pile of notebooks, they observe how these items were physically curated by past owners. All this material evidence enables archivists and users to critically evaluate archives' content, query their authenticity and unpick their function and history of use. It can also foster a sense of connection with past owners and creators. But, when archives are digitised and made available online, the remote user's ability to interpret and interrogate the physical evidence is often significantly compromised, because neither visual representations or catalogue descriptions effectively convey documents' physical qualities and context.

Using textile industry pattern books as a case study, this presentation will explore the importance of material evidence for testing authenticity and interpreting content, function, use and past curation. It will consider how archivists unintentionally alter archives' physical context in their interventions to preserve or digitise records, and the consequent loss of potentially valuable information about the record and its provenance. The presentation will reflect on the relationship between physical originals and digital representations and the benefits each offer for research and engagement. It will provide examples of how digital technologies can facilitate study of material features and evidence and provide rich insights into the past. The presentation will conclude by offering a framework for capturing and conveying physical qualities in the digital sphere, without the need for complex technologies, to enable attendees to adapt and implement the proposals within their own context. It seeks to foster and encourage ongoing discussion about archival materiality and its role in archival practice, research and engagement.

## Individual Paper

### 27 Materials of Truth: Technical Authentication and Fibre Analysis of Iranian Security Documents (1940-1950)

Mr Morteza Mafi, Independent Conservation Researcher & Document Specialist

Session: B8

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

The authenticity of a historical record is often hidden within its microscopic structure. This paper presents a comparative technical study of Iranian identity documents (Shenasnameh) from the 1940s, a pivotal decade where traditional papermaking met global industrial imports. The research investigates the "hierarchy of authenticity" by analysing the material transition from traditional, lignin-free rag fibres to imported industrial wood-pulp papers.

A significant part of this study involves the forensic differentiation between local and imported substrates. While traditional Iranian papers utilized high-purity cellulose from textile fibres (lignin-free), the 1940s saw a surge in industrial papers imported from Germany. These imported security papers, characterized by their lignin content and specific chemical sizing, were often insured by British maritime firms, creating a complex global provenance.

To bridge the gap between damaged physical states and legal legitimacy, Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) was employed. This non-invasive technology allowed for the digital recovery of obscured security features, specifically the Lion and Sun motifs, which were embossed or watermarked to deter forgery. By visualising these latent symbols, the research demonstrates how RTI can verify the "originality" of a document even when its surface is severely degraded or fragmented.

By combining fibre microscopy—which identifies the shift from traditional long fibres to industrial pulp—with digital imaging, this presentation offers a new framework for archival authentication. It argues that the "Truth" of a record resides not just in its text, but in its materiality. For the conservator and archivist, understanding the chemical and physical evolution of these documents is essential to preserving the integrity of national history in a "post-truth" era.

Authentication, Security Documents, Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), Fibre Analysis, Paper Conservation, Lignin, Iranian Archives, Materiality, Forensic Conservation, Watermarks

## Individual Paper

### 32 Oral Histories and Authenticity

Neasa Roughan, Royal College of Nursing Archives

Session: C8

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

With the advent of online loans, the accessibility of oral histories has increased considerably over recent years. However, archive users often rely solely on the transcripts of oral history interviews, as this is a quicker process than listening to a recording. However, this means that they are not experiencing the oral history as an original archive. Transcripts can omit pauses, slang, and background noise. Tone and accent is usually lost. But does this mean that the authenticity of the oral history has been lost?

Transcriptions are often an essential part of archiving oral histories, streamlining the creation of catalogue entries and summaries. With the advent of ai transcription software, more and more organisations are using this as an alternative to human dictation services, despite associated risks of poorer quality output, and a lessening of the authentic experience of the oral history.

This paper seeks to explore whether it matters if researchers are using transcripts rather than the original recording, if it means they are accessing the archive collections? And is there a place for ai in the archiving of oral histories?

## Individual Paper

## 15 How Authentic are Postcolonial Documents on Africa?

Mr Bob Munanga Matekya Maskati, Prime Minister Office, the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Session: C8

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 2

## Abstract:

When we ask how authentic postcolonial African documents really are, we have to look at the history of colonisation itself. These records were created by the people in power, in a system built on political and ideological control. That means we have to read them with a critical eye and try to see what's missing.

The Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 was a major turning point. European powers carved up Africa among themselves without consulting a single African person. They drew lines on a map that had nothing to do with the people who actually lived there, ignoring existing ethnic groups, cultures, and political realities. This division is the very root of many of the identity and border conflicts that continue today.

You can see the devastating effects of this partition clearly in Central Africa. In the eastern part of what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, communities with deep ties to the Great Lakes region were suddenly split by new borders. Some ended up in the Belgian Congo, while others were in the territory that became Rwanda, fuelling tensions that have lasted for generations. In the west, the Bakongo people, including the Bazombo, were scattered across the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, and the Republic of the Congo—a single, coherent cultural space, fragmented by colonial lines. In many cases, the traditional leaders of a community are now in one country while many of their people are in another, creating a disconnect between long-standing authority and modern state borders.

Before colonisers arrived, many African societies passed down their history and memory through rich oral traditions. Just because they didn't have a written culture in the Western sense didn't mean they had no history. Colonisation completely upended this balance by imposing its own version of a written history, produced almost entirely by the colonisers. Administrators, missionaries, and explorers wrote the documents that now fill the archives, and their accounts were often designed to justify colonial rule, downplay local resistance, and dismiss the political structures that were already in place.

To make matters worse, when African nations finally gained their independence, a huge portion of the colonial archives was shipped back to Europe. The records that were eventually returned were often incomplete or took years to arrive, which naturally raises questions about their integrity. And even when these archives are accessible, they reflect a purely Western viewpoint, using administrative categories and ways of thinking that were completely foreign to African realities.

So, you simply can't take the authenticity of these documents at face value. They have to be carefully weighed against other sources, like oral histories, local archives, and contemporary African scholarship. Real authenticity isn't found in a single piece of paper from that era; it's found by piecing together a fuller, more inclusive truth that takes the entire historical context into account.

## Individual Paper

## 36 The Authenticity of Intangible Records: A Case of Land Objects in Uganda

Ms Monica Naluwoza, Aberystwyth University

Session: C8

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 11:05 AM - 12:25 PM

Presentation Order: 3

## Abstract:

In recent years, the land management system in Uganda has been faced with challenges like forgery of land titles, multiple copies of titles and corruption which have led to an increase in land conflicts. The records available in the country are majorly from the colonial time when documentation or titling of land started. Pre-colonial-- the country was oral and all land transactions were done orally. Currently, some of the major land objects like titles have been fully digitised and their search system is automated, however, the process is still on-going for the rest of the activities. While progress on digitisation and automation has been made, issues of authenticity and integrity of the digital records are on the increase. The authenticity of the current records in the country remains contingent upon the intangible undocumented properties of land. Persistent challenges like land fraud, conflicts, fake land titles, land grabbing, fake land documents, etc continue to reflect in the system. As defined by ISO 15489-1: 2016, a record that shows integrity is one that has not been altered and is complete. Sodring (2020) affirms that a record keeping system has to keep records collected and not changed. It is therefore manifestly clear that there is a need for authenticity of land records in the country.

Uganda as a country has gone through various reforms including the cultural transition—shifting away from an oral to a documented society. The current land challenges emanate from this transition of historical (pre-colonial era) to the current (post-colonial) documented land management system. The major problem lies in the undocumented/ oral properties of land and the lack of integrity in the records management system. As Mamdani (1996) states, land records serve as the foundation of land ownership and provide documented evidence, however, a significant aspect of land records and ownership specifically for the precolonial and post-colonial in Uganda reside in the realm of intangible knowledge—that is not recorded in society and yet it carries significant weight.

This paper therefore examines the possibility of documenting the historic intangible knowledge concerning land and integrating it to the current formal records management system. To achieve a high level of authenticity of the current records and to effectively administer justice and provide security over the land objects, the paper proposes to have duo recognition of both the tangible and intangible knowledge. This will allow the two systems to inform each other which will provide accountability and authenticity of the land records in the country.

This paper presents preliminary findings from an ongoing PhD research and therefore it is still work in progress.

## Individual Paper

### 11 Authentic Assessment: Applying an Ethics of Care Mindset to Digital Collection and Metadata Assessment

Evan Miller, Indiana University Indianapolis

Session: A9

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

Entering a new position comes with new responsibilities and projects. To increase collection access, it can be tempting to jump into evaluating legacy projects and quickly make changes based on our own knowledge and experiences. However, this approach ignores institutional knowledge—giving precedence to our own perspectives and opinions—and disregards the individuals responsible for building up and forming the collections with which we're working. By ignoring our predecessors' contributions and not taking the time to understand the reasoning behind their decisions, we miss the lessons that they learned through their successes and failures as well as the growth and changes in the institution.

