

ARCHway – GATEWAY TO RESOURCE SHARING IN ARCHAEOLOGY

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ARCHway was a project, funded by the Research Support Libraries Programme (RSLP), which focussed entirely on serials in a single discipline, archaeology, and looked at a range of questions relating to the access to, and use of serials by archaeology academics in the UK. In the conduct of the research and in the development of the key deliverables, the project team faced many questions and many challenges. Some of these will be familiar to readers of Serials and others perhaps more specific to the discipline of archeology itself. This article outlines some of these problems and how they were dealt with.

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Introduction

In the March 2001 issue of *Serials*, the Director of the Research Support Libraries Programme (RSLP), Ronald Milne, talked about the role of RSLP in improving access to research resources in libraries and archives. This article looks at one of the RSLP projects, ARCHway, and some of its key findings. ARCHway was a two-year project which ran from 29 March 2000 to 30 April 2002. It was funded by the Research Support Libraries Programme (RSLP) and managed by the University of York Library. The project involved eighteen university libraries as full partners and a number of associate partners.

ARCHway was an investigative project and its outcomes depended to a very large extent on the views of archaeology academics. Its main aims were:

- To discover if access to journals and related materials for archaeology researchers could be improved.
- To assess whether the collection management policies of partner libraries for archaeology are adequate.
- To evaluate how effectively document delivery and table-of-contents services met the needs of academics.
- To demonstrate how serials information could be shared via a web-based journal locator.

Some of the areas of research undertaken during the course of the project included:

- A survey of academics' usage of journals and document delivery services.
- Surveys of the collection development policies, access policies and document delivery services of partner libraries
- Mapping of the research interests of academics and the taught

courses available in each department

- Geographical mapping of the library resources used by academics outside their home institution
- Testing the archaeology coverage of document delivery and table-of-contents services against a random selection of journal titles

The project has produced two valuable new resources for archaeologists:

- The ARCHway Archaeology Journal Locator, which provides information on more than 2000 archaeology journals and links to the libraries which hold them.
- An article citation database, which also displays tables of contents, for 14 key UK archaeology titles.

What is different about archaeology?

Archaeology, as taught and researched in UK universities, has a number of characteristics which emerged during the project. Perhaps most surprising was the relatively small number of people working in the discipline. Our estimate is that perhaps less than a thousand staff are employed in archaeology departments across the country. Equally surprising (at least to the project team) was the huge diversity in the research interests of those staff – everything from forensic archaeology to underwater archaeology. This diversity was represented in the range of materials held in the partner libraries.

It was evident from the beginning of the project that a purely formal definition of archaeology as ‘the study of the material remains of human activity across time’ would not suffice, so the project team took the simple, pragmatic and inclusive approach that archaeology was whatever was taught and/or researched in the archaeology departments in the partner universities. This inclusive approach was then followed through in our discussions about what material to include within the ambit of the project. This was not the first project, and will probably not be the last, to grapple with the question ‘What is a serial?’. For the purposes of the project, we agreed simply to include all of the titles purchased from the journal budgets in the archaeology departments of the partner institutions. Naturally, there was some debate

about the usual thorny issues, such as monograph series, but we ignored these, deciding it was better to have the material which some users might be looking for included in the project.

What lessons did we learn?

Some of the lessons we learnt were specific to archaeology, while others were more a reflection of serials and libraries’ treatment of them. Some of the findings from our survey of archaeologists led us to a major shift in one of the key deliverables. Journals were rated as being quite important/very important by 99% of survey respondents. Many respondents, both to the paper-based questionnaire and to the face-to-face interviews, stressed the importance to them of browsing. It was also pointed out time and time again that the age of a journal issue was irrelevant, and that the 1770 issue of *Archaeologia* was just as important to some researchers as the latest issue of *Industrial Archaeology Review* was to others.

A key finding was that 91% of respondents were happy to wait between three days and one month for an article through the document delivery system. This finding, coupled with other research and amplified in discussions in the project’s steering group, led the team to the decision to abandon the planned large-scale document delivery trials. Permission was sought and obtained from the project’s funder, RSLP, to divert resources to the access end of the access/delivery continuum. It was agreed that we would build an index for the full run of 14 key archaeology titles and link that service to the Journal Locator.

Finally, we learnt that ‘core’ is a meaningless concept. A key deliverable in the project was ‘to identify which journals were core to researchers in archaeology’. The ARCHway project team tackled the issue of identifying ‘core journals’ directly, by initially asking each of the partner library representatives to nominate their top 20 titles which they might consider ‘core’. This process could be carried out by the library representatives themselves, or by their academic colleagues, or through a consultation process.

It soon became apparent that this seemingly simple exercise was fraught with all sorts of difficulties. Not the least of these difficulties was

an underlying concern expressed by some academics as to the reasons why we wanted to have this information. Although a simple request in itself, some academics interpreted the seeking of this information as a precursor to yet another exercise in serials cancellations. Others feared that if a title was somehow identified as 'core' by the project, then their institution would have to subscribe to that title, whether they wanted it or not. None of these concerns had any basis in fact, but they were a distraction and conveyed a concern about the project that the project team needed to address.

An analysis of the lists from the 13 partner libraries who submitted returns on their 20 core titles produced a total of 85 titles. One institution pointed out in its reply that:

... titles which are supported by only one person may nevertheless be essential for the teaching and research output of the department. In a department with such a wide spread of interests there are many journals which are crucial to areas of study, but which may only be regularly used by one or two staff; in other cases whole courses may depend on titles which are used by a single member of staff. In all, 118 titles were listed as vital by at least one person.

