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SUPPORTING TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES

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Supporting Teaching with Primary Sources: Executive summary

Project background

The project was an investigation into how the University of Sheffield Library can better support teaching with primary sources, through in-depth interview with current practitioners. It has generated a rich understanding of teacher needs and allows recommendations to be made for how the University Library can support such teaching going forward.

The University of Sheffield Library project contributed to research overseen by Ithaka S+R, and contributes to a wider study across institutions in the UK and North America. The rationale for the research is that the use of primary sources engages the critical faculties of students and affords inquiry based/research led learning to take place within the curriculum. The ever-increasing availability of digital resources has meant that primary sources are more readily available, discoverable, and lend themselves to be used with increasing variety.

The research process

The data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with academics in the faculties of Arts and Humanities, and Social Sciences. An interview schedule provided by Ithaka S+R was used to structure the interview; each interview lasted around sixty minutes. Participants were identified via networks of contacts within the University Library. In total, nine interviews were conducted which have contributed to the findings of the research.

Summary of findings

The findings of the research have affirmed the centrality of primary sources, in certain pedagogical approaches. Critical and analytical engagement with primary sources represents the higher order learning that is the hallmark of a university degree. It is transformative in a way that consuming and collating secondary sources and criticism is not.

For the academic teacher this presents challenges. Use of primary sources if often associated with particular disciplines, the specifics of how to teach effectively with primary sources is not included in the generic teacher development programmes. Consequently, academics rely on a peer support network, which includes librarians and learning technologists, to develop their own style and method. Achieving and maintaining this

knowledge for a wide range of sources, amongst the other pressures on their time, is central for academic teachers.

The skills developed by students when working with primary sources correlate with those that can be identified as information and digital literacy (IDL). The practical skills of how to find, access and use sources are seen to be where librarians can best contribute to learning. Critical and analytical skills are developed as learning outcomes of the curriculum, The findings also highlight the role physical archives can play in skills development. This may be a lesson for wider IDL teaching to learn as it struggles with de-contextualised digital sources.

Naturally, there is a preference and an ease of use for teachers to work with material that is held locally by the University Library. However, there is not an expectation that the University Library will hold all of the relevant material itself, but academics are looking for their library to facilitate links with other archives and to invest in services (digitisation, catalogue descriptions, and translation) that opens up wider archival sources to their students.

There are profound social and political implications around primary source selection for teaching. Sources that are difficult to access (through physical or technological failings) reinforce existing inequalities in teaching. While libraries and archives have struggled to approach the grand challenge of diversifying their collections effectively, more focused individual academic teaching practices present genuine opportunities. Across all disciplines in this study, academic are driven by the demand of their students, and a genuine commitment to diversifying the archival record. They expect the University Library not just to react to demand, but to play an active role in the discovery and maintenance of a wider set of primary sources so that they might be incorporated into the curriculum.

The support that academic colleagues require from the Library centres on improving their effectiveness as teachers. They appreciate the infrastructural support of maintaining catalogues, acquiring new materials and enabling discovery. However, they most value support that is tailored, specific and grounded in a sound knowledge of their objectives as teachers. This requires deep engagement and personal relationships. Academics want to know the collections so that they can be effective guides to their students; in turn, they expect support from library staff both to guide their students, and to guide them in their knowledge of the sources available.

Recommendations

The report makes the following recommendations for how the University Library can support teaching with primary sources:

- **Invest in liaison work** – improve the Faculty Engagement Team's (FET) knowledge of collections of primary sources available, and improve liaison skills of the National Fairground and Circus Archive (NFCA), and Special Collections (SC) staff.
- **Focus archival acquisitions** – to address missing voices within the collections.
- **Emphasise information and digital literacy** – learn from the similarities between generic and curriculum based skills development and look to develop resources which accommodate these.
- **Build relationships with other archives** – the library can play a role in facilitating relationships between departments and external archives.
- **Improve digital accessibility** – focus on digital accessibility, re-digitisation and resource descriptions with an understanding of teaching priorities.
- **Support high quality translations** – invest in local translation services, or support wider community initiatives.

