Volunteering in Archives 2014

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VOLUNTEERING IN ARCHIVES IN 2014: A REPORT FOR THE ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ASSOCIATION

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TABLES AND CHARTS

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Volunteering has always been a key element of archive provision in the UK. Perhaps it is due to this ubiquity that until fairly recently very little attempt had been made within the sector to explore, through research and writing, the nature of this volunteering and its impact on archive services. In 2009 the National Council on Archives (a predecessor to the Archives & Records Association) produced a report entitled 'Volunteering in Archives'. This was the first time a report on the topic sought to include the voice of the volunteer in identifying motivations and benefits of volunteering from the perspective of individual volunteers. The publication of this report led to a Forum on the topic and the establishment of the Public Services Quality Group sub-committee on Volunteering which now operates within the Archives & Records Association. The aim of the sub-committee is: '*To drive improvements in volunteering practice within the archive sector; to increase the number and range of volunteering opportunities and ensure the contribution and impact of volunteering is evaluated and celebrated*.' The members of the sub-committee have sought to achieve this through a published 'Volunteering in Archives' Action Plan and through activities such as the Archive Volunteer Co-ordinator Network and the annual Volunteering Awards.

As part of the current action plan (2012-14), we have continued to undertake and commission research, to dig deeper into current volunteering practice in order to identify areas of good practice where services can learn from each other and to identify training and support issues. Last year we published a report entitled 'Managing Volunteering in Archives', written by Caroline Williams, looking at the topic from the perspective of those running archive services and managing volunteers. 'Volunteering in Archives 2014' acts both as a complement to 'Managing Volunteering in Archives' (2013/14) and as a successor to 'Volunteering in Archives' (2009). In repeating a survey of volunteers five years on from the original NCA survey we hoped to answer the following questions

- Is the sector attracting the same type of person to volunteer, or have there been any changes since 2009? Have the motivations and perceived benefits of volunteering remained the same?
- What tasks are volunteers undertaking – does their view back up the findings in the 'Managing Volunteering in Archives' report?
- What specific comments have volunteers to make at that can help identify training needs or issues around volunteer management?

Whilst the survey itself was created, managed and publicised by members of the sub-committee, we were pleased that Caroline Williams agreed to take on the task of analysing the survey results for us. Her commentary and conclusions gives us an excellent starting point to consider how to use the evidence in our future work. We are also of the view that this data is of general interest to those managing volunteers, taking on volunteering roles, or with a general interest in workforce issues and are therefore pleased to make it available to a wider audience.

One area specifically excluded from the survey was the volunteer time and expertise that members put into supporting the ARA and other professional bodies and networks. I would nevertheless like to thank all those who volunteered to help with the administration of this survey as well as all the volunteers that responded to it.

Louise Ray on behalf of the Archives & Records Association sub-committee on Volunteering

The 2014 survey of volunteers organised by the Archives and Records Association (ARA) sought to add to existing knowledge about the volunteer experience in archives and records management services across the UK and Ireland, building on previous surveys. 438 responses were received to 15 questions relating to volunteer profile, types of volunteering, motivations and benefits gained from volunteering.

The following were key findings:

Volunteer profile: this remains similar to previous surveys in relation to gender (64% female) and age (32% aged 65-74), though the population is aging slightly. 10% had at least one disability.

Volunteers' time commitment was substantial in terms of years volunteered, monthly hours and regularity of commitment (82% volunteering weekly and 59% contributing 11-30 hours a month). Earlier surveys do not allow close comparison, but monitoring against CIPFA shows an upward trend.

Types of volunteering: two thirds of people volunteered for social rather than career-related (28%) reasons; 85% in an archive environment. A solid minority worked in conservation but very few in records management: this needs consideration. More people made direct approaches to archive services than in 2009 and fewer came as part of an interest (e.g. Friends) group.

Tasks undertaken: description and process based activities continue to predominate over outreach and advocacy undertakings and archival tasks over more general duties. Individuals each undertook about three different archival tasks, mainly related to description – transcribing, indexing, cataloguing or data inputting. General tasks were primarily secretarial, clerical and administrative.

Financial equivalence. While the most valuable outcomes of volunteering are not to do with money, it can be useful to make a case in terms that funders and others can relate to. Using the minimum wage as a model in the 2014 survey alone over 300 people contributed a total of over 84,500 hours a year: an in kind total of nearly £550,000 or over £1600 each. Further exploration of models might be useful.

Volunteer motivation and benefits. Interests in history and in family history (69%) were key intellectual reasons for volunteering, though many were also keen to improve their archival and other skills. As in 2009 expectations continued to be met or exceeded, except in the case of family history – a category introduced in 2014. Greater benefits than expected accrued in the social and communal aspects of volunteering.

Volunteers' experiences were very positive, valuing the tasks, the staff and the social environment, often wanting to 'give back' to services. Improvements suggested included less bureaucracy, and better IT provision, feedback, and training and induction: all worthy of consideration.

Career volunteers: a significant minority (28%) undertook volunteering in order to advance a career. Their voice has been clearly heard in this survey: issues surrounding payment, the status of 'career' volunteers and the need for experience tailored to a future career have been raised.

The distinction between professional and volunteer activities continues to be clearly maintained, but can become blurred for example where 'career' volunteers want anticipated professional activities, or where volunteers wish to save professionals time e.g. by accessing restricted areas.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ARA is committed to supporting the work of volunteers in the archives, records management and conservation sectors. Its Sub-Committee on Volunteering produced a Policy on Volunteering in Archives in 2011 and this is being followed through in an Action Plan. The relevant ARA webpage holds a substantial number of reports and case studies, details of volunteering activities and of its Volunteering Award.[1] The 2014 survey builds on previous surveys of volunteers (2001, 2005, 2009) and of volunteer management (2013/14) and seeks to add to existing knowledge about the volunteer experience in archives and records management services across the UK and Ireland. [2]

2. METHODOLOGY

The survey was hosted on Survey Monkey and was open 8 September - 3 October 2014. Invitations to complete it were issued to volunteers via The National Archives (TNA), Scottish Council on Archives, CyMAL and ARA; and relevant ARA sections and groups email lists and social media. [3]

The survey comprised 15 questions: of these, five (relating to age, gender, motivation, routes into and benefits of volunteering) replicate those issued in the 2009 survey. A two part question relating to the nature of tasks undertaken revisits that issued in the 2013/14 survey. The remaining 9 cover such issues as volunteering purpose and environment and length of time, number of hours, and regularity of contribution.

Of the 15 questions 7 required a simple box tick, while 8 allowed for some free text additions: this has resulted in the assembly of both quantitative and qualitative data. 438 responses were received in total: this compares well with the 411 received in response to the 2009 survey.

3. KEY FINDINGS OF 2014 SURVEY

The main findings of the survey are supplied in this section. These are described in terms of volunteer profile, tasks, motivations and benefits, and volunteer experience. Each section provides headline and detailed information followed by brief analysis. Where a question has invited free comment selected quotations are included. The complete results are provided in the Detailed Survey Results section (from p.17).