Upon starting as the inaugural Digital Preservation and Digital Collections Archivist at Indiana University Indianapolis in August 2025, Evan N. Miller aimed to assess his institution's digital collections and associated metadata while keeping in mind the people who were responsible for creating and working with these collections. The position, being the outcome of merging past library roles with new strategic priorities, required Miller to work across departments and interpret differing institutional practices while charting a new vision forward. Applying current applications in the archival literature of the ethics-of-care concept, Miller will share his process for authentically and transparently assessing the state of his institution's digital collections, including specific information he aimed to collect and why along with specific tools and workflows he used to gather, document, and share the information. Specific areas of focus in this approach's application will be cultural heritage digital collections, born-digital assets, and documentation.

## Individual Paper

### 33 Establishing Authenticity for Digital Archives: Finding a New Perspective That Facilitates Access and Accessibility

Sharon McMeekin, Preserve Together and Dr Alicia Wise, CLOCKSS Archive

Session: A9

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 2

#### Abstract:

In her seminal 1995 *Archivaria* article, “Reliability and Authenticity: The Concepts and Their Implications”, Luciana Duranti aimed to establish the essential components of reliability and authenticity in archival records and how they relate to one another. But it is a definition reliant on inherent characteristics belonging to physical analogue records and on processes specific to formal Western approaches to record-keeping.

If we broaden the scope of archives beyond those forms and processes, in particular to include digital content, these definitions quickly become too rigid and impossible to maintain in a practical capacity.

When considering how to define authenticity for digital archives, there are three main challenges to consider:

- Digital archives are ephemeral by nature, lacking the physicality that is core to many of the processes for ensuring the authenticity of analogue records.
- Creating an exact copy, that may be indistinguishable from the original, is the work of seconds, easily leading to a proliferation of copies and an inability to definitively state which is the authentic “original”.
- Both preserving and providing access to digital archives may require changes to be made, for example migrating the content to a new file format. How can authenticity be measured and confirmed through these processes?

The tension between access provision and authenticity is a particularly fascinating challenge with digital archives. Technology creates new approaches to and opportunities for broadening access to digital archival content. One example is through the use of assistive technologies such as screen readers, personal amplification systems, and captioning to expand access to people living with disabilities. Where digital archive content has not been created to support the use of these technologies it is clearly ethical and moral to widen access, so how do we do this whilst also maintaining authenticity?

In this paper we will set out how digital archives challenge us to rethink traditional methods of establishing authenticity and the different perspectives and methods we could utilise in the digital age. In particular, we will examine how different views on authenticity, such as the three lenses of artifactual, informational and folkloric authenticity described by Trevor Owens in his book *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation*, might afford us a more flexible approach to the concept. We will then focus specifically on the tension between maintaining authenticity and how we can exploit the potential to make digital archives more accessible.

We will also offer a practical perspective on this issue through a case study of ongoing work at the CLOCKSS Archive, a global leader in the preservation of ejournal and ebook content. The CLOCKSS Archive has recently undergone a major accessibility review and is in the process of taking new steps to make both their platforms and archival content more accessible to users. CLOCKSS is also closely involved in the development of a new ISO standard, EPUB/a, for archiving EPUB formatted ebook files.

## Individual Paper

80 Authenticity in the simulacrum: practical observations on appraisal and cataloguing of digital records from the Transport Initiatives Edinburgh Ltd.

Ray Moore, City Of Edinburgh Council

Session A9:

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 3

### Abstract:

This paper seeks to examine the challenges of securing integrity, reliability and authenticity within a digital environment in which 'natural' record formation processes – in the form of digitisation, versioning, backup, copying, duplication, password protection, encryption and format – serve as points of rupture in which the authentic is subverted. This outcome necessitates a renegotiation of authenticity in which the archivist becomes the active agent for the (re)creation, transformation, and reconfiguration of the record. While archival discourse has developed metanarratives that address the issue of authenticity from the top down, this paper examines it from the bottom up, drawing on the practices and experiences involved in the appraisal and cataloguing of digital records from a large business collection from the Transport Initiatives Edinburgh Ltd. This collection reflects the nature of record-keeping practice in the early 21st century, covering the transition from paper-based record-keeping, in which the digital was supplementary, to one in which it proliferated. The outcome is a collection that exceeds 5TB, comprising approximately 7 million files, stored on a variety of storage hardware, media, and Microsoft SharePoint sites, and in more than 80 discrete formats. While records managers and archival professionals often utilise metadata to augment the search for the authentic, here, organisational changes, improper data migrations, and system failures have contributed to some significant losses of this crucial information.

