

This document outlines areas that the National Archives team have identified as potential areas for collaboration with Oxford researchers. For further information, please contact Victoria McGuinness (TORCH) [victoria.mcguinness@humanities.ox.ac.uk](mailto:victoria.mcguinness@humanities.ox.ac.uk)

Number	Title	Idea	Broad area(s) of interest
1	<b>Archives in a world of alternative facts</b>	<p>Pervasive digital social networks and media have transformed our information environment and brought vast swathes of the world's knowledge to our fingertips. But amidst a huge and growing variety of increasingly undifferentiated information sources it is not clear that, as citizens, we have the skills and tools we need to navigate this new environment – an environment in which individuals (and even pieces of code) can misrepresent themselves with consummate ease.</p> <p>Archives, libraries and museums are memory institutions and can make a unique contribution to a response to the dissemination of misinformation via traditional media outlets and online networks. For an archive, few activities are more important than preserving trust in the evidential value of the record. What is the best approach to this in the digital age?</p> <p>A knowledge exchange in this area would aim to foster a public conversation, both online and at UK-based events about the role of memory institutions in responding to false reports. It could explore the work of existing fact-checking organisations and consider their applicability to the historical sphere and consider techniques for most effectively refuting stubbornly resistant myths, misstatements or outright lies about past events.</p> <p>Possible future research outputs could include the development of a set of tools or resources to inform and empower memory institutions to work in this area.</p>	<p>Digital Information studies Impact of tech on historical methods</p>
2	<b>Measuring and displaying accuracy of machine reading to enable human correction</b>	<p>The National Archives' collections contain huge amounts of material which would be perfect for either HTR (handwritten text recognition) or OCR but the standard of the results is not always good enough to use. We also have a strong volunteer base, with the potential (and desire) to expand this by recruiting distant volunteers. One possible avenue is to get volunteers to correct machine produced transcriptions - humans are still much better at reading names, places and difficult words than machines. However we cannot expect volunteers to wade through huge amounts of correct text searching for the errors – we need a way of utilising the probability data that these technologies rely on to focus the volunteers. The aim is to get the machines to do the bit they are good at – working at scale – and the precious human resource can be focused on the tricky bits. This clearly has potential benefits in terms of involving volunteers in exciting research projects, and providing scope for greater engagement between the public and holders of large cultural heritage datasets.</p>	<p>Digital humanities Presentation of collections as data</p>
3	<b>Visualisation tools to enable easier public access to the content of our records</b>	<p>The National Archives holds huge collections of records in which the wider public have a genuine interest, but do not have the skills (or patience) to really access. Any proposal that explores how we can enhance access to these types of materials would be very interesting. Taking as an example the collection of over 1,000,000 PROB 11 wills, lots of people are very interested in these documents, but very few can actually read and make sense of what is going on in the text. This is only one such example and there are numerous others throughout the archive. Visualisation tools have the potential to bring these records to a whole new audience. It is appreciated that, depending on the collection, there are possible issues in accessing the information within the record, but the potential of such work is great, and TNA has the ability to leverage a huge audience in this area to create real impact.</p>	<p>Digital humanities Visualisation</p>