Update regarding Covid-19 pandemic

This research was undertaken before the global pandemic. The research has provided evidence that access to primary sources is vital for undergraduates, to develop their subject specific critical analysis skills. In response to this, the University Library is looking to provide access to primary sources, whether it be via digital or physical access, to continue providing access to primary sources held in its collections. A digitisation on demand service has been created, working in collaboration with the FET and the NFCA and SC. The University Library is continuing to run some of its services online, such as delivering online sessions.

Supporting Teaching with Primary Sources: Findings

Introduction

The intention of the research was to uncover the motivation and challenges of teaching undergraduate students with primary sources. The data collection method of unstructured interviews was chosen as it would collect rich, qualitative data that the library struggles to collect via established methods of service assessment. Respondents represent a variety of disciplinary approaches from across Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. The findings represent an affirmation of the importance that primary sources hold in certain pedagogical approaches alongside an understanding of how information and digital literacy support is developed by the use of primary sources. On this basis, recommendations are offered for the future development of the University Library and its special collections.

Teaching with primary sources

The pedagogy of primary sources.

Teaching with primary sources was identified as integral to the pedagogy of the disciplines covered, and held to be the elevating factor in the educational aims of a module. They are part of the fundamental teaching philosophy of disciplines that are analytical. This is seen as the key value of using such material over secondary sources, or de-contextualised texts in an anthology. It allows the development of students from passive consumers of lectures and secondary reading to become active creators of knowledge. This ideal seemed to cross disciplines. Use of primary sources allow students to develop from being able to analyse and criticise a source, through being able to synthesize multiple sources, up to active engagement and knowledge creation. These are the critical analytical skills for employability that are seen as the value of a humanities or social sciences degree:

> *"My students [should engage] with a written argument. They prefer films of course, they prefer things that they can listen to... for me it is important students sit down and read something. They read until they [are] more or less able to follow somebody else's reasoning. I think it's a key"*

The act of reading a primary source is considered transformative in the learning process. Fundamentally, interactions with primary sources are an engaging and creative way of

teaching. It is seen as the most effective way of highlighting topical areas within a subject. Interviewees highlighted the emotional response of students in relation to primary sources and their studies:

> "I can explain by just using secondary sources but... [they] cannot feel this was real, if I show the actual primary sources and if students can analyse the actual primary sources then they can feel ok... this wording is important because [the] implication of this wording is ABC you know so they can actually feel and analyse directly"

The discussion around the text (generally in the form of a seminar) is the core method of developing critical thinking and analytical skills. Students are required to ask questions of a text. Their ability to engage with a primary source is inherently enriched when dealing with a contextualised physical item. This questioning of the text is supposed to encourage the student to have the understanding to then go on to ask wider questions of society:

> "That's part of their assessment so that's kind of built in... to think about the bigger questions about source criticism [...] it's not just the this source is biased but who made it, why did they make it, what language is it in, who created it, why did they create it... it's just a really good way in getting all those intricacies"

The Teacher as Expert and Guide

The framing and contextualising of primary sources would appear to be key when incorporating them successfully in teaching. Students who are enthused by the sources or by a visit to the archive are those that are likely to be more engaged with the course and recognised as high achievers. There is an understanding that working with such sources can be difficult and challenges students, but this is precisely the pedagogical value. The teacher then acts as a guide:

> "I think that as the expert and the person who has done research in that area, the person who's paid to teach these people, it is my job to frame set of sources they ought to be using because otherwise there's too much onus in my view on the student"

Our respondents' teaching methods were designed to make students comfortable with primary sources. The approaches varied by personal style, and subject area. Some texts can be intimidating in terms of language or format:

> *"It's quite a hard thing to give a medieval text to students [and] say ok tell me something meaningful about this. They will struggle with the language. They wouldn't have the historical background needed so alongside a lot of the lectures were aimed at sort of giving this historical background"*

Misjudgement on the suitability of selected sources, such as sources that are too long, or too many sources can be barriers for less experienced students. In this respect, the selection of the text is key. Selecting a suitable text relieves student anxiety and creates the intellectual space for the pedagogical approach to be implemented.