The paper contends that authenticity should no longer be regarded as Cartesian but conceptualised with greater nuance. It proposes that the archivist should no longer be the objective custodian of authenticity but instead an active agent in its creation.

This paper draws on work undertaken as part of the 'The Last Stop, Newhaven: Cataloguing the Digital Legacy of Transport Initiatives Edinburgh Ltd and the Edinburgh Trams (2002-2011)', funded by the (UK) National Archives, Archives' Revealed programme.

## Individual Paper

### 90 Reimagining Access to Tightly Bound Manuscripts

Mrs. Samantha Schireson, National Library of Scotland

Session: B9

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

Authenticity sits at the heart of conservation theory and practice, an ethical tenet which guides decision-making as we navigate the balance between preservation, access, and interpretation. This presentation outlines a digitisation initiative that seeks to reconcile these tensions, placing the longevity of the object at the centre of its priorities through the development of an innovative mirror-assisted capture system designed for tightly bound manuscripts previously considered inaccessible.

At the National Library of Scotland, many bound volumes in our collection, particularly tightly sewn or fragile manuscripts, have historically been excluded from digitisation programmes. Conventional imaging methods and mass digitisation infrastructure risk mechanical strain, gutter shadow, text loss, and potential mechanical damage. As a result, these volumes were indefinitely deferred within digital access strategies, limiting user engagement and raising important questions about equity of access and the authenticity of the archival record presented online.

In response, a member of our Imaging Services staff, in close collaboration with the conservation team, designed a mirror capture device adaptable to an adjustable cradle. This system enables the capture of text deep within the gutter without forcing the binding beyond a safe opening angle. By reflecting otherwise obscured areas toward the camera sensor, the device produces more complete images while maintaining the manuscript's structural integrity. This innovation negates the need for interventive treatment and significantly reduces risk to the object during digitisation. Rather than undertaking rebinding or disbinding to achieve image completeness, we adopted a minimal-intervention approach aligned with professional standards of reversibility and the retention of original structure.

A secondary consideration is how to maintain authenticity throughout the digitisation process. Decisions about lighting, angle, reflection, and image processing inevitably shape how authenticity is perceived in the digital surrogate. Does a more "complete" digital image enhance interpretive authenticity, or might it risk presenting an idealised version of the object?

By examining workflow development, risk assessment, and collaborative decision-making, this presentation reflects on the "why" behind our approach. We argue that authenticity in the digital realm is not solely a function of material fidelity, but also of ethical transparency. Addressing technological constraints through innovation rather than alteration, this project offers a case study in how conservation practice can uphold authenticity while broadening access to complex archival materials.

## Individual Paper

### 151 Beyond the Bench: Integrating Materiality and Hazard Data into the Descriptive Record

Claire Schieder, National Library of Scotland

Session: B9

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 2

#### Abstract:

For the conservator, the "authenticity" of an item is inextricably linked to its physical state and its history of intervention. However, this critical data is frequently siloed within internal databases and surveys, leaving the descriptive record—the primary point of discovery for staff and researchers—as an incomplete representation of the item's life cycle. This disconnect creates a professional tension between archival accessibility and the conservation imperative of transparency and safety.

This presentation explores the creation, trial, and evaluation of the Conservation Input Tool, a bespoke interface designed to bridge the gap between the conservation studio and the collection management systems Alma and ArchivesSpace. We will discuss the tool's development and how its implementation has fundamentally transformed our internal conservation workflows, allowing for the streamlined input of standardised Condition Ratings (C1–C4) and critical metadata regarding hazards, such as the presence of arsenic.

Beyond the studio, we evaluate how this integration has benefited wider institutional departments. By surfacing handling guidance and physical hazards directly at the point of discovery, we have empowered reading room staff and curators with the material evidence to facilitate safe access.

By moving toward a model where treatment records are embedded, we provide a more authentic account of the item's provenance. This ensures that intervention is not a hidden act of interpretation, but a documented, transparent part of the item's history that strengthens the integrity of the archival record.

