

Report of Supporting Norfolk's Archive Ecology Consultation Event Regarding Cataloguing Support Needs

Norfolk Record Office - 19 July 2018: 18:30-20:30

Attendance

The event was hosted by the Norfolk Record Office ('NRO') and was attended by 16 people representing the following organisations: Blakeney Area Historical Society; Brundall Local History Group; Costume and Textile Study Centre (Norwich); Heacham History Group; Loddon and District Local History Group; Loddon Parish Study; Newton Flotman and Saxlingham Thorpe Heritage Group; Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society; North Walsham Heritage Centre; Reepham Archive; Wymondham Town Archive and an individual with a large private collection of rare printed works relating to Norfolk. The event was advertised using the NRO's mailing list and social media.

Timetable of the event

After the County Archivist introduced the *Supporting Norfolk's Archive Ecology* project ('SNAE') attendees were invited to introduce themselves, to briefly describe their collections and to outline their cataloguing requirements. Staff of the NRO summarised their approach to documentation, and existing online resources. The event finished with a discussion on what support the attendees would want from the NRO.

Details of attendees current situation regarding the documentation of their collection

One group wants to start cataloguing their collection of historical 7,000 photographs using established standards and tools. Another group has several filing cabinets of original documents, including title deeds and bills and wants to start cataloguing them so both they and potential users know what they have. An individual wants to publicise his large collection of rare local history books so it can be used by researchers *via* an easily accessible catalogue.

An organisation which records Norfolk's industrial heritage has three filing cabinets of surveys and a separate series of photographs. Though a limited catalogue exists, they struggle to find things within the collection, especially photographs. Organisation members also have their own private collection and there is a desire to secure and catalogue these. Another group wants to enhance their limited catalogue and enrich it by indexing as they are struggling to navigate the collection. Another organisation would like to catalogue their mixed collection, which includes journals and photographs, so that researchers can navigate the collection without relying on the expert knowledge of dedicated volunteers. Another organisation wants to enhance their limited catalogue of photographs in order to differentiate between originals and copies. Another group wanted help with indexing places.

A few of the represented groups have only recently been established and have just started collecting either original documents or digital objects. They want the wider public to know what they have in order to make it as accessible as possible and acknowledge they need to create a catalogue and want assistance with it.

Many groups wanted to maintain their own collections because of the difficulty to get to Norwich. Other common themes were a desire to engage volunteers of differing ages *via* a structured cataloguing programme and a desire to work with their local communities.

NRO approach to documentation

NRO staff outlined their approach to documenting their holdings. Topics covered included the difference between accessioning, cataloguing and indexing; principles of archive cataloguing, standards, cataloguing software and plans for the future.

Support requirements of attendees

Attendees were asked what assistance they would most appreciate. The most popular suggestion was access to a community archivist who could visit, provide detailed specific advice and an element of quality control. There was also interest in cataloguing training delivered through YouTube videos, workshops or day schools with an emphasis on practical advice. Some attendees saw the benefit of combining catalogues so researchers knew where to access collection information and to take advantage of shared taxonomies or name authorities. There was also demand for shared tools, such as spreadsheet templates as well as advice on existing resources, archives and data protection training. Other suggestions were a directory of local history organisations within the county, an online forum and the opportunity to visit each other's organisations.