

ARCHI'VE
EXPLORED
DISCOVERED
FOUND
DETECTED
CONNECTED
ENGAGED
UNEARTHED
LEARNT
IMAGINED
CREATED
UNLOCKED
OPENED
REVEALED
CELEBRATED

Explore Your Archive is a campaign coordinated jointly by The National Archives (UK) and the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) (ARA) with, and on behalf of, the archives and records sector across the UK and Ireland. It aims to showcase the unique potential of archives to excite people, bring communities together, and tell amazing stories. The campaign runs all year around and its focal point is the launch week in November. It seeks to increase capacity in the archive sector to engage with the public, to raise public awareness of the phenomenal archival and records collections across the UK and Ireland, and to drive attendance at events. In 2016, over 100 organisations held events during the launch week and over 130 organisations and individuals engaged with the designated social media campaign throughout the week, comprising over 29,000 tweets with a total reach of 26 million.

In 2016, the launch week for the Explore Your Archive ran between 19-27 November. It was a positive week, with some good national and local media coverage, and some great results on social media. A wide range of individuals and organisations got involved with the social media campaigns, including the National Portrait Gallery, the Imperial War Museum, the Royal Academy, the Guardian Media Archives and the National Records of Scotland, as well as campaign ambassadors, such as the actors Stephen McGann and Shobna Gulati, and television presenter Diane Louise Jordan. We achieved international reach, with colleagues at the National Archives and Records Administration (US) and from across Europe joining in.

Sector Activities & Communications

The full range of national and local partners in the UK (including in Scotland and Wales, private archives and local government sector, among others) developed joint or individual activities and promoted the campaign within the sector and communities. The ARA ran its usual communications to members, and supported marketing and activities in the Republic of Ireland, alongside Irish archives and services and the National Archives of Ireland.

In the run-up to the campaign, The National Archives (UK) sent out a regular newsletter from July to November to a mailing list of over 900 contacts from the sector. These newsletters covered a range of topics, including updates from the campaign team, tips for dealing with the media, and keeping people up to date with preparations for the launch week.

For the first time, the campaign was included in The National Archives (UK) newsletter (220,000 recipients) and was also the focus of a bespoke Explore Your Archive newsletter to its broader research database (135,000 recipients). This led to over 3,000 visits to the Explore Your Archive website on the same day, up from an average of 700 per day during the launch week. The Explore Your Archive website was again hosted by The National Archives on behalf of the campaign. The website was again a focus for promoting activities.

The main campaign statistics for 2016-17 were:

- 102 archives registered events on the Explore Your Archive website;
- At least 130 events were run during the launch week throughout the UK and Ireland;
- The campaign's hashtags each trended on Twitter in the UK and Ireland on their respective days;
- @explorearhive now (at time of writing) has 1797 followers (an increase of 509 from last year);
- Explore Your Archive Facebook page activity had a reach of 106,037, with 5019 post engagements.

Public communications

The social media campaign had another excellent year, maintaining the successes of previous years. 113 accounts registered their participation in #explorearchives week on Twitter¹ and 11,709 tweets were sent using #explorearchives (14,592 last year) with an effective reach of over 26 million.

Whilst the headline figures are slightly lower than last year, the number of tweets sent using the daily hashtags was higher, and the reach was comparable. Each hashtag trended on their given day, with #archiveanimals and #hairychives trending in the top three hashtags in the UK and Ireland:

Hashtag	Number of uses	2015 total if applicable
#explorearchives	11,709	14,592
#archiveanimals	4,535 (3 rd in the UK and Ireland)	3,700
#yearinarchives	2,773	2,000
#archivepioneers	2,683	n/a
#hairychives	4,326 (2 nd in the UK and Ireland)	n/a
#autoarchives	3,026	n/a
TOTAL	29,052	24,990

The Explore Your Archive [website](#) exists to publicise events to the public by region and date, and to act as a hub for information about the campaign (including anyone wanting to organise events). 7,600 unique users visited the website during the Explore Your Archive launch week, resulting in 12,031 sessions (8664 in 2015-16), and 19,378 page views (14,717 in 2015-16).

Responses to the evaluation survey

A survey² was sent out at the beginning of January 2017, via the Explore Your Archive mailing list and to ARA members to gather feedback concerning the launch week in 2016. We received forty responses to our evaluation survey this year, which is a smaller figure than in previous years. In 2014 and 2015, the evaluation survey was sent out in December and closed in January, receiving over one hundred responses. We have yet to determine how best to evaluate the 2017-18 campaign but will learn from the experience of recent years.

Participation

- Of the forty responses we received this in this evaluation, nineteen (47.5%) were from people working in local or national government archives, five (12.5%) were from people in university archives and sixteen (40%) were from people in private archives, including charity and business collections.
- Thirty seven (92.5%) of those responding had taken part in the launch week this year.
- Ten (27%) of those responding had not taken part in the launch week in previous years.

¹ 116 registered in 2015, 50 in 2014

² Evaluations of the previous years' campaigns can be found [here](#) and [here](#)

- Twelve (32.4%) of those responding had taken part every year since 2013-14; nine (24.3%) had taken part in two of the last three years, and six (16.2%) took part in 2015-16.