Where students are considered to be more naturally familiar with the primary sources they are working with then there are other opportunities for students further their understanding/discovery of other primary sources. Contemporary subjects, such as Law, allow for students to select the relevant sources, creating a different stimulus for the teacher:

> *"I also model myself not knowing how to do it because the point of this module is that I might not know either, it's not I have this knowledge that I'm passing to the students it's we're creating this knowledge together and I'm creating a structure"*

Teacher Development

Primary sources are seen as more flexible than secondary sources and offering more spac for discussion. Their appeal is they allow active engagement from the student and less structured teaching. Respondents referred to the "empty curriculum" and how primary sources allow for experimentation on the part of the teacher. Interaction with the text in other ways (transcribing, editing, translating, re-writing) is part of the pedagogical method with learning by doing, knowledge creation not replication.

The re-interpretation of the same sources in the context of contemporary society gives a flexibility to the teaching and a fluidity to the approach:

"[I have] an ever evolving organic... syllabus which does mean that when I come across, in my own research, things I'm like 'well that they really need to add that to the resource packs' [...] so that's why so it's not static or petrified"

Formal teaching qualifications encouraged respondents to think critically about their wider methods but did not provide the specifics of teaching with primary sources. For true professional development respondents relied upon peer networks ("Teaching Brown bag lectures") which notably included learning technologists and librarians. Respondents spoke of the lack of support for early career teachers, and a mistaken belief that charisma and enthusiasm alone could carry a module - "I've got lots of experience of having been taught so I can use that to work out how to teach basically ... [and that only] works like to an extent"

Information Literacy and Primary Sources

Critical Thinking Skills

As part of the University's Programme Level Approach, it is expected that students develop skills and attributes needed to aid their employability prospects after University - including developing appropriate information and digital literacy skills, as part of the Sheffield Graduate Attributes. Respondents from all disciplines noted that students are not expected to come to university with the skills to interact and interpret primary sources. These skills, in particular critical thinking, are developed by embedding them in curriculum by teaching with primary sources – "...one of the journeys we [are] plotting in terms of learning outcomes and things like that is not just critical thinking but it's independent critical thinking."

In the increasingly digital world, students are presented with so much information, which is taken at face value, that they find the development of critical thinking skills to be difficult. From the lecturers' point of view, they need to make the primary sources engaging in order to garner student attention:

> *"Students rely too much on social media... without analysing without digesting... so in that sense [to look at] primary sources and read primary sources is a [...] complicated process which requires [engagement], attention, focus and sometime[s] passion too."*

The time at which students are introduced to primary sources largely seems linked to the learning outcome of their programme of study. The main use of primary sources is to develop a level of consistent understanding amongst their peers during the early stages of their studies . However, in some cases finding the balance of introducing primary sources for skills development in level one has been difficult due to the materials needing to be understood:

> *"...because of the period of literature we work on, it's just difficult... we just launched the new first year module and it's [a] whole year [with the texts] and they're finding it hard and I don't think [we] pitch[ed] it quite right, I think we've gone in too hard too soon."*

Even though skills are embedded in the curriculum, it is the module leader who emphasises to students that they are there to develop skills and brief them on the expectations and requirements for successful participation. Respondents spoke of a need to balance primary and secondary resources for students. Providing Primary sources early in a programme requires some guidance on what the source is about and how it is relevant, and relates to the secondary sources.

Using primary sources to meet learning outcomes can be a challenge for students, depending on the materials being consulted. This requires specific skills for primary sources alongside generic information literacy. Students may need to understand the language but being challenged in such a way brings students into a liminal space that develops understanding and learning.

