Archives and Records Association UK & Ireland
Annual Conference: 27 - 29 August 2025, Bristol, UK
'Next Generation: Innovation and Imagination in Record Keeping'

Call for Papers

The Archives and Records Association's first ever hybrid Conference will be held in Bristol in 2025. The theme for our conference will be **'Next Generation: Innovation and Imagination in Record Keeping'**.

Adversity breeds innovation, forcing us to consider different approaches. This is an opportunity to reflect on our successes and evaluate what could have gone better. To ensure a viable and proactive future for our associated groups of professions, it is imperative that any forward-looking discussions must be through the lens of Sustainability, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We must view them as fundamental pillars of the next generation of the recordkeeping sector and ensure that we move beyond well-meaning but tokenistic gestures. This year's conference theme asks: how things were, how things are, how things could be and what are we doing to get there?

AREAS FOR SUBMISSIONS MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Old challenges - new solutions, or is it the other way around? How do we use existing knowledge and experience as the foundations for the future while embracing changes to the sector? Does the wheel need reinventing or is there value in revisiting and reviving old methods that may have been forgotten but can still be relevant?

- How can we attract people from a broad array of backgrounds and experience to our professions? Conversely, what deterrents are there to joining our numbers? What is the impact of perceptions of recordkeeping as a career, barriers are being identified and addressed but can we do more? Are there new ways to expand the routes into our workforce, both traditional and informal? With the pressure of reducing budgets and staffing resources how do we deliver training and development? Are we valuing and retaining staff including paraprofessionals? Reflecting on the changing nature of the sector, how can we adapt once formalised and fixed roles? As specialisms become more defined, with technology and innovations taking us further in more disparate directions – how do we maintain the strengths that are found in working together?

- How do we take advantage of developments in technology and what are the practical considerations? What new techniques and treatments are we deploying to prolong the usable life of our records? How do we meet the challenges arising from changes to systems we have become accustomed to? Amid all the specialist technical knowledge, how are we interrogating our choices to safeguard and minimise the risk to our collections? What new and innovative practices and procedures are we making use of,

Appointed organiser: Opening Doors & Venues Ltd (for and on behalf of ARA)
Tel: +44 (0) 1562 731788   Email: ARAconference@opening-doors.org.uk

B2025 BRISTOL

such as AI, smart buildings and the use of microclimates, sourcing and using sustainable materials, developments in software systems from cataloguing systems to environmental monitoring? How are our core principles, ethics, professional standards and legislation keeping pace with the changing world?

- We have an obligation as custodians of evidence. Our roles in recent high profile, high impact public inquiries have brought more visibility and the chance for advocacy. We need robust procedures to make it easier for new users to access our services. How do we identify and engage with previously unreached audiences and partners? What work is being done on uncovering diversity within existing catalogues as well as seeking new and representative collections?

- Coming from Left Field, you tell us what you and your organisations are doing to fulfil the theme. Professional curiosity, facing up to uncomfortable truths, listening to voices of dissent, are all vital to challenge the status quo. Are these the next generation's superpowers and is this how we make our services safe and positive places for all? How do we turn risks and threats into opportunities, making the maximum impact with often limited resources and the ever-present call for income generation? Are we forever a Cinderella service? It doesn't take a lot of imagination to make collections such as this sparkle – how do you make yours shine?

These prompts are only suggestive of potential areas that could be included, but the programme is really shaped by you! *What would you like to say at #ARA2025?*

When you submit your proposal on-line you can select one of the following areas for your presentation:

- Archives and Records
- Conservation
- Digital Preservation
- Information Governance

PROPOSALS

While we can consider alternatives, it helps us to programme if you can suggest a proposal which fits one of the formats listed below. We ask that where possible all speakers deliver their presentations in person. When you submit your proposal, please give details of the format you would prefer or contact us for an informal discussion conference@archives.org.uk.

- **Individual contributions** – presentations of 20 minutes, and if successful your proposal will be combined into a session with other speakers – these must be in person
- **Panel sessions** – three to five speakers presenting related papers on a specific theme or topic.
- **60 minute workshop** – a longer session aimed at including a practical element as well as presentation – in person

Please remember:

- We aim to devise a coherent programme, so please connect your proposal to the theme
- We would like proposals that will stimulate debate.
- We want diverse panels of speakers. If you have particular requirements (e.g. accessibility, interpretation, etc.) please let us know and we will make every effort to accommodate you.
- As a hybrid conference, this year's programme will be livestreamed and recorded for delegates to view online during and after the conference. You will be asked to confirm your consent when submitting your proposal and sign a consent form if your paper is accepted. [Click here to see an example consent form](#)

Anyone who has experience or expertise in working with records can submit a paper. Contributions are welcomed from across the UK and Ireland, and from colleagues in the global recordkeeping community. And of course we welcome submissions from other sectors too.

If you submit a proposal, you should have a reasonable expectation that, if invited, you would be able to attend in person in Bristol in August 2025 to make your contribution.

HOW DO I SUBMIT A PROPOSAL?

Please submit your presentation proposal [HERE](#).
If you require assistance, please contact araconference@opening-doors.org.uk

KEY DATES

- The submissions system will open on **Monday 18 November** and close on **Friday 17 January 2025, midnight UK time**.
- Notification of invitations to speak are expected to be issued from week beginning **24 February 2025.**
- The programme will be published shortly after that date and conference registration will open **mid-March 2025.**

EXPENSES

All speakers will receive free conference registration for the day on which they are presenting. We are unable to pay accommodation costs, but speakers will be reimbursed travel expenses up to a maximum of £100.

Appointed organiser: Opening Doors & Venues Ltd (for and on behalf of ARA)
Tel: +44 (0) 1562 731788   Email: ARAconference@opening-doors.org.uk

B2025 BRISTOL

In addition, please note that speakers are eligible to apply for the regular Conference bursaries to support attendance at the wider conference. These are usually advertised in April/May each year. If invited, you will be asked to confirm your attendance as a speaker for the day you are asked to speak prior to the bursary round taking place, so please take this into account when planning.

OUR CONFERENCE VENUE

Our venue for 2025 will be the Delta Hotels by Marriott Bristol City Centre. Further information can be found on the conference website.

Appointed organiser: Opening Doors & Venues Ltd (for and on behalf of ARA)
Tel: +44 (0) 1562 731788   Email: ARAconference@opening-doors.org.uk

2025 BRISTOL