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[1] ARA website at http://www.archives.org.uk/ara-in-action/campaigns/volunteering.html
[2] Institute of Volunteering Research 2001, 2005; National Council on Archives 2009, Archives and Records Association 2013/14 available from http://www.archives.org.uk/?view=article&id=494:volunteering-reports-and-case-studies-&catid=18.
[3] ARA Groups: Chief Archivists in Local Government (CALG), New Professionals, Records Management, Specialist Repositories and Archives Trainees; Email lists Volunteer Co-ordinators Group, ARCHIVES-NRA, ARCHIVES-WALES

3.1 WHO ARE THEY? THE PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS

➢ **Gender:** In 2014 64% of volunteers were female and 35% were male with four people preferring not to say.

The **gender** profile of volunteers remained almost unchanged from that in the 2009 survey, with nearly two thirds being female. (Q13).

➢ **Age:** In 2014 32% of volunteers were aged 65-74, 25% were 55-64, 12% were 75 and over and 10% were 25-34.

The **age** profile of volunteers also remained fairly consistent between 2009 and 2014 (Q14). The greatest number of volunteers fell into the 65-74 age range, the next largest into the 55-64 age range. This replicates the ratio in 2009, although in the 2001 and 2005 surveys these two categories were reversed. Since 2009 there has been a slight increase in the percentage of 25-34 age group as well as in the over 75s. These findings may indicate an aging profile of active volunteers.

➢ **Disability:** In 2014 10% of volunteers acknowledged some kind of disability.

In 2014 half of **disabilities** were mobility related and a further 40% concerned hearing or visual impairment. Substantial minorities suffered a mental health condition (13%) or a neuro-developmental condition (e.g. dyslexia, autism spectrum) (10%). Of those responding some indicated more than one type of disability. (Q15).

The ARA Disability Survey 2013 findings showed that of those respondents who said they had a disability 55% reported a physical disability (mobility-related condition, hearing, visual or speech impairment, dexterity) and 44% a mental health or neuro-developmental condition. [4] In that survey respondents could only enter a single disability, nevertheless it is useful to see how the two compare.

➢ **Time commitment**: over half had been volunteering in archives for between 1-5 years, often in the service they were currently based in, with most people contributing up to 30 hours a month. The vast majority of people (82%) volunteer on a regular weekly basis. (Q7,8,9,10).

Table 1 provides detail about the length of time volunteered both overall and in volunteers' current service. (Q7, Q8).

Years volunteered overall	%	Years in current service	%
Less than 1	24	Less than 1	33
1-5	53	1-5	50
5-10	14	5-10	11
Over 11	9	Over 11	6

Table 1. Number of years contributed

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[4] Caroline Williams *Diversity Surveys: Disability Report 2013*
http://www.archives.org.uk/images/documents/Diversity/ARA_Diversity_Working_Group_Diversity_Surveys_Report_2013.pdf

This time commitment can be further recognised in the **number of hours monthly** that volunteers contribute shown in Table 2. (Q9).

Hours per month	%
10 or fewer	25
11-30	59
31-70	15
71-250	1

Table 2. Hours contributed monthly

➢ **Monthly contribution**: in 2014 over 300 people contributed a total of over 7000 hours a month or 84,500 hours a year: an in kind total of nearly £550,000 or over £1600 each. 331 people supplied exact monthly hours: this totalled 7038 hours a month.

Statistics can usefully be employed to define such contributions in financial terms using different financial models. Based on the current minimum wage (£6.50 in October 2014) the 2014 figures represent an annual in kind contribution of £548,964. This is a snapshot only. Alternatively a calculation based on the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) 2013 states that the median gross hourly earnings for full-time employees were £13.03: again pro rata estimates might be useful.[5] CIPFA statistics for 2012-13 showed that 3369 volunteers gave an annual total of 313,102 volunteer hours across local authority archives (only) in England and Wales: the average number of hours donated by each volunteer was 116 in the London area, 92 in the rest of England and 69 in Wales.[6] Using the minimum wage this equates to over £2 million a year.

Volunteers' time commitment to volunteering was evidently substantial. Considering the length of time that they had been volunteering both overall and in their current office, the number of hours they contributed monthly and the regularity of their commitment it is clear that their contribution to archive work is highly significant and might be quantified in financial equivalence.

3.2 WHAT DO THEY DO? TYPES OF VOLUNTEERING

➢ **Volunteer categories**: in 2014 just under two thirds (66%) of volunteers volunteered for social reasons while 28% stated career motives.

The **categories** of volunteering in the archive sector fall into two main groups: career and non-career oriented (Q1). A significant minority of volunteers was seeking experience with a view to undertaking a professional qualification, or as a required part of an accredited course they are already on, or in order to enhance their future employability. The clear majority however were volunteering for social reasons and personal enjoyment.

➢ **Volunteer environment:** in 2014 85% of volunteers were attached to an archive/record office with 8% working in conservation. While 6% worked in both archives and records management only 3 people (.75%) worked solely in records management.

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[5] Office for National Statistics Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2013 Provisional Results http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/ashe/annual-survey-of-hours-and-earnings/2013-provisional-results/stb-ashe-statistical-bulletin-2013.html#tab-Hourly-earnings--excluding-overtime.
[6] Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy *Archive Services Statistics* 2012-2013 (2014).

Volunteering in the archive sector takes place in a number of **environments** but is most likely to take place in an archive or record office (Q2). Volunteering in records management is far less common: it has a lower profile overall and its volunteering potential might reward further investigation and development: the nature of the work means that security and data protection implications may apply. Conservation labs are usually located within an archive service and provide ample opportunities for volunteer work. The 2014 survey did not seek to identify the nature of host archives/records management services: although previous findings have shown that local authority services take more volunteers than business, charity, university and other archives. A few responses were received from volunteers working in archives based in libraries (4) and museums (5).

Selected comments:

'I am volunteering in an archive/record office AND I am volunteering in a conservation department within that archive/record office.'

'I am volunteering with a local history project and am looking for further voluntary experience within an archive or RM service.'

'I am volunteering for several crowd-sourced online transcription projects in UK and USA.'

➢ **Routes into volunteering**: in 2014 while more people approached archive services directly and fewer came to volunteering via an interest group than in 2009, similar proportions of people responded to recruitment initiatives.

Route	2014	2009
Approached service directly	50%	44%
Responded to recruitment initiatives	32%	33%
Belonged to an interest group	16%	34%

Table 3. Routes into volunteering 2009/2014

There are three main **routes into volunteering** (Q3). People may take it on themselves to approach an archive service directly; archive services may actively recruit new volunteers either for general tasks or in relation to specific projects; and volunteers' membership of local history, Friends or NADFAS groups introduces them to the opportunities of becoming involved in archives. Occasionally schools, universities and employment organisations recommend volunteering to students and to people seeking employment (3% or 13 people in 2014). Occasionally friends' recommendations or recent retirement of archive professionals lead to volunteering (8 people in each case in 2014).

As volunteering becomes a more main stream activity so archive services actively recruit new volunteers either for general tasks or in relation to specific projects. This increasingly proactive approach on the part of services is often underpinned by the requirements of funding bodies. The statistics above may indicate that there is less dependence on interest groups (or that membership of such groups is declining) to inform volunteers, who clearly have the knowledge and confidence to make direct individual approaches.