Activities

- Thirty five archives gave us details of the events they had run during the launch week, including a number who reported on their social media activities. A number took advantage of the launch week to announce new activities or begin online activities, such as blogs or start social media accounts.
- The social media campaign had excellent uptake with thirty six (97.3%) respondents taking part. The hashtags in particular were well received:
 - *“The daily hashtags on twitter worked very well, it encouraged us to be more creative with our selection of material from our archives”*
 - *“Having the hashtags is always fun and helps us to show items which may otherwise not be seen”*
 - *“Loved the # - I was able to find interesting items in the collections we haven't shared before”*
- The themes provided were also popular:
 - *“I found the themes to be a good idea to promote archives together.”*
 - *It was challenging to find items to fit within the themes on each day but it helped us to look at our collections in a new light and come about things in new ways*

Overall, respondents gave the social media campaign a positive rating

- Nineteen (51.4%) respondents rated the social media campaigns good and seven (18.9%) rated them excellent;
- Eight (21.6%) respondents rated the support and communications from The National Archives, ARA and other partners as excellent; Twenty one (56.8%) rated it as good;
- However, a small number of those responding highlighted some areas that could be improved; Two (5.4%) of those responding reported being unable to find details of the social media campaign, and five (13.5%) asked for more advance notice of launch week;

Overall, the Explore Your Archive launch week was a success

- Thirty five (94.6%) archives deemed the Explore Your Archive launch week as successful for their service;
- Thirty one (86.1%) thought the Explore Your Archive launch week was successful for the archive sector
- Thirty five (94.6%) agreed that the Explore Your Archive Launch week made them feel proud about the work that they do.
 - *“It was great to be involved and we have plans to try something more ambitious next year. The event gives us the room to escalate our participation as our confidence grows.”*
 - *“The resource pack was fabulous and had I more time, I would have really liked to have planned in an event as well as the social media campaign.”*
 - *“I'm sure we will continue to participate in future years as it is a great opportunity for archives to come together and showcase the amazing things we hold.”*

However, the survey revealed some areas for development for future campaigns

- Three (11.1%) respondents did not take part this year: one of these had taken part previously. Reasons given included: lack of awareness of the campaign, lack of resources and a mismatch between the campaign goals and their organisational goals.
- Thirteen (35%) respondents said Explore Your Archive launch week resulted in them or a colleague developing new skills.
- Some commented that if they were to participate again, they would like to receive information earlier in order to prepare:
 - *“Better advanced information online about the current year rather than showing the previous year's info right up to the few weeks before.”*
 - *More advance notice of plans and ideas.*
- Two respondents commented on being confused about the Explore Your Archive ‘launch’ week:
 - *“What exactly did it launch as I have seen no mention of the campaign or related material since November. Surely awareness week is a better term, and is probably how most archives perceive the occasion.”*
 - *“If the Explore Campaign is intended to be a year-long event (which we were not aware of until this year's report came out) is it possible to encourage participants to continue using the hashtag #explorearchives and posting to the social media pages throughout the year? Currently, as soon as the launch week is over, all activity ceases and the pages quickly look unused/out-of-date.”*
- Importantly, there is interest to engage more broadly, beyond the archives sector with the next campaign:
 - *“This year we felt the campaign didn't go beyond the archives profession. It was great to engage with other archives more than usual, but that doesn't feel the point of the campaign. Also the lead-in and preparation time seemed even shorter despite asking last year for it to be longer.”*

Priorities for the 2017 Explore Your Archive campaign

- Announce launch week date in March 2017;
- Develop a greater focus on engaging the public with the campaign, building on the successful and wide ranging activities undertaken by colleagues in the archives sector, and build in greater evaluation of public engagement to determine a better picture of the impact of the campaign;
- Continue to build on the social media successes achieved this year.
- Seek to extend the use of ambassadors.
- Develop a simple, re-usable evaluation framework model, tailored to the needs of the sector;
- Make the Explore Your Archive website and campaign materials more accessible and year-round to reflect the full scope of the campaign.

For further information about the Explore Your Archive Campaign, please contact [Jessamy Carlson](#), campaign lead at The National Archives or [Jon Elliott](#), Head of Public Affairs at the Archives & Records Association (UK & Ireland).

Media report

25 November 2016

Appeared

Broadcast

BBC Radio London –*Robert Elms*

Interview with Diane Louise Jordan, 23 November
1.38.50 – 1.39.10 and 1.42.40 – 1.54.10

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04fpjgh#play>

Nationals

The Guardian

Piece on GNM archive, 18 November

Note: We did approach The Guardian but did not receive a confirmation for this piece

<https://www.theguardian.com/gnm-archive/gallery/2016/nov/18/making-headlines-printing-the-guardian-newspaper-1921-1987-in-pictures>

Telegraph

Comment piece by Stephen McGann, 23 November

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/call-midwives-stephen-mcgann-should-delve-national-archives/>

Online

Scottish History

Ran feature including Scottish events, 22 November

<https://www.celebrate-scotland.co.uk/news/explore-your-archive-week-in-scotland-21-27-november-2016>

The Londonist

Listing of LGBT event at National Archives , 18 November

<http://londonist.com/london/weekend/things-to-do-in-london-this-weekend-19-20-november-2016?rel=handpicked>

The Voice

‘Historical Records: Find Your Family's This Month’, 25 November

<http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/historical-records-find-your-familys-month>

Confirmed

Royal Academy

RA Recommends feature on Arts Archives

Huffington Post

LGBT comment piece

The Stage

Feature on Theatre Collection