



History Librarians Workshop

Question summary

Keeping historians reading: approaches to providing e-resources and alternatives to print during COVID-19

Isabel Holowaty (Head of Humanities Libraries & History Librarian, Bodleian, University of Oxford)

Matt Shaw: Great range of activities taking place across the Bodleian which are testament to Isabel and her colleagues. People across the sector are having to make decisions and adapt as these change and develop.

Number of things to draw out from the work in the sector around the changes being made that are both positive and negative. One thing this is an awful amount of effort and work that has already taken place and how sustainable are all of these activities for everyone going forward.

Q: What is your response to the question regarding the supermarket comparison? Supermarkets are opening why isn't the library?

A: Libraries are a complex site- multiple floors, entrances and book security systems. One of the biggest problems will be toilet provisions when readers are back on site.

- *Colleague from University of St Andrews commented in the chat that they are using portaloos for next semester and shared a webinar from [@MuseumsToilets](#) PLANNING TO REOPEN? DON'T FORGET THE TOILETS WEBINAR <https://youtu.be/zqyufcsJhyk>*

A: Mixture of readers using the library space- those that are there for long periods of intense study and those that are just dropping in to pick up a book. If there is a limit on how many people you can let into the building, managing this workflow with the mixed economy is certainly different from supermarkets.

Q: Can you share any insight into physical reopening of the Bodleian will look like and the time frame around this (to everybody).

A: Some limited staff have just been allowed back on site-this was only after all the correct documentation was provided to the University following a risk assessment, PPE and correct signage in place.

For Readers there is still not a time frame. The Bodleian has a project group looking at the re-opening to readers there is nothing in place currently.

Issues to look at before opening include a system for booking seats (a system in place which allows readers to click and collect can be used to book seats in reading rooms). The biggest issues that need looking at after doing a risk assessment of the building are ventilation, circulation of space, fire evacuation, number of readers allowed in the space (where they will be and how you will manage that), flow of one way systems around the building (narrow corridors will be a challenge). Once this



is has all been risked assessed it needs signing off from the Bodleian and the University. There will be screens in the library where appropriate

- The National Archives also have a working group that has been looking at reopening issues for both staff and readers - staff, on a very limited basis have started to return to work and the current view is to open to the public in July on an appointment only basis

Q: You mentioned the challenges of e-book availability—one thing we have found in Lincoln is that our students and academic colleagues expect books to be available as e-books. How do you manage expectations around e-book availability?

A: Bodleian have had to explain in more detail than they usually would regarding the availability of e-books as they have been challenged as to why they are not available. Reasons have included that they are tied to particular vendors, they don't buy e.g. Kindle e-books, and there are licences that the library has to have in order to buy these books for readers. Bodleian will be publishing a statement on their website which will explain the non-availability of e-books- such as some are not published, purchasable to the library, some publishers don't sell them to the libraries, resourcing issues (some are in packages which are too expensive to buy).

Q: Inductions and training- what are the Bodleian doing? Are any providing reading list resources before freshers come to campus? Raises problems with authentication to licensed content.

A: With inductions the Bodleian will be using Teams, which is the preferred platform by Oxford. During summer they will be producing a 2- 2 and half minute video which can be seen by anybody and will point to the resources that they will need to know about. These will be supplemented by more videos in the students' VLE on key aspects; how to do photocopying, printing, discovery tour, how to access resources etc.

Q: I was interested that you added free e-resources to Primo. We took opposite approach (University of Leicester), and have not added them, so they wouldn't end up on next year's e-reading lists.

A: Bodleian decided to do this, because they know this is where everyone is looking first to find the material. Colleagues in systems and catalogues explained that they would be able to remove the records quickly and have put a temporary label on them to want everyone that they are indeed only in the collection temporarily.



Running heritage projects under lockdown

Simon Dixon (Head of Special Collections and Archives, University of Leicester)

Bristol Archives: Trying to set up an online listening room, where they will be putting the Bristol Archives sound clips on their website and help other archives set up online listening rooms (but depends on the archives websites). This was set up in response to COVID-19 and moving a planned exhibition online.