Selected comments:

'Being a regular user of the archives, I realised I had something to offer from my own researches.'

'I am a semi-retired archive professional and wished to continue to contribute.'

'I was recruited by a friend already involved in a project.'

➢ **Volunteering roles and work placements**: in 2014 most people volunteered both in an individual capacity (64%) and as part of an open-ended arrangement (63%). Project-based (26%) and group work (14%) formed a significant minority. A small number (3%) worked remotely (14 people) but the number working onsite was not specifically recorded.
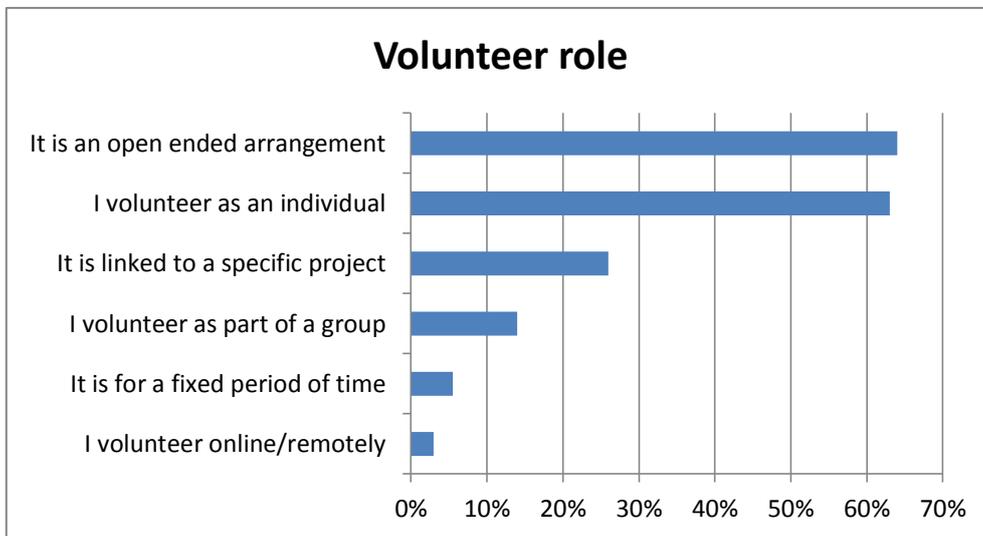
Volunteer role

It is an open ended arrangement	
I volunteer as an individual	
It is linked to a specific project	
I volunteer as part of a group	
It is for a fixed period of time	
I volunteer online/remotely	

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%

Chart 1. Nature of the volunteering role

Volunteering roles and work placements take a number of forms (Q6). If these are project-based they are likely to focus on specific tasks and exist for a specific period of time. However many take place as open-ended arrangements whether formal or informal, regular or irregular, and are often undertaken for social reasons. Professional archivists may also undertake considerable amounts of voluntary work, for example for their professional organisation. Some people act as archivists in an honorary capacity for their organisation or society, whether or not they have a professional qualification. For those whose voluntary work has a career focus experience of a range of tasks within a professional setting may be required by university and college programmes. Increasingly volunteers can work remotely, usually at home on such tasks as transcription or data inputting.

Chart 1 identifies the nature of these arrangements. Comparison with Q1 (purpose of volunteering) indicates that 67% of those volunteering for social purposes do so as an open-ended arrangement while only 28% of those furthering a career have such an arrangement

➢ **Volunteer tasks**: in 2014 many volunteers undertook multiple tasks (averaging 3 types per person). 408 people identified a total of 1207 archive-related tasks in which they were involved. Overwhelmingly the most common task is describing records.
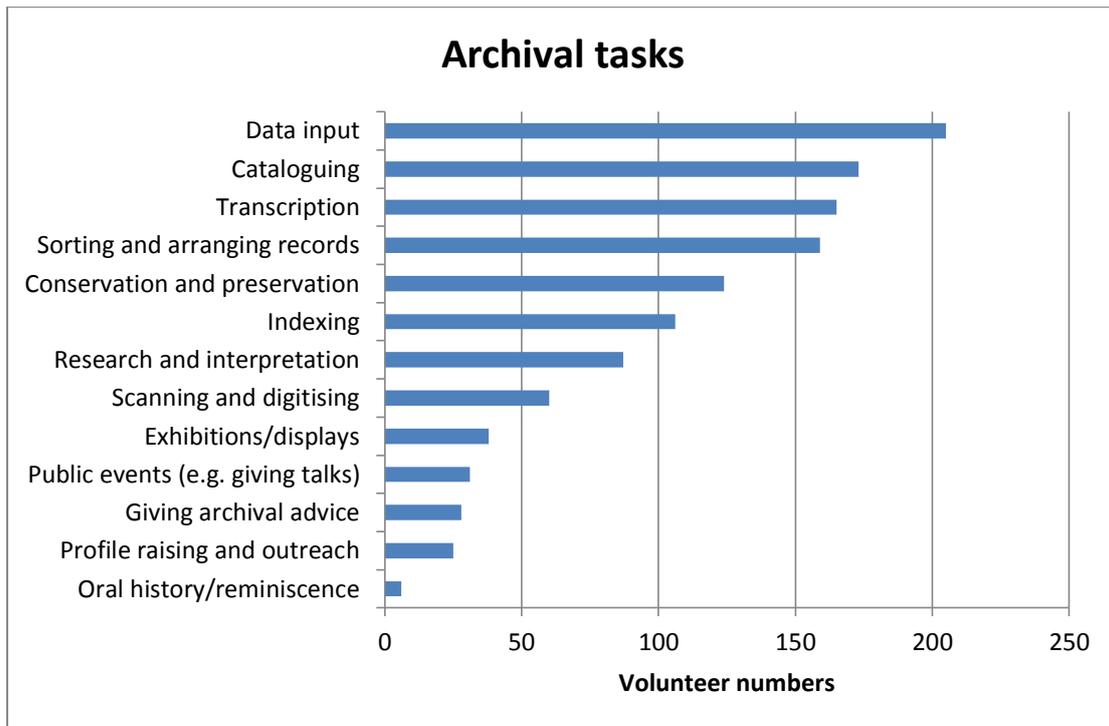
Archival tasks

Task	Volunteer numbers (approx.)
Data input	205
Cataloguing	172
Transcription	165
Sorting and arranging records	160
Conservation and preservation	123
Indexing	106
Research and interpretation	87
Scanning and digitising	60
Exhibitions/displays	38
Public events (e.g. giving talks)	31
Giving archival advice	28
Profile raising and outreach	25
Oral history/reminiscence	5

Volunteer numbers

Chart 2. Archival tasks undertaken by volunteers

Volunteer tasks fall into two categories: archives/records related tasks and general tasks (Q11a). Chart 2 shows the range of archival tasks that individuals undertake: the figures clearly indicate that many people ticked a number of options, demonstrating their involvement in more than one kind of task – an average of three per person. Activities that fall into the 'describing records' category (cataloguing, indexing, data input and transcription) were those most commonly undertaken.