This is a clear demonstration of the breadth of interests within archaeology, and the inherent difficulties in attempting to define it.

The findings reinforced the project team's view that 'core' means different things to different people and, not surprisingly, a vote for a particular title reflected the research interests of that individual. This was graphically illustrated in the meetings with academics. Often, in a group discussion of half a dozen or more academics it was impossible to reach agreement on whether or not a particular title should be regarded as core.

Although the identification of core journals was cited as a deliverable from the project, the project proposal does not explicitly state to what purpose such a list would be put. It is not unreasonable to assume that one purpose would be to use the list as a basis for collaborative collection management, but there are a number of factors which make this a difficult proposition. In particular, academics frequently emphasised the view that, to them, 'core' meant having direct

access to that title for their research and teaching needs. They generally saw any attempt to develop 'centres of excellence' from which they would need to obtain material, either through document supply services or electronically to their desktop, as a dilution of the level of service they expect. These views must be taken seriously, especially in the light of the willingness generally of archaeology academics to visit other institutions to study material for their own research interests.

The cost of archaeology journals

One assumption in the original project proposal was that archaeology journals were relatively cheap. If this can be shown to be the case, it may be a factor which could lead to collaborative collection development seeming less attractive or necessary.

The project research verified this initial assumption. The average cost of an archaeology journal was found to be in the order of £60. This compares with the following average costs of journals in other disciplines:

Humanities/Social sciences	£145.76
Medicine	£344.91
Science and Technology	£616.98.1

Collaborative collection management

The project started with high ideals in the area of collaborative collection management, but like other RSLP projects found it difficult to make significant progress. This is one area where the academics were unanimous in their views. The whole question of co-operative collection development was treated with a high degree of caution and concern, to the extent where often even mentioning the topic raised fears about the project. In some cases, this was because there was some initial concern about the ARCHway project, in that some academics saw it as a thinly disguised serials cancellation exercise. Although this false impression was dispelled after a presentation of the project's real aims and objectives, the concept of 'centres of excellence' and moving collections around met with strong resistance. It is possible that these concerns were rooted in previous unhappy experiences. It is also likely that they were partly caused by a tendency

to discuss collection management issues as relating solely to existing collections, whereas true collection management looks to the future as well as the present and the past.

A number of factors have emerged in the course of the ARCHway project which lead the Project User Group and the research team to the view that archaeology may be a difficult candidate for collaborative collection management.

Briefly, these include:

- the highly interdisciplinary nature of archaeology
- the high level of diversity in the research interests in the partner institutions
- the relatively low cost of archaeology journals
- the relatively low cost of interlending
- the real and imagined barriers to travel
- the demonstrated reluctance of academics to part with material.

There may be some scope for continuing the ARCHway discussion list and using it as a vehicle for bringing broken runs together and for notifying potential major purchases. These options were being explored at the end of the project.

What key deliverables were produced?

The project produced two key deliverables, both of which are available on the web. They are a Journal Locator and an Article Citation/Table-of-Contents Database. Rather than attempt to describe them here, readers are encouraged to take a look at them at:

<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/ARCHway.html>

Some of the issues the project had to deal with in building the Journal Locator were the competing claims of the physical versus virtual catalogue. The reasons for choosing a physical catalogue are documented in detail in the final report of the project. It was interesting to note that the SUNCAT proposal, arising from the UK National Union Catalogue study, has also opted for a physical union catalogue rather than a virtual distributed catalogue.

Another problem area to be addressed was whether to include subject headings. After extended discussion, and in the light of the fact that virtually none of the partner libraries assigned subject headings to their serials, it was

decided not to attach subject headings to the description. This decision was also influenced by the lack of an agreed comprehensive thesaurus for archaeology. In the end, the Journal Locator had over 2000 titles listed, with direct links from the title to the catalogue of each library which holds that title.

The decision to build the Article Citation Database stemmed from the project's findings on the level of academics' satisfaction with document delivery services. It was decided to build a database of every article in every issue of 14 titles, chosen for their widespread use. As some of these titles dated from as far back as 1770, the total database has over 20,000 articles, all fully searchable by keyword, with full Boolean logic. The database can also be used to construct a table of contents for each issue of each title.

The Journal Locator and the Article Citation database are fully searchable from one web page and the user can move seamlessly from one product to the other. Together it is hoped that they will form a useful tool for archaeology academics and research students as well as the amateur archaeologist.

Conclusions

The findings from the project can thus be summarised as follows.

- The survey of academics' usage of journals and document delivery services indicated that journals are vital resources, but that academics' usage of document delivery services was low.
- The surveys of the collection development policies, access policies and document delivery services of partner libraries indicated that more work needed to be done in this area.
- The mapping of the research interests of academics and the taught courses available in each department highlighted the variety of interests within each department, which was reflected in the strengths of each institution's library collection.
- The geographical mapping of the library resources used by academics outside their home institution highlighted the major impact that existing specialist collections have on the research of archaeologists across the country.

- The testing of the archaeology coverage of document delivery and table-of-contents services against a random selection of journal titles showed that the coverage is generally poor.

Where do we go from here?

Keeping the outcomes of any project up to date is a universal problem. After debating the options, ARCHway has opted for a periodic updating system, whereby the two products will be updated after 18 months and again a further 18 months on. There is provision in place for an

independently managed review to be carried out 12 months after the end of the project, i.e. in April 2003. The findings of this review will further inform the updating processes.

The real test of success of the project and its outcomes will be how well they are taken up and used by the archaeology community. The early enthusiasm is there – long may it continue.

Reference

1. Library and Information Statistics Unit, 2002
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/dils/lisu/list00/list00.html>