4	<b>Revealing the early slave trade and the Royal Africa Company</b>	<p>The Royal African Company was the principal British organisation engaged in the slave trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Between its inception in 1660 and the early eighteenth century it was instrumental in the removal of around 150,000 slaves from West Africa to the West Indies. The records of the Company are held at The National Archives in catalogue series T 70 and a complementary set of private records (the Rawlinson papers) is held at the Bodleian Library.</p> <p>These records have been of interest to some academics, but outreach and popular history has focused on the period of abolition, making extensive use of slave registers (T 71) in particular. The records of the Royal African Company are difficult to access, because of lack of cataloguing, but they contain details of conditions in the slave forts of West Africa and of voyages to the West Indies. However, with further collaborative research, it would be possible to provide an online resource and exhibition which would illuminate the earlier experience of slavery for a popular audience. There are already existing networks and resources for the West African and West Indian communities in Britain, which would afford opportunities for dissemination of such resource.</p>	<p>Collections-based research African history History of the slave trade</p>
5	<b>Portraits in the Plea Rolls: royal imagery and vernacular art in the early modern law courts.</b>	<p>The formal records of pleas in the central court of King's Bench (TNA record series KB 27), contain numerous illuminated capital portraits of monarchs from the late fifteenth century onwards. These images were produced under the supervision of chief clerks and royal justices but were not specifically created for public consumption. Although they vary in sophistication of execution and imagery, there are strong propagandist and dynastic messages in some of the illustrations – particularly at times of regime change and political crisis. Others are mere sketches or doodles. Only a small number of the finest quality pictures from the rolls are known and the true extent of the image collection remains unknown.</p> <p>A partnership between TNA and an art historian to investigate the corpus of illustration and royal portraiture in these records might address questions related to the vernacular or polemical messages projected by the court officers on behalf of the Crown between the early 16th and the mid-18th centuries. Do they represent some form of social/political commentary or do they reflect broader developments in English (and British) royal art as a component of the projection of royal power? Since some of the mid-Tudor pictures are known to be by appointed artists such as Livia Teerlink, a concentrated analysis by an art historian might reveal much more about artists at work within the Tudor, Stuart and Hanoverian courts.</p> <p>There is some literature on the late medieval portraits and sketches (Danbury &amp; Scott 2015), but nothing systematic that serves as the basis for more comprehensive early modern study.</p>	<p>Collections-based research Early modern history Art history Social history</p>
6	<b>Literary Manuscripts in The National Archives</b>	<p>The Early Modern team would like to host a fellowship that would explore our important holding of literary manuscripts and develop a programme of public engagement activities to increase awareness of this overlooked aspect of our collection. We hold literary manuscripts of many canonical figures (for example Ben Jonson, John Milton, John Donne, Lady Mary Wroth) in addition to biographical sources for literary figures (for example William Shakespeare, Aphra Behn and Andrew Marvell). These documents are scattered throughout our collection and we would like to explore the context of their retention within the records of the government and the central law courts and how this shapes our understandings of the texts – not only in terms of the content but also in terms of the different material forms in which the texts appear – as letters, enrolments and evidence in legal cases. We are open to developing creative responses to these works, especially as they cover such a wide range of genres and material forms. For more information on the manuscripts we hold please see the Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450-1700 (<a href="http://www.celm-ms.org.uk/repositories/national-archives-kew.html">http://www.celm-ms.org.uk/repositories/national-archives-kew.html</a>).</p>	<p>Early modern literary history Literary manuscripts</p>
7	<b>Cultural Encounters in the Early Modern Period</b>	<p>The National Archives holds several transcripts of early modern travel itineraries which are 19th century copies of original documents held in St Mark's Library, Venice. Of particular interest are the diaries of Paul Hentzner, a German lawyer who describes his visit to Elizabethan London, and Horatio Busino, priest to the Venetian ambassador who writes about Jacobean London. They offer a rich body of evidence for cultural encounters of European travellers in England, and have been widely drawn upon by theatre and cultural historians due to their references to playhouses and royal entertainments. We would like to explore how we could use these documents in a digital engagement context, and to consider them in relation to the collecting and practices of nineteenth century archivists. The documents are described briefly on Discovery: <a href="http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/C67588">http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/browse/r/h/C67588</a>.</p>	<p>Digital engagement Early modern history History of collecting</p>

8	<b>Negotiating the National Health Service</b>	<p>The National Archives holds a significant collection of records relating to the planning and establishment of the National Health Service (which celebrates its 70th birthday in 2018) in the record class MH 77 (Ministry of Health: Post War Planning and Establishment of National Health Service, Registered Files, Proposals and Conference Papers).</p> <p>MH 77 contains many records relating to the planning and scope of NHS services, but also a large amount of documents relating to the government's discussions with various interest groups, including doctors, nurse, patients, dentists and health administrators.</p> <p>In its 70th year the NHS' role and future are still part of the national conversation, This fellowship would use MH 77 (as well as other records in MH, PREM and CAB series) to provide an insight into how government navigated and absorbed the concerns and pressures of various stakeholder groups as the service was established, with relevance to historical and current policy debates. Records and research could then be used to contextualise and facilitate conversations with professionals and the public about the history and future of the NHS.</p>	History of medicine and health Health policy
9	<b>AIDS, the public and government policy, c.1983-1987</b>	<p>The Government's AIDS advertising campaign of c.1987 is one of the most famous and successful public health campaign in British history. This project would focus on the government's attempts to gauge public perceptions of HIV/AIDS and its attempts to craft an effective yet sensitive policy in response.</p> <p>The National Archives born digital series BN 97 (AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) Advertising Evaluation Dataset) contains the data of 1000s of questionnaires gauging respondents from across British society's knowledge of and attitudes towards AIDS, public health and social issues. Series CAB 134 meanwhile, contains the papers of the Cabinet Committees on AIDS, showing how public health and public relations policy was shaped.</p> <p>Using these records to examine the interplay between the public and government's understanding and approach to HIV/AIDS, this fellowship would seek to address three questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do we present born digital records such as BN 97, which do not always appear to be easily exploitable, to encourage traditional researchers not to be intimidated by digital records.</li> <li>2. What were public perceptions of HIV/AIDS throughout the Second Thatcher Ministry? How did government policy shape and alter these?</li> <li>3. How did public perceptions of HIV/AIDS shape government decision making?</li> </ol>	History of medicine and health Health policy
10	<b>Documenting trade routes through the history of stationery bindings at The National Archives</b>	<p>The National Archives has an extensive collection of stationery bindings dating from the 14th century to the early 20th century. Stationery bindings were used for maintaining accounts: ledgers, daybooks and minute books. They encompass a wide range of binding styles which reflect both the financial successes of different cities at different times and technological developments in the history of bookbinding. The collection is of international significance but has never been fully catalogued or researched.</p> <p>The National Archives is looking for a knowledge exchange partner who can help us interpret the materials of the book and give new insights into the trade routes in Europe from the 14th to the 18th century. In this partnership The National Archives would survey the materials and methods used in this diverse collection, selecting a representational sample set for examination using a range of analytical techniques including X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy, fibre optic reflectance spectroscopy and multi-spectral imaging. The project would be of benefit to historians (specifically banking, accountancy, politics and the exchange of international ideas), book historians and conservators.</p>	Book history History of banking Political history