The 2013/14 survey showed a similar but not identical profile: this was not an entirely comparable survey in that this question was put to volunteer managers rather than individual volunteers. However describing records was also the most common task, followed by conservation and preservation, sorting and arranging, scanning and digitising, research and interpretation, exhibitions, profile raising, giving advice, public events and oral history.

In 2005, when less detail was sought, Description of Records (89%) was followed by Conservation and Preservation (43%), Research 41% and Public Events 28%.

The pattern over time remains similar: most activities are predominantly routine and process-based: outreach, profile raising and the provision of advice and other advocacy roles are less likely to be undertaken regularly by volunteers.

Selected comments:

'Checking existing catalogues on CALM, correcting and bringing information up to a consistent level before catalogue goes 'live'.'

'Reading through Quarter Session and Petty Session records, extracting genealogical information and recording it in a spreadsheet.'

While volunteers also undertake general tasks alongside archive-specific ones, fewer people and less time is spent on these than on archival ones (Q11b).

➢ In 2014 193 people identified a total of 305 general tasks in which they were involved. Most commonly undertaken were secretarial, administrative, clerical and technical tasks (55%) followed by giving advice (36%), helping to run an event (24%) and committee work (20%). Fewer than 10% in each category take on representing, fundraising/handling money, transporting or visiting people.

Comments:

'I am the lead for the group of volunteers and therefore responsible for organising/ relating to Archivist / doing reports etc.'

'A significant part of my volunteering is in fund raising to purchase records or help meet the cost of improving services.'

3.3 WHY DO THEY DO IT? MOTIVATIONS AND BENEFITS

➢ In 2014 the key reasons for volunteering were an interest in history (69%) and family history (39%). The desire to improve skills, particularly archival skills was also a major driver.
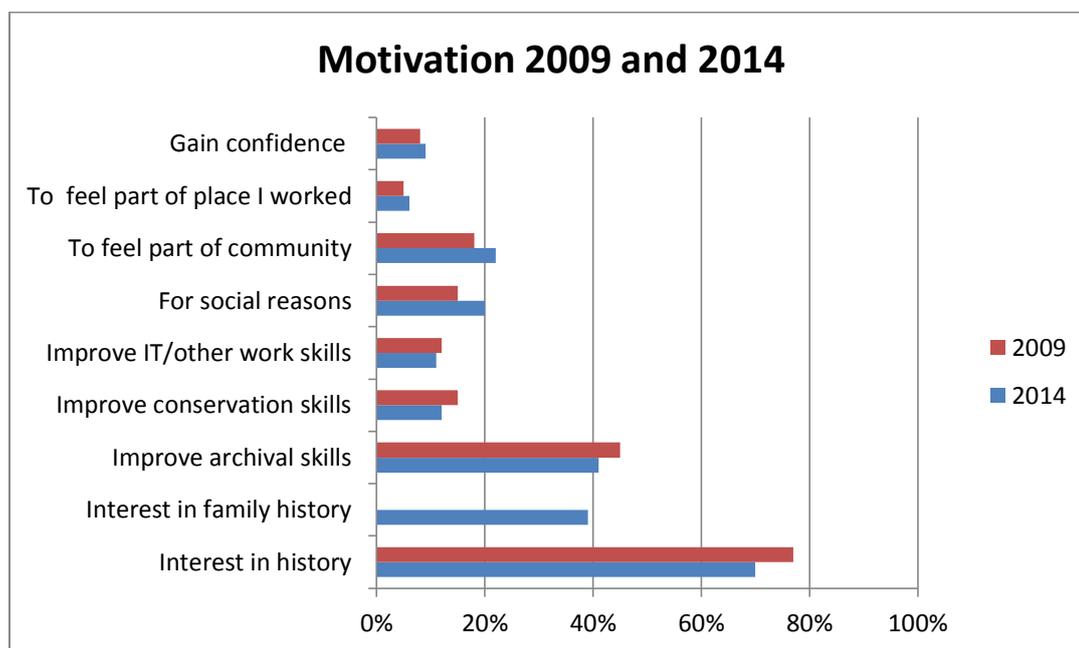
Chart 3. Comparison of motivation 2009 and 2014

Motivations behind volunteering continued to fall into recognised categories although of course many volunteers subscribe to more than one of these which makes them less easy to quantify (Q4). Interests in history and in family history are fundamental intellectual reasons (this is the first time family history has been made a separate choice) though many people are also keen to improve their

skills – whether in archives, conservation, IT or other worked-based activities. Less prominent but still significant are social and emotional reasons, whether seeking confidence or wishing to feel part of a community. In addition to the reasons shown on Chart 3, 37 (9%) some 'wanted to give something back': this included those who said they wanted to help keep the archives open 'in beleaguered times', those who wanted to give back from the knowledge they had gained over years of research and those who having received much help themselves in their own research now wanted to help others in a similar way. Career ambitions motivated 14 (4%) people.

A comparison with 2009 responses to the same question shows (Chart 3) a very similar pattern in terms of the order of priority of motivations for volunteering.

Some typical comments:

 'I was newly retired from a busy teaching job and wanted to do something completely different. I had done some family history research many years previously using the local record office and when I saw they wanted more volunteers it seemed the ideal opportunity for me.'

'I felt it was time to put something back but had constraints on time because of an elderly mother. Being able to volunteer and work at home has been a life saver for me when things have been difficult.'

'I wanted to become a volunteer in order to gain work experience to better understand the role of an archivist. This led to me enrolling on an archive accredited course and then volunteering in order to fulfil the requirements of the Masters course, volunteering for the duration of it.'