## Individual Paper

### 128 Interpreting Board of Trade Design Registrations Through 3D Visualisation and Game Environments

Dr Pedro Maximo Rocha, The National Archives

Session: B9

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 3

#### Abstract:

The Board of Trade (BT) design registrations constitute one of the most significant visual records of Victorian material culture, documenting furniture, decorative objects, wallpapers, textiles, and industrial design. Despite their importance, access to these volumes is severely constrained. Their physical size and weight require supervised handling, many volumes contain non-active mould, and consultation often necessitates access within Collection Care environments. As a result, these records, while technically available, remain functionally of difficult access to many readers.

Digitisation is frequently proposed as the solution to access barriers, yet for collections of this scale and condition it is often financially prohibitive, technically complex, and ethically constrained. Moreover, even when images are available, the highly specialised nature of design registrations limits meaningful engagement: records are often catalogued at a high level, offering little descriptive detail of individual designs. This creates an additional layer of inaccessibility, particularly for non-specialist audiences who may struggle to understand what these designs represent, how they functioned, or how they existed within lived Victorian spaces.

This presentation explores an alternative approach: the development of a game-based 3D visualisation workflow that interprets BT design registrations not as isolated images, but as objects situated within historically informed environments. Rather than digitising the designs directly, the project extrapolates their three-dimensional form, materials, scale, and spatial context, allowing users to experience how these objects may have appeared when new, in use, and interacting with light, texture, and surrounding interiors.

The process itself exposes fundamental questions of authenticity. Objects are modelled using differing methodologies depending on their source material: some are created entirely from 2D design registrations; others are informed by surviving physical examples captured via laser scanning; still others rely on comparative analysis of period materials and manufacturing techniques. Each method involves interpretive decisions, assumptions, and inevitable inaccuracies. In this sense, the resulting digital objects are not reproductions but interpretations.

The presentation interrogates where authenticity resides within this process. Is the paper design registration inherently more authentic than a speculative 3D reconstruction? Does visualising an object's volume, materiality, and spatial presence offer a more authentic understanding of its historical reality? Conversely, if an original object survives but has aged, deteriorated, or been conserved, does its current state represent authenticity or distance us further from its original Victorian condition?

Rather than presenting a definitive answer, this project proposes authenticity as relational and layered. The game environment maintains direct access to the original archival record alongside its digital interpretation, encouraging users to navigate between source, context, and reconstruction. In doing so, it challenges static notions of authenticity and suggests that interpretive digital tools, when transparently constructed, can expand access while deepening, rather than diminishing, engagement with archival truth.

#### Individual Paper

17 Whose throne, is it? Chieftaincy succession disputes in Malawi and the role of records in upholding human rights and constitutional principles

Mr Clement Mweso, National Archives Of Malawi

Session: C9

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 1

#### Abstract:

Chieftaincy succession disputes in Malawi have become progressively prominent, reflecting an intricate interaction between tradition, constitutional governance, and human rights. Such disputes frequently deepen due to conflicting claims of ancestry and heritage, creating danger to communal stability and the credibility of local governance. This paper examines the extent to which various competing claimants to chieftaincy across the country have utilized available historical records from the National Records and Archives Services in adjudicating chieftaincy disputes. The paper explores how these records serve as reliable sources for authenticating entitlements, providing an avenue for local citizens to claim their rights in culturally sensitive and legally complex matters. Besides, these records act not just as historical evidence but also as tools for protecting rights and affirming the constitutional tenets of equality, fairness, and openness. The paper also illustrates that some claimants buoyed by evidence from these inquiries escalate their contestation in courts and in turn, court officials, judges and lawyers have consulted records at National Archives to solidify their cases and make determinations. Besides, the paper focuses particularly on the rights of marginalised communities, whose voices are frequently overlooked in archival appraisal processes. Furthermore, the study draws attention to how archival materials intersect with judicial and customary practices, illuminating a significant aspect that has emerged in recent history of the country, the relentless drive by local citizens to demand their rights. Finally, the article argues that while records offer significant opportunities for justice and legitimacy, gaps in access and awareness present ongoing challenges.

## Individual Paper

## 16 Cataloguing the Hillsborough Project: A Personal Reflection on Authenticity

Miss Aimy Stevens, Edge Hill University

Session: C9

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 2

## Abstract:

Reflecting on my experience of cataloguing the Disasters Research Archive created by Professor Phil Scraton at Edge Hill University, with a focus on the Hillsborough Project and how its records challenge the official account of events presented by the media. As a Level 7 Archivist and Records Manager apprentice, this is one of the first major collections I have worked on, and it has raised important questions for me about authenticity, responsibility and the role of the archivist when working with records that contest the official narrative.