> *"There's often quite a hurdle [with archaic language]... if they are reading contemporary literature there is no such hurdle. With [historical sources] they have to go, 'ok before I make sense of this I have to get used to new kind of syntax, I have to get used to new kind of grammar' and that kind of*

thing. So a lot of the early work we do with students at that level is actually just getting them used to reading the stuff"

Print Archives and Student Skills Development

Information and digital literacy is often associated with the skills to interact with information online, but our respondents talked about the role that personal, physical experience with archival material can play in the development of students as critical knowledge creators. Students like using primary sources in a hands on manner, with the lecturer, as expert, there to explain significance. In so doing, students can also see how materials differ from the same material presented, and possible translated, in an anthology and the work that has gone into creating the text:

> *"...you know what your anthology editors had to do to get the text from this date into what she's presenting to you in your anthology. You know the fact that she's putting capitalisation, punctuation, all these things that [...] they never thought about."*

The physical format lends itself to deeper understanding of a primary source as it allows the student to develop a subtext, which may not be gained by interacting with the online version. Respondents highlighted how much students like interacting with the physical resources. It was held that they gain a deeper understanding and critical analysis of the material when experiencing it hands on:

> *"They really appreciated how lucky they were and the fact that they personally were able and allowed to handle the materials themselves. And they said you know they couldn't believe that they've been allowed to touch something that was made in the 12th Century and sniffed it."*

Visits to Special Collections as part of the programme/module are viewed as a valuable resource. The interviews highlighted that more than using electronic resources this developed critical thinking skills. It forms part of the learning process undertaken by the students. Certain learning moment could only be experienced physically:

"they can feel the difference, they can see the difference, smell the difference. And it's nice, it's a tactile thing. You get to see and then you know they say to you well what does this mean, what's this?"

Using Primary Sources in teaching

Selecting primary sources

The selection of the right primary source is crucial to successful teaching, and respondents invested significant time in making sure this was done correctly. The process is considered even more crucial when physically accessing primary sources, especially early material. However, it is not something that is solely down to the academic - there was also enthusiasm for involving the students in this process - "the challenges I face have to do with my own limitations and the way I overcome them is by making learning collaborative and bringing in other people."

Another method of selection favoured was the maintenance of personal collections of primary sources, often accumulated over a career. This can mitigate the problems of physical distance, paywalls or poor quality digitisation. Alongside formal archival structures, our respondents were happy to use mass market platforms like google books, image search and YouTube to connect their students with versions of primary sources. Limitations were noted with this approach, including the perceived lack of control over the reliability and quality of the content, and its pre-existing contextualisation. This means that an element of learning, interpretation and control over the text is lost:

"I suppose…the danger… [is] authenticity…I'll say something very kind of obvious but with the nature of the internet with the proliferation of fake news with the fact that we don't know nobody really has control or can regulate the dissemination, the spread, the creation, the preservation of source material. That you know it will be harder and harder to prove authenticity so I think that's a general … universal problem."

The availability and ability to find sources is key in selection but respondents also invest time in judging the quality of the primary source, because of the variability they have encountered. Digital surrogates often miss out covers, prefaces, dedications, commendations from authors, printer and publisher information. Some digitising technologies can change characters in the text. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is often unable to interpret old

English, old fonts and non-Latin scripts.   All of this takes away the materiality of primary sources and decontextualizes the text:

> *"They just often take the kind of canonical bits but they leave out quite a lot and they leave out very specifically stuff that comes at front of books, prefaces, dedications, commendations... you know prefatory essays which are actually crucial in...giving people a lens through which to read the book."*

Editions and anthologies can also be problematic as, although they are more affordable than original editions, they can be presented by editors in a very selective way, which can make them problematic for teaching . Acquiring modern editions of early text, that are properly annotated by scholars, which can be reproduced within copyright law for students' use is very difficult. Core issues around metadata, while not mentioned explicitly, remain important. Poor catalogues and incomplete resource descriptions/metadata hamper the selection of the correct sources with the significant challenge being simply to know that a source exists:

> *"[Anthologies] are affordable...in the world of fees we can buy for students at the start of their degree and basically say, 'pretty much all of your modules will be in and out of here at some stage'... [but they] are extremely selective and you are prey to one particular editorial team's set of tastes and what they leave out, what they gloss, what they annotate, what they prioritise, what they think is important."*

Discoverability and Accessibility of Primary Sources

Sourcing primary material, finding the right content for teaching, re-formatting and making it intellectually accessible to the students can be very laborious and time consuming for academics. If sources are not easily discoverable they are, more often than not, not used or known about. Often the primary material used for learning and teaching is determined principally by availability. Our respondents were time poor and could not allocate or dedicate lengthy periods of time to discovering resources. Their preference was for 'local' resources, or resources they are already familiar with: "I say I'll do that 'cos we've got a copy [in Library Special Collections] and there's less - you know - shoe leather involved I can just go there and work with it"

Academics and students appreciate the availability of e-print material because it means that they do not have to wait for print books to be available, or visit a physical archive, they can access them immediately, at any time or place, which makes the preparation of teaching much more efficient:

> *"It allows you to do this thing the historians call it side glancing where... I can look at digital archives that are based in South America... I might be able to access sources and look at whatever [is] in that archive without going there, I can just chuck that into whatever I'm working on."*

However, some available databases can be difficult to search therefore the resources are difficult to discover (i.e. Earlier English texts, translations, etc). Other materials (Musical scores, manuscripts) are very difficult to find, especially if they are in copyright, they can be expensive for students to buy and can take a long time to acquire if they come from abroad. Copyright problems become much more evident for courses which require modern and contemporary material. Finding primary sources that are affordable to obtain, copy or peruse is very difficult:

> *"I think it makes it much harder to say to students just go out find some primary sources because we know that it's going to be harder and harder for them to be able to judge what they have a right to have access to and what they have a right – how they have a right to use it"*

While ease of access is appreciated, respondents point out that digital resources are no substitute for the experience of the physical items. Being able to look at the way they were printed and the social, cultural and economic implications that an original document brings does not exist in the same way with digitisation. How an object is experienced - digitally or physically - affects the contextualisation, understanding and interpretation of its content.

Social Accessibility

Respondents spoke of their concerns about how and what their students could access. The capacity to access more primary sources locally would, they believed, level the playfield for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who suffer from academic discrimination:

"…access is difficult and almost clearly an element of privilege thinking about equality and diversity and inclusion. You have to be middle class and be able to afford to go and travel there and do it. So that is always a concern for me is that whether if I suggest these things, they really want to do it but they can't afford it and what to do about that."

It was noted that induction and skills work that used to be carried out by library staff in classroom settings is now often delivered online as an optional activity. When these sessions were delivered in person they were an intrinsic part of the course and all students received the same experience. Moving these activities online has made them optional. Many students who are time poor from caring or work commitments don't access them. This perpetuates inequalities within the higher education experience:

"So the library has created lots of online tutorials for students to work through independently, to do things that would've been done by human beings in lecture theatres in the past right. Now the problem with that is we know that many many students don't actually engage with that and there's also an equality dimension. So students who feel pressed who perhaps have part time jobs don't engage with those things whereas the students who feel less pressed and feel like have more time do engage with those things so you're perpetuating inequalities within the education experience."

In the past there have been scholarship schemes available which have provided students with the opportunity of conducting work with the archive, continuing to develop it, recording oral histories and sourcing donations. This has contributed to making existing collections very dynamic and provided a really useful source of student engagement and learning. There was enthusiasm for the return of these scholarships.

Inclusivity of Primary Sources

The lack of access to a wide range of voices and points of views from different cultures, counties or groups perpetuates social inequality and discrimination. Finding the right breadth and type of source can be generally problematic. Developing collections to be more

inclusive is more than a response to student pressure. Undoubtedly, a more diverse set of primary sources creates more profound and engaged learning. Academics are seeking to address this elision through their source selection.