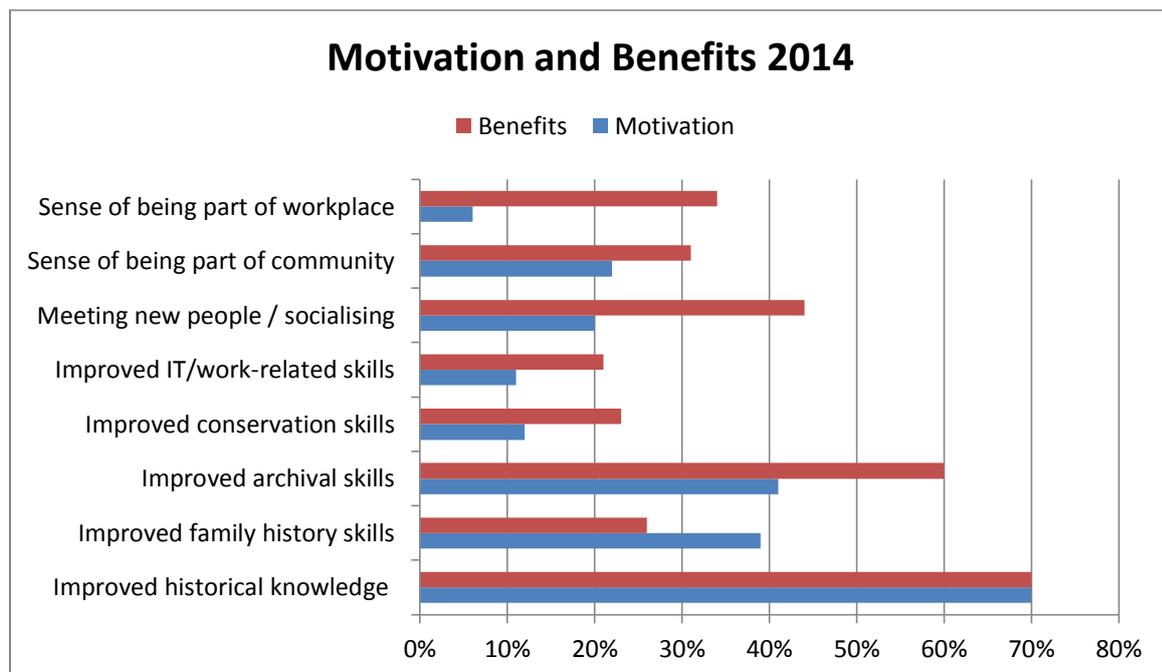

Chart 4. Comparison of volunteering motivation and benefits, 2014

➢ **Benefits of volunteering:** benefits appear to have outstripped expectations in nearly all aspects of volunteering particularly in respect of skills and social benefits.

The **benefits of volunteering** also fall into recognised categories which, when compared with people's expressed motivations can gauge how far expectations have been fulfilled (Q5). Chart 4 shows how far such expectations were met or exceeded in 2014. It would seem that greater benefits than expected were gained in social and communal aspects, as well as in the acquisition of skills. While people have clearly met their need to improve historical knowledge it seems that there is a slight gap between motivation and benefits in relation to family history that might be worth teasing out.

Other benefits expressed included feeling a sense of purpose and a structure to life, satisfaction, enjoyment and achievement; the ability to make a positive contribution and share knowledge; the enhancement of career and employment prospects and engagement with original documents and inspiration for further research.

'As well as feeling part of the very open and inclusive workplace that is the archives sector, I gained invaluable career and interview advice from professionals, and friends and mentors in these professionals. Going onto a professional course, the confidence I have gained from working alongside and being included by senior sector professionals because of my skills has been hugely valuable.'

'Enabled me to use knowledge I had built up over many years of working in the archives and to ensure that this knowledge would be available both to the office and to researcher.'

'Volunteering at my local archive has given me a sense of purpose and self-worth. I have a long term illness and cannot currently work. Being able to combine my love of history, academic and work background with being useful to others has meant a great deal to me.'

3.4 WHAT DO THEY THINK ABOUT IT? THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Volunteers were invited to comment freely on whether they had had any issues as a volunteer. They were also asked how their experience could be improved (Q12).

192 free-text comments were received. Of these:

No actual issues and no comments	38 (20%)
General observations	8 (4%)
Positive comments	58 (30%)
Negative comments or suggestions	86 (45%)

The 192 comments can be divided into those from 'social' volunteers (173) and 'career' volunteers (19) who were volunteering with a view to undertaking a qualification in archives, records management or conservation.

Comments from the 19 'career' volunteer constituencies comprised:

General observations	3
Positive comments	9
Negative comments or suggestions.	9

These have been extracted and described under the section 'Career related issues' below.

A fuller breakdown of comments is provided under the detailed results (from p.17).

For purposes of clarity comments have been analysed and organised into 'positive' and 'negative' categories. General observations comprise those that have neither positive nor negative connotations. Direct quotations from respondents have been selected where they highlight a particular issue, and are clearly identified.

General observations

- Volunteers do not want to be seen as taking away the work of a paid member of staff and so some may volunteer less freely and thus feel underused.
- When too many demands are made on volunteers' time and specific skill sets it can make them feel like a free work force. Resentment can be caused when CV/application forms and salary details are required if not relevant to a specific volunteer role.
- Concern that when archives (e.g. charity) are entirely dependent on (only) volunteer labour, volunteers who happen to have professional knowledge/experience are not always given credit for this.
- It is important to recognise and utilise the existing experience, skills, knowledge and expertise of the volunteers to best advantage.

Positive comments

The whole experience:

'I thoroughly enjoy my volunteering. I get enough instruction and there is always someone to help me if I have any questions.'
'I am very happy working in the way that I am. I can get on with the work whenever I want, I can ask for help when I need to and generally others working in the archives are extremely helpful and supportive. I really enjoy what I am doing and I know that the work will be appreciated by so many family historians once it is publically available.'
'I do not think it is possible to make my role as a volunteer any better - I love what I do.'
'It is totally enjoyable, totally satisfying, and hopefully a little bit useful to the Archives Dept.'
'My experience has always been extremely positive in every respect. I am at a loss to think of any ways in which my experience could be improved.'
'It could not be improved as the staff are very helpful and the other volunteers delightful.'
'I have thoroughly enjoyed being a volunteer: being prepared to do whatever is asked is the sensible approach.'

How it makes me feel: people said that in volunteering they:
- Were made to feel part of a team
- Were respected and valued
- Were made to feel welcome
- Felt part of the archive community
- Felt their work of benefit to the office

- Loved the friendly atmosphere
- Learned a lot

The staff: volunteers said staff and volunteer co-ordinators are:
- Patient, encouraging, welcoming, helpful, courteous, supportive, appreciative of volunteers' own skills
- Aware of the importance of team dynamics and happy to provide tasks that are beneficial to the individual
- Friendly, encouraging, accommodating - making people feel part of a team and dealing promptly with questions and ready to supervise

In relation to a career: people
- Found it a great way to get used to working again
- Were able as a volunteer to use professional skills to help develop the Archive services and raise professional standards
- Felt fortunate to secure voluntary work in order to gain experience prior to further study, and then, a professional life as an archivist.

Negative: a summary of responses

The adverse comments were analysed in some detail and fell into the following categories:

1. Bureaucracy: this can be cumbersome for volunteers leading to logistical problems with HR, IT and permits (e.g. parking) and passes.
2. Information Technology: the chief issues involved access to software systems, the internet, and the small size of monitors. Some had to take queries home in order to access the internet and this was felt to be an impediment to progress.
3. Training and induction: volunteers want good training and induction plans, these provide confidence and trust in the office, staff and the work they are being asked to do.
4. Organisation: volunteers need to be organised and do not like to be left to their own devices. They prefer a managed system/programme, ready advice when needed and set targets.
5. Nature of tasks: large tasks can sometimes be overwhelming, repetitive and isolating. Some would like greater access to documents for cataloguing.
6. Feedback: volunteers require a working feedback and appraisal procedure. When staff struggle to allocate time to volunteer needs it can result in volunteers feeling undervalued.
7. Reward: formal recognition of experience/contribution in the form of e.g. signed certificates by archivist when a standard has been reached is welcomed.

Further detail is available on pp. 25-26.

Career related issues

General observations

'The best placements for those looking for archive experience are those where the archivist is prepared to spend time imparting knowledge, and where the tasks are varied. There is probably too much emphasis on "backroom" tasks whereas experience dealing with visitors/events would have been valuable.'