Bristol Archives have been doing a lot of work to help people do House research from home inspired by the BBC programme *A House Through Time?* They put together a list of resources which the [Online trade Directories](#) were on and have been getting a lot of retweets from David Olusoga on Twitter.

Q- Has there been in an increase in people visiting the online trade directories?

A: University of Leicester will look into the google analytics of the site to see where/if an increase in traffic to their website is coming from and at what time.

Q: Do you have any idea who the new audiences are?

A: No- although now keen to explore this further.

Q: Are you doing any public outreach by zoom?

A: Blackboard collaborate for formal talks, presentations and workshops. Informal chats with volunteers on Teams.

Q: Great point on engaging people in digital spaces in new ways - what have you found works well for your volunteers?

A: We've had good feedback on the talks and presentations we have delivered to the volunteers- consultation on the project and potential volunteer's one of the motivations for getting involved was to meet other people. One of the ways to support this during this time is to use Teams. Have found that the 'chat' in meetings like this doesn't flow as well as in person- so they have decided to structure their 'tea and chat' Teams meetings by getting the volunteers to share something that they have found. Where you want people to interact, plan and think in advance about how they can interact.



Q: I was wondering about what your and your team's plans were for resuming digitization with social distancing in place?

A: Simon- Have prioritised one project- the Sound Heritage Project. Audio Sound preservation engineer works alone and is the only one touching the equipment, so currently risk assessing the return to work for this project.

A: Isabel- Look at the closeness of equipment to each other, people should not be sharing equipment, separated by a screen if necessary, have their own PPE equipment for wiping down if they need to, moving the equipment if necessary (depending on space and network connections), let as few people handle multiple items- the person doing the picking will also do the scanning and returning the item.

Quarantining items-Will only quarantine external packages and books coming in from outside. Once they have been quarantined for 72 hours (no distinguish between hard back and soft back), they will not quarantine internally (expect staff to follow hand washing and hygiene rules), unless someone coughs or sneezes on the item- then it will be re- quarantined.

Q: Did you have an established volunteer program prior to the pandemic, and will you continue on with the volunteers when things "return to normal"? Where do the volunteers come from? Students? Community members?

A: The 2 heritage fund projects have given the opportunity to develop this volunteer programme. It is the intention to continue with the volunteer activity when things 'return to normal'. As lockdown eases we are unsure what impact this will have on the volunteer activity and the volunteers have options to do other activities (we hope to retain the volunteers).

Some of our volunteers are students, retired individuals, volunteers we have reached through our local volunteer hub and those with an interest in the projects.

- The National Archives has an established volunteers programme/team and have continued its remote projects since lockdown where it involves digital material of course.

Q: Even if the mobile phone images aren't terribly stable for long-term access, it's interesting to think of them as historical documents themselves--representing a plague year and so on

A: This is very true, interesting artefacts that will be there in the historical record for us to look back upon. Cambridge University have been collecting COVID-19 related material to document the current crisis, so there will be a record of this time.

- Science Museum: As a Museum we have been doing a lot relating to Covid 19 - collecting material



Q: would you be offering other workshops like this one in future?

A: Yes- the School of Advanced Study are planning lots of different sessions National Conversations in the humanities in the wider context of the financial situation we are in (not just COVID-19 related). If this is useful we can provide library specific ones.

- A workshop on how to conduct archival research aimed at researchers (from other countries) who are unable to access physical collections in the UK would be helpful.

Q: I understand that some libraries have been purchasing print materials from Amazon and Abe to be sent directly to university staff and students. They're sent on the trust that the borrower will return the book to the library once they reopen.

A: This could be cheaper and more efficient in the short term, but of course relies on trust that it will be sent back.

- Historic England have been doing this for material that's not already in the collection. They are working with staff members mostly though, not students. They have been creating a temporary catalogue records and issue the book to the borrower.