> "[this] trumps everything, that trumps little glitches of the technology... [it's] the main thing. I can see the less committed students switching off every week. So it's another dead white guy, it's another dead white guy"

There is a genuine desire to create a more inclusive archival record by decolonising the curriculum on primary source led courses. Our respondents recognised that they are faced with systematic challenges. Notably, the erasure of viewpoints from the existing archival records: "I can't magic [an] Afro-English playwright in 1590s cos there wasn't one".

There is a lack of availability of translated primary source texts feeding into the colonial nature of the curriculum. This problem manifests in different disciplines in different ways:

> "[In the Middle Ages] there were [a] huge number of things that were written in Arabic, Hebrew, different languages that provide different perspectives.. but I don't necessarily know about them... or have the language skills to translate them even if I did. So I think as we think about decolonising the curriculum that's something that will [be a] stopping point for it."

Access to translated primary source text is often conducted via the internet and it is difficult for students, without the requisite language skills, to verify the quality and reliability of the text. The interviewees also found that some translations of European languages are outdated due to the evolution of languages and need to be reviewed:

> A key challenge [...] is translation. I think a lot these things the translations are very outdated and they ought to be redone. [W]e have to reply on translations from here or not and I think it'll be great if they could improve, that will be a really really important thing for accessibility with text - just accurate precise translations that don't get basic linguistic facts wrong would be a massive help.

Finding overseas sources of primary material presents an extra level of difficulty compared to accessing British sources. This presents a significant issue when courses depend highly on their ability to carry out comparative studies across countries, or the material they require to deliver their course is held abroad. This also affects international students who are taught using British sources but don't learn how to access their own country's sources.

> *"It's really difficult…and it's really hard to get around it because… almost all [of what] we teach is not British. And therefore, the sources are physically in other countries. So that is a real barrier. I don't know whether there's a way we could build links with [other] archives … that could be quite valuable I think."*

Support from the Library

Respondents spoke of how their courses could not be delivered without the support of library staff, in expert roles that bridge the gap between teacher and student:

"engagement with [primary sources] is absolutely critical to this module and I couldn't run the module without the help of the librarian and somebody who can come and talk to them… I can't run this module unless I have somebody who's prepared to help students think about how to find things'.

For academics, being able to tap into the library staff's expert knowledge of the collections to help them understand their content is invaluable. Particularly, archives and special collections staff who act as guides to navigate the collections and discover relevant material, "You do need an Archivist or set of Archivists who have enough knowledge of the collection that they can point you to where you can find stuff."

Teaching sessions conducted at the library using primary sources are very highly regarded. Library staff often deliver skill base training to students, such as how to search for relevant material, where to look for it, how to access special collections and archives and how to use them. The academics' role overlaps with some aspects of this and it focuses on interpreting the primary sources and developing critical thinking. Academics consider specialist library staff collaborators as part of the design of their courses, their role crossing over to teaching. Academics also learn skills from librarians and acquire knowledge about the archives and special collections. Therefore, there is consternation at the decline in these roles:

> *"[academic related] roles are being stripped out of Universities, and that is one of the biggest challenge we face… not having people in between the academics and the undergraduate students [who] have specific expertise that will help the students. [L]earning to work with people like me who have research agendas and teaching undergraduates, that's the biggest challenge that I face. It's a human resources challenge."*

There is overall a high level of satisfaction with the resources the library provides both in terms of physical collections and online databases. As well as the responsiveness to requests for the acquisition of new resources and the generation of digitised packs and making them available on the VLE for students:, *"…the library's been great in terms of supporting teaching here… always open to buy[ing] resources to try them for teaching."*

Recommendations

Based upon the above findings it is possible to make recommendations for the services and resources the Library should develop to support undergraduate teaching with primary sources.