'Awareness of team dynamics always interesting wherever one works! In my experience the team has been very encouraging and friendly. Supervision always available. I have noticed though perhaps due to times of financial austerity and staff cuts that volunteers can be looked at as a threat / also brings concerns to qualified and experienced staff of the inexperienced volunteer and all that may entail, eg, working with the public.'

'Having volunteered at over nine different archives it would be fair to say that the levels expectation, organisation, assistance, training and understanding of the volunteers needs vary quite widely.'

Positive comments

'I have always had a very positive experience as a volunteer. I actually find that the main obstacle is organising time of from my full-time job in order to volunteer during the week. Most places that I have volunteered in are closed at the weekends.'

'I have never encountered any problems in any of the volunteering roles I have undertaken. In my opinion, volunteering needs to be useful to me, helping me gain valuable experience that can be transferred to real life employment/the Archives and Records Management course. I would be disappointed if all I was required to do was box listing and packaging.'

Negative: a summary of responses

The adverse comments were analysed in some detail and fell into the following categories:

- Finance: some note the financial constraints of volunteering, the need to have expenses paid, and the value of having a partner who has an income.
- Supervision: some emphasised the need for good supervision and review in order to gain and reinforce skills and maintain a sense of value to the organisation. One thought organisations should do more to ensure that volunteering skills could lead to employment.
- One volunteer thought that offices should distinguish between retired volunteers and those volunteering for career reasons, giving the latter precedence in terms of opportunities offered. A specific quota of work experience candidates was suggested.
- Work experience: some said they did not gain the work experience they needed to support archive training/ experience either because resources are not available where they are based or due to the short term nature of some placements
- One older newly qualified professional thought that the job market is biased towards the young newly qualified and that they need wider voluntary experience to compensate
- One respondent resented having to volunteer in order to maintain the payment of benefits. Another (career-seeker) thought that volunteering should be restricted to a limited number of weeks after which it should be paid.

The issues identified here indicate that for most people volunteering is a very rewarding experience, whether 'social' or 'career' focused. People have benefited in many ways, and archives offices are clearly continuing to providing a good overall volunteering experience. In general volunteers appreciate the value they bring and understand how their work differs from that of professionals. It may sometimes be necessary to highlight the distinction between the two: for example unsupervised access to archive storage areas may need to be restricted to professionals. It is also unlikely that any archive service would operate a system that prioritised one type of volunteer over another even though for some career requirements are important drivers. Archive services may need to be more aware of the relationship between volunteering and the payment of state benefits: and that one may depend upon the other.

4. CONCLUSION

This survey has provided useful quantitative and qualitative data that continues to build a clear picture of volunteering in the archives, records management and conservation aspects of recordkeeping. While many of the findings confirm those identified in previous surveys, such as volunteer profile, motivation and tasks undertaken some issues are worth highlighting.

Records management is still under-represented among volunteer activities. The reasons for this may not be difficult to establish, but some investigation might be undertaken in this area.

Financial equivalence: a number of models might be used to establish the financial value of volunteers' contributions. While care should be taken to emphasise the fundamental non-financial values of volunteering some research into this area might be useful to those taking on volunteers where applications for funding are concerned.

The management of volunteers is necessarily becoming more efficient and business like. However volunteers may resent the introduction of processes that mimic those of employment. Demands (especially if not strictly necessary) to produce CVs, complete application forms and other documentation can make them feel like a free work force.

Tasks undertaken. The pattern over time remains similar: most activities are predominantly routine and process-based: outreach, profile raising and the provision of advice and other advocacy roles are less likely to be undertaken regularly by volunteers, thus remaining the responsibility of the professional.

Career volunteers: the views of this significant minority need to be taken into account in order to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to support them. Although the 'intern' debate has not formed part of this survey the motivations and needs of different volunteer groups do vary and need open discussion.

The distinction between professional and volunteer activities continues to be clearly maintained, but can become blurred for example where 'career' volunteers want to anticipate professional activities, or where volunteers wish to save professionals time e.g. by accessing restricted areas. Explicit guidance may be usefully provided here, provided that it is not too prescriptive.

5. APPENDIX: FULL SURVEY RESULTS

The results below are taken directly from the Survey Monkey site and the findings are shown as presented there. The number of people responding to each question is indicated alongside (not all 408 respondents answer each question) together with percentage outcomes. Where multi-tick options were available percentage results will be affected, and should be read accordingly.

Q 1   Volunteer situation: purpose. Tick the most appropriate statement.

Answer Choices	Responses	
I am volunteering to gain experience with a view to (or alongside) undertaking a recognised qualification in archives and records management or conservation	12.64%	55
I am volunteering as part of an accredited course (other than above)	1.15%	5
I am volunteering for personal enjoyment and/or social reasons	65.52%	285
I am volunteering to improve my chances of future employability	14.02%	61
None of the above	6.67%	29
Total		435

Q2   Volunteer situation: environment. Tick the most appropriate statement.

Answer Choices	Responses	
I am currently volunteering in an archive/record office	84.96%	339
I am currently volunteering in records management service	0.75%	3
My volunteering covers both archives and records management activities	6.02%	24
I am volunteering in a conservation department within an archive service	8.27%	33
Total		399

41 further comments. Most amplified on the choice ticked. Additional data came from those working in a
Library – 4
Museum – 5

Q3   How did you become a volunteer?

Answer Choices	Responses	
I approached the archive/records office/records management service myself	50.12%	213
The archive/records office/records management service was recruiting new volunteers	20.24%	86
The archive/records office/records management service was recruiting new volunteers for a specific project	11.29%	48
I am a member of a Friends group and/or NADFAS working with the archive/records office/records management service	9.88%	42
I am a member of a local history group/ family history group or community archives working with the archive/records office/records management service	6.12%	26
I was put in touch with the archive/records office/records management service by my school/college/university	1.88%	8
I was put in touch with the archive/records office/records management service by a group/organisation helping people seeking to return to work	1.18%	5
Other (please specify)	13.65%	58
Total Respondents: 425		

Other = 58 responses. Many amplified one of provided choices. Others can be broadly grouped:
Recently retired previously worked for the archive service – 11
Recommended by a friend – 8
Record office user become a volunteer – 6
Advert in paper, via a website or following a talk or open day – 9
To further career – 4

Q4   Why did you want to become a volunteer?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Interest in history	69.21%	272
Interest in family history	38.68%	152
To learn/improve archival skills	40.71%	160
To learn/improve conservation skills	11.96%	47
To learn/improve IT or other work-related skills	10.94%	43
For social reasons	20.36%	80
To feel part of my local community	22.14%	87
To continue feeling part of the place I worked	6.36%	25
To gain confidence with working with new people	9.16%	36
Total Respondents: 393		

Further comments = 123. 60 amplified one of provided choices. Others can be broadly grouped:

To put something back - 37: this included wanting to support underfinanced services, give back from the knowledge gained over the years, help others in the way they have been helped, wanting to volunteer to help society in general, and as a way of saying thankyou.