The Hillsborough Project was an independent research and advocacy project set up after the 1989 disaster to examine the investigations, inquests and public narratives that followed. Based at Edge Hill between 1990 and 2003, and funded by Liverpool City Council, the project was designed to provide external scrutiny of official processes and to work alongside bereaved families and survivors. The records created through this work later became part of the Disasters Research Archive.

While cataloguing the collection, it became clear that many of these records exist because the official account could not be fully trusted. They document how police statements were altered or suppressed, how evidence was overlooked, and how media narratives shaped public understanding. Phil Scraton's first report *Hillsborough and After: The Liverpool Experience (1990)* drew directly on this material to challenge the version of events presented by authorities and the press and by giving voices to the bereaved families and survivors to provide context alongside the official records.

This raises a key question linked to the conference theme: when the official record is incomplete or misleading, where does authenticity sit? The Hillsborough Project does not replace official records, but it sits alongside them, offering context, additional perspectives, and evidence of how those records were created, defended, or altered. In this sense, the archive becomes a space where truth is examined from a specific viewpoint, rather than taken for granted. It asks whether archives should simply preserve records as they are, or whether they also have a role in helping users understand how and why certain narratives came to dominate, and others were pushed aside.

This paper also reflects on my position as the archivist working with this material. I have a strong personal and cultural connection to Liverpool, and Hillsborough is not a distant historical event but something that continues to shape the city and region. The Hillsborough disaster is still incredibly important today; the families are still campaigning for justice. The work undertaken at Edge Hill in the early 2000s remains central to understanding the truth of what happened and why accountability was so long delayed. By sharing my experience of working with the Hillsborough Project material at an early stage in my career, this paper aims to open discussion about how archivists at all levels engage with authenticity in contested collections and whether we can, or should, remain neutral.

## Individual Paper

24 All is fair in music archives: the ethical, research, and governance implications of pseudonyms in the Brass Bands Archive

Kaitlynn Buchbaum, Brass Bands England

Session: C9

Date: August 7, 2026

Session Time: 1:25 PM - 2:45 PM

Presentation Order: 3

### Abstract:

The Brass Bands Archive documents over a century of history of brass banding in Britain and internationally. Initiated by bandsmen Walter Ainscough and Alan Marsh and enhanced through accruals from banders in recent years, the collection includes a vast array of material relating to several aspects of brass band history, including material recording the relationship between banding and industry; records relating to the history of brass band contests; photographs, uniforms, scrapbooks, and other ephemera relating to a number of bands and banding individuals; a wealth of brass band publications; and an extensive collection of sheet music and scores.

This presentation will explore authenticity through the provenance of the collection, primarily through the presence of pseudonyms which obscure the identities of some record creators within the collection. Historically, producing military music bore certain ideological and political connotations. Individuals involved with composing or arranging such music, then, used pseudonyms to protect their identities and distance themselves from their professional or recreational work. As brass band music originated in the military band tradition and much of the earliest music arranged and composed for brass bands was produced for military performances and marches, the Brass Band Archive contains many examples of sheet music attributed to pseudonymous identifiers. Among these attributions, there are many instances of composers sharing the same pseudonyms, or of individual composers producing their work under multiple assumed names.

The presentation will explore the challenges these pseudonyms introduce into the process of cataloguing the collection and for creating authority records. It will address the ethics of revealing the true identities of individuals who chose to use pseudonyms, and the implications of these choices for modern researchers. It will also explore some practical guidelines for using these types of collections for engagement and teaching, as well as processes and methods of recordkeeping that the Archivist at Brass Bands England has developed to track the identities of musical composers and to ascribe meaning and comprehension to the archival materials that bear these traces of historic subterfuge.

Is it inauthentic for a record creator to identify themselves in a certain way? Is it ethical for an archivist to betray the creator's true identity? What governance concerns does this have in terms of Data Protection and in assigning copyright ownership and processing licenses? What broader implications does this have for creating a chain of authenticity in the course of any historic figure's life, whether that be their association with a particular pseudonym or a gender transition? These are questions that the presentation will endeavour to answer during a 20-minute presentation at the ARA conference.