Invest in liaison work
The academic teachers who interact with library primary source collections tend to do so for very specific reasons. Therefore, generic promotion of resources is of limited value. An in depth understanding of what is trying to be achieved pedagogically is crucial in targeting library services. This takes time and the Library must be willing to commit time if it wishes to achieve this.

Suggested activities include:
- Regular meetings (after semesters) for academic staff to inform library of required content
- Surveys of curriculum
- Targeted interviews with teacher staff (ie a quick, informal version of this study)
- Archive open-days
- Improve knowledge of collections among Faculty Engagement Team to inform their conversations with academics

- Horizon scanning of commercially available products with targeted feedbacks from relevant academic staff

Focus archival acquisitions

Locally held archives are by far the easiest for staff to build courses around. Therefore alongside commercially available resources the Library should also take into account requests from academic teachers in their archival acquisitions. This can play a powerful role in student recruitment.

Specific areas highlighted by respondents:
- Diverse / Anti-Colonial material
- Specialist music archives
- Database of historical maps (beyond DigiMap)

Emphasise information and digital literacy

The critical and analytical skills that students develop working with primary sources are the same as those that information and digital literacy seeks to develop. The Library should celebrate where these skills are being developed in curriculum and focus its work on the foundational, confidence building activities around primary sources that allow for higher-level development

Build better relationships with other archives

It is impossible for a University Library to supply all the primary sources required for all courses taught on its campus. Neither, is there an expectation amongst academics that it will, but the Library can play a role in facilitating the connection with external archives. Without this effort students can only interact with these sources if they have the financial means to do so which represents a form of academic discrimination.

Improve digital accessibility

Interaction with physical texts and objects has limited scalability and is suited to smaller group (and often more advanced level) teaching. Therefore, the most effective way for large groups to interact with primary sources in learning is digitally.

Suggested areas of focus are:

- Increased digitisation of Library held archives
- Re-digitisation (or improvement) of sources to allow for OCR and full-text searching - including digitization of existing microfilm
- Improved resource descriptions
- Improved discoverability
- Promotion of, and user training for, archival search platforms (eg Gale Primary Sources, ProQuest, Adam Matthew Explorer, etc.)

Support high quality translations

In the UK higher educational setting, primary sources that are not translated into modern English are limit their application in teaching. This applies equally to Old and Middle English texts, as to non-English languages. The commercial market and the structure of research recognition does not allow for the translation of works externally. Therefore, it may be incumbent on the library to support this via other means:

- Paying for high quality translations of its own archives
- Supporting publishers and community initiatives that are involved in modern translation.

Background project information

Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the project was obtained from the University's Professional Services Ethics Committee on 9 May 2019, reference number 026084. Draft guidance was provided by ITHAKA S+R.

Research methodology and data collection

From March 2019 to Autumn 2020 three members of library staff from the Library's Faculty Engagement Team (FET), Library Learning and Teaching Services (LLATS), and National Fairground and Circus Archive (NFCA) participated in the international research project "Supporting Teaching with Primary Sources" on behalf of the University Library for Ithaka S+R.

Project members undertook training via webinars and face-to-face training to become familiar with undertaking semi-structured interviews and to identify potential interviewees. No formal sampling took place; project members used contacts within the University Library and used the University's Announce email system to identify interviewees. The data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with academics in the faculties of Arts and Humanities, and Social Sciences. An interview schedule provided by Ithaka S+R was used to structure the interview; each interview lasted around sixty minutes.

In total nine interviews were conducted through November and December 2019.

Archiving of project documentation

In line with the terms of the ethics application, audio files were destroyed after transcription. Identifiable personal data were deleted on completion of the project, with consent forms being destroyed no later than three years after the publication of the report. Personal correspondence with interviewees will be deleted in accordance with GDPR and University policy.

Any information that has been gathered on paper will be shredded and discarded in the University's confidential waste once it has been scanned and stored digitally.

Project sign off.

This report has been formally agreed with the Senior Leadership Team of the University Library on 24/08/2020 and with Ithaka S+R

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