Career reasons - 14

Health reasons – 5

Requirement – e.g. employment benefit; course being studied - 2

Records management interest - 2

A completely different challenge - 1

Already an archivist, but volunteering too – 1

Unable to get paid work - 1

Q5   What have been the benefits to you from volunteering?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Improved historical knowledge	70.17%	294
Learnt/improved family history skills	25.54%	107
Learnt/improved archival skills	59.90%	251
Learnt/improved conservation skills	23.15%	97
Learnt/improved IT or other work-related skills	20.76%	87
Meeting new people / socialising	43.91%	184
Sense of being part of community	31.26%	131
Sense of being part of workplace	34.37%	144
Total Respondents: 419		

Further comments = 82.

Feeling of giving a positive contribution, sharing knowledge = 27

Sense of purpose and structure to life = 15

Career and/or future employment prospects = 11

Sense of satisfaction, achievement and enjoyment = 11

Inspired further research = 4

Engagement with original documents = 3

Maintain unemployment = 1

Q6.   Volunteer role. Please tick those statements that best describe your volunteering or work placement.

Answer Choices	Responses	
It is for a fixed period of time	**5.49%**	23
It is linked to a specific project	**25.78%**	108
It is an open ended arrangement	**64.20%**	269
I volunteer as an individual	**62.77%**	263
I volunteer with others as part of a group	**14.32%**	60
I volunteer online/remotely	**3.34%**	14
Total Respondents: 419		

Q7   *How long have you been volunteering in archive/records office/records management service?*

Answer Choices	Responses	
under 3 months	**5.33%**	22
3 months to 1 year	**18.64%**	77
1-2 years	**23.24%**	96
2-5 years	**29.06%**	120
5-10 years	**14.29%**	59
11-15 years	**5.08%**	21
16 years or longer	**4.36%**	18
Total		**413**

Q8   *How long have you been volunteering in your current archive/records office/records management service?*

Answer Choices	Responses	
under 3 months	**8.70%**	36
3 months to 1 year	**24.40%**	101
1-2 years	**23.19%**	96
2-5 years	**26.33%**	109
5-10 years	**10.87%**	45
11-15 years	**4.59%**	19
16 years or longer	**1.93%**	8
Total		**414**

Q9   *How many hours do you normally volunteer over the period of a month?*

Of 397 responses 35 had to be discounted: some because terms such as 'varies' had been used but could not be quantified, others because of an apparent system error. Of the remaining 362 the breakdown shows that most people volunteer for between 11 and 30 hours a month.

Hours contributed per month	No of responses	%
10 hrs or fewer	90	24.8
11–30	215	59.39
31-70	53	14.6
71-250	4	1.1
	362	

Of the 362, 331 people supplied an exact number of hours worked per month. This came to a total or 7038 hours worked a month. Given the current minimum wage of £6.50 per hour (October 2014) this represents an annual in kind contribution of £548,964.

Q10   How regularly do you volunteer?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Daily	2.25%	8
Weekly	81.74%	291
Fortnightly	8.71%	31
Monthly	7.30%	26
Total		356

Further comments = 81.
2-3 days a week (could just be mornings or 2-3 hrs) - 29
As and when, or as required, varies depending on a range of factors - 22
Work from home so it varies - 9
During term time/school holidays – 3

Q11a   What of the following tasks do you undertake? Records-related

Answer Choices	Responses	
Sorting and arranging records	38.97%	159
Transcription	40.44%	165
Data input	50.25%	205
Indexing	25.98%	106
Cataloguing	42.40%	173
Scanning and digitising	14.71%	60
Conservation and preservation (cleaning, packaging, boxing, condition checking)	30.39%	124
Research and interpretation	21.32%	87
Exhibitions	9.31%	38
Profile raising and outreach	6.13%	25
Public events (e.g. giving talks and lectures)	7.60%	31
Giving advice on archival/records issues	6.86%	28
Oral history/reminiscence sessions	1.47%	6
Total Respondents: 408		

Some respondents mixed their responses to Qu 11a and 11b, especially where there was difficulty in establishing whether a task was strictly 'archival' or 'general'.

Further comments = 44. 27 elaborated on choices provided. Others included:

Translation - 2
Web site work and blogging – 5
Other activities – 8 e.g. Summarising audio and video content of library items; habitat survey and mapping; survey and selection of records for transfer to RO; writing bids for funding; making lesson activities; member of County Executive Committee; summarising records of deceased children for family members.

Q11b.   What of the following tasks do you undertake? General

Answer Choices	Responses	
Fundraising, handling money	6.22%	12
Committee work	20.21%	39
Organising, helping run an event	24.35%	47
Visiting people	3.11%	6
Giving advice, information	36.27%	70
Secretarial, administrative, clerical, technical	54.92%	106
Transporting	3.63%	7
Representing	9.33%	18
Total Respondents: 193		

Further comments = 59. 19 'none of the above' or irrelevant.

Archival tasks – 13 (cleaning documents, box-making, cataloguing, scanning, conservation, document production, inputting (4))

Membership of group or committee (Local Heritage/History, Volunteers, Friends etc) - 8

Raising, managing funds - 2

Assisting/guiding public - 6

Editorial work - 2

Miscellaneous = 4 (showing historical films, restoring locomotives, volunteer gardener and in bookshop, solving IT queries)

Q12   Have you had any issues as a volunteer? How could your experience as a volunteer be improved? Please include your comments here.

192 free-text comments were received. Of these:

No issues and no comments	38 (20%)
General observations	8 (4%)
Positive comments	58 (30%)
Negative comments or suggestions	86 (45%)

The 192 comments can be divided into those from 'social' volunteers (173) and 'career' volunteers (19) who were volunteering with a view to undertaking a qualification in archives, records management or conservation.

Comments from the 19 'career' volunteer constituencies comprised:

General observations	3
Positive comments	9
Negative comments or suggestions.	9

These have been extracted and described under the section 'Career related' below.

Selected comments are provided below.

General observations

- Volunteers do not want to be seen as taking away the work of a paid member of staff and so some may volunteer less freely and thus feel underused.
- When too many demands are made on volunteers' time and specific skill sets it can make them feel like a free work force. Resentment can be caused when CV/application forms and salary details are required if not relevant to a specific volunteer role.
- Concern that when archives (e.g. charity) are entirely dependent on (only) volunteer labour, volunteers who happen to have professional knowledge/experience are not always given credit for this.
- It is important to recognise and utilise the existing experience, skills, knowledge and expertise of the volunteers to best advantage.

Positive comments

The whole experience:

'I thoroughly enjoy my volunteering. I get enough instruction and there is always someone to help me if I have any questions'

'I am very happy working in the way that I am. I can get on with the work whenever I want, I can ask for help when I need to and generally others working in the archives are extremely helpful and supportive. I really enjoy what I am doing and I know that the work will be appreciated by so many family historians once it is publically available.'

'I do not think it is possible to make my role as a volunteer any better - I love what I do.'

'It is totally enjoyable, totally satisfying, and hopefully a little bit useful to the Archives Dept'

'My experience has always been extremely positive in every respect. I am at a loss to think of any ways in which my experience could be improved.'

'It could not be improved as the staff are very helpful and the other volunteers delightful.'

'I have thoroughly enjoyed being a volunteer: being prepared to do whatever is asked is the sensible approach.'

How it makes me feel: people said that in volunteering they:
- Were made to feel part of a team
- Were respected and valued
- Were made to feel welcome
- Felt part of the archive community
- Felt their work of benefit to the office
- Loved the friendly atmosphere
- Learned a lot

The staff: volunteers said staff and volunteer co-ordinators are:
- Patient, encouraging, welcoming, helpful, courteous, supportive, appreciative of volunteers' own skills
- Aware of the importance of team dynamics and happy to provide tasks that are beneficial to the individual
- Friendly, encouraging, accommodating - making people feel part of a team and dealing promptly with questions and ready to supervise

In relation to a career: people

- Found it a great way to get used to working again
- Were able as a volunteer to use professional skills to help develop the Archive services and raise professional standards
- Felt fortunate to secure voluntary work in order to gain experience prior to further study, and then, a professional life as an archivist.
- to gain experience prior to further study, and then, a professional life as an archivist.

Negative comments (and positive suggestions)

Practical - facilities and issues

- Payment of travel and other expenses: some volunteers feel expenses should be re-imbursed where they are not; others are resentful if they are not reimbursed in good time
- Refreshments: some volunteers would appreciate free tea or coffee and resentment was caused in one place where volunteers were asked to pay for what had formerly been free
- Bureaucracy in some organisations can be cumbersome for volunteers leading to logistical problems with HR, IT and permits (e.g. parking) and passes.
- Work stations are not always comfortable and working in public areas can be noisy and distracting
- Timetabling: some people find it hard to give enough time to volunteering but often have competing jobs or other demands on their time. They would appreciate greater flexibility from archives (e.g. making volunteering possible on a Saturday)
- IT: the chief issues are about access to software systems, the internet, and the small size of monitors. Some resented the need to take queries home in order to access the internet and all who brought this up felt this lack was an impediment to progress
- Access: opening/closing hours and lunchtime closure can restrict working time; more open access to storage areas would facilitate volunteers' work

Nature of the tasks

- Some were quite over -faced by very large tasks and repetitive work often requiring great concentration (e.g. data input) and that this could be isolating,
- Some felt restricted in terms of what was offered and asked for a wider range of tasks and/or a volunteer pathway that offered to develop different skills and more variety
- Some wanted to study documents more closely in order to catalogue in more detail; others to have more hands on duties within cataloguing/indexing and sorting/arranging records.
- Some wanted to learn more about the staff roles and responsibilities in the office to gain knowledge of the processes and information available to the public

Induction, training and communication

- Volunteers want good training and induction plans and without these tend to lack trust and confidence in the office, staff and the work they are being asked to do.
- Volunteers need to be organised. Although volunteers recognise how busy staff can be they do not like to be left to their own devices and prefer a managed system/programme, ready advice when needed and set targets.

- While there are clearly many good induction and ongoing training programmed some offices are felt to need to make these more of a priority for their volunteers
- Regular meetings and discussions about projects' progress, social events and newsletters about the local and wider archive volunteer scene would make people feel more included. Volunteers might be involved in organising these.
- Regular meetings with a line manager would reassure volunteers they were on the right path and having a badge/uniform would make some feel more part of the team
- Volunteers with disabilities may feel that their disability leads to exclusion

Feedback/ rewards
- Sometimes communication is so poor that volunteers do not know whether work they have sent has been received – even basic feedback can be neglected
- Volunteers require a working feedback and appraisal procedure. Staff struggle to allocate time for dealing with volunteer needs and this can result in feeling undervalued
- Formal recognition of experience/contribution in the form of e.g. signed certificates by archivist when standard has been reached would be welcomed

Career related

General observations

'The best placements for those looking for archive experience are those where the archivist is prepared to spend time imparting knowledge, and where the tasks are varied. There is probably too much emphasis on "backroom" tasks whereas experience dealing with visitors/events would have been valuable.'

'Awareness of team dynamics always interesting wherever one works! In my experience the team has been very encouraging and friendly. Supervision always available. I have noticed though perhaps due to times of financial austerity and staff cuts that volunteers can be looked at as a threat / also brings concerns to qualified and experienced staff of the inexperienced volunteer and all that may entail, eg, working with the public.'

'Having volunteered at over nine different archives it would be fair to say that the levels expectation, organisation, assistance, training and understanding of the volunteers needs vary quite widely.'

Positive

'I have always had a very positive experience as a volunteer. I actually find that the main obstacle is organising time of from my full-time job in order to volunteer during the week. Most places that I have volunteered in are closed at the weekends.'

'I have never encountered any problems in any of the volunteering roles I have undertaken. In my opinion, volunteering needs to be useful to me, helping me gain valuable experience that can be transferred to real life employment/the Archives and Records Management course. I would be disappointed if all I was required to do was box listing and packaging.'

Negative: a summary of responses
- Some note the financial constraints of volunteering, the need to have expenses paid, the value of having a partner who has an income.

- Some emphasised the need for good supervision and review in order to gain and reinforce skills and maintain a sense of value to the organisation. One thought organisations should do more to ensure that volunteering skills could lead to employment.
- One volunteer thought that offices should distinguish between retired volunteers and those volunteering for career reasons, giving the latter precedence in terms of opportunities offered. A specific quota of work experience candidates was suggested.
- Some volunteers said they did not gain the work experience they needed to support archive training/ experience either because resources are not available where they are based or due to the short term nature of some placements
- One older newly qualified professional thought that the job market is biased towards the young newly qualified and that they need wider voluntary experience to compensate
- One respondent resented having to volunteer in order to maintain the payment of benefits. Another (career-seeker) thought that volunteering should be restricted to a limited number of weeks after which it should be paid.

Q13   Your Gender

Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	35.11%	145
Female	63.92%	264
Prefer Not To Say	0.97%	4
Total		**413**

Q14   Your Age

Answer Choices	Responses	
Under 18	0.24%	1
18 – 24	5.81%	24
25 – 34	9.93%	41
35 – 44	3.39%	14
45 - 54	9.44%	39
55 – 64	25.18%	104
65 – 74	31.72%	131
75 and over	12.11%	50
Prefer Not to Say	2.18%	9
Total		**413**

Q15   Do you have a disability?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	10.49%	43
No	88.05%	361
Prefer Not to Say	1.46%	6
Total		410

Answer Choices	Responses	
Mobility-related disability or condition	50.00%	26
Hearing impairment or tinnitus	32.69%	17
Visual impairment	7.69%	4
Speech impairment	0.00%	0
Dexterity-related condition (e.g. difficulty using your hands/fingers)	1.92%	1
A neuro-developmental condition (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, autistic spectrum)	9.62%	5
An intellectual disability (e.g. Down's syndrome)	0.00%	0
A mental health condition	13.46%	7
Prefer Not to Say	11.54%	6
Total Respondents: 52		

Half of disabilities declared were mobility related while nearly a third concerned hearing impairment. Substantial minorities suffered a mental health condition (13%) or a neuro-developmental condition (e.g. dyslexia, autism spectrum) (10%).