

**Meeting of the GLAM Committee
11.00 on Monday 10 March 2008 at Seven Stories,
the Centre for Children's Books**

Minutes

Present: Chris Sheppard (CS, chair), Jamie Andrews (JA), Fran Baker (FB), Fiona Courage (FC), John Wells (JW).

Apologies: Chris Fletcher, Jess Gardner, Stella Halkyard, David Sutton, James Travers.

The committee discussed items 3-9 of the agenda for the afternoon's general meeting.

3. GLAM Survey report

CS reported that the survey analysers are currently working on the final report. Their recommendations will be directed primarily at GLAM member institutions, but also at the UK Literary Heritage Group.

There will be three main sections to the report. CS reported on some of the recommendations proposed for each section, and these were discussed.

1) Policies (Stella Halkyard)

Recommendation: Member institutions should be encouraged to produce written collecting policies.

Recommendation: Policies should be structured and compatible to facilitate data exchange – probably using TNA's guidelines – and linked to from the GLAM website.

JW pointed out that most collecting policies are institution-wide rather than specific to literary papers; CS responded that the survey recommendations relating to policies would be generally applicable, but will attempt to focus in particular on the literary elements of collecting policies.

JA suggested that it would be a good idea for more institutions to have subject-focused sub-policies, and that it should be made explicit if an institution collects literary papers. He reported that Nick Kingsley at the last UKLH meeting had mentioned that TNA are providing guidance on the content of collection policies for archives.

Recommendation: GLAM should play a leading role in providing guidance and support to curators who wish to carry out collections analysis; such analysis would enable them to include explicit and detailed information in their collecting policies about the kind of literary papers they hold and/or collect.

SH had found that many institutions do not extrapolate in detail the precise literary qualities of the archives and manuscripts they collect (as requested in section 2.3 of the survey). CS pointed out that there are some problems with the questions set out in that section, e.g. if an institution collects archives associated with that institution (regardless of chronological period, literary movement etc), this is likely to obscure the other categories of information sought in this section.

CS also commented on the issue of locality: overwhelmingly, institutions' collecting of literary archives relates to a particular region or institution, and these definitions can be ambiguous. The issue of how conflicts of interest are resolved is therefore an important one.

Deleted: is

JW pointed out that while it might be possible for GLAM to do something about resolving or avoiding conflicts between institutions in the case of material put up for auction, sales by private treaty are harder to address. In the latter case, the power lies with the dealer, who decides which institution to offer a collection to. It was felt that these decisions are probably based on looking at an institution's existing collections as well as assessing which institutions are best able to pay for new acquisitions.

JA suggested that GLAM might be able to take back some of this power from manuscript dealers. The institution which is first offered an archive should always think about whether there is another, more appropriate, home for that collection. JA suggested that fully cross-searchable institutional policies should be mounted on the GLAM website to facilitate this.

Deleted: ¶

Recommendation: GLAM should consider drawing up a model for loan or deposit agreements.

Deleted: .

Several survey respondents reported receiving substantial collections on deposit/loan. Information about the terms of holding these collections was not requested, but their comparative vulnerability is a potential cause for concern. The institutions concerned might be approached for details of their agreements with depositors/lenders with a view to establishing best practice and conveying advice to members.

Recommendation: The 'headline statements' should be made available through the GLAM website, subject to the agreement of the members responsible for them and any alterations they might wish to make.

Deleted: Institutions not covered by the survey should be invited to contribute comparable statements.

SH's survey analysis had revealed that the 100-word 'headline statement' about literary holdings supplied by survey respondents was often more useful and informative than the answers given in response to more specific questions about collecting policies. It was agreed that it would be useful to mount these statements on the GLAM website; larger institutions might be asked to submit a lengthier account if their literary holdings are extensive. FB also suggested that institutions which hadn't participated in the survey could also be asked (by means of listserv postings etc) to provide a similar headline statement – which would be less onerous than completing the survey in its entirety. These headline statements should also be fully cross-searchable if possible.

2) Practice (CS)

Deleted: ¶

Recommendation: GLAM member institutions should be encouraged to report on literary acquisitions and grants received on a regular basis.

It was suggested that this reporting could be more detailed in respect of literary archives and manuscripts than the kind of returns that are made to the NRA. Reports of the acquisition of individual or apparently minor items would be revealing about current

collecting practice. Although the UKLH group collects acquisitions information, this is selective, and focuses exclusively on literary papers from the modern period.

Recommendation: GLAM members should press to have some kind of annual funding for the purchase of archives and manuscripts, even if this is very small.

This recommendation was prompted by discovering an obvious imbalance between institutions in terms of what they can command by way of expenditure; very few institutions have reliable recurrent funding for acquisitions.

JW pointed out that small acquisitions budgets may not necessarily be useful: repositories with a small budget are usually expected by their parent institution to spend that budget within the financial year, rather save it for a single larger acquisition. This may result in repositories struggling to buy numerous small acquisitions while being unable to make major purchases.

Recommendation: Institutions which want to purchase literary archives and manuscripts should routinely apply for grants.

CS found that about three quarters of respondents had not applied for grants during the past five years. In particular, he noted that museums and galleries apply for many more grants (including frequent small sums) from the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund than archive repositories and libraries. He stressed the importance of applying for grants regularly: one problem highlighted by the survey was a failure to obtain collections because of slowness and uncertainty in making acquisition processes including raising finance; a culture of grant applications (combined with a small acquisitions budget) might help to change this.

FB suggested providing guidance on the funding bodies (both major and minor) which might finance literary acquisitions, and some guidelines on submitting applications (including the kind of information that should be included in a bid), as in many cases funding bodies are rather vague about their requirements.

Recommendation: GLAM should endeavour to set up a dialogue with the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Deleted: ¶

Conspicuously few survey respondents had applied to the HLF for funding, perhaps because HLF terms are so difficult to meet.

JA suggested a GLAM meeting or question and answer session with representatives from both the HLF and the MLA/V&A Purchase Fund. CS agreed, and also suggested that it would be useful if the HLF could provide examples of what successful applications from HE repositories should look like.

CS suggested that a further recommendation might be made on how valuations are carried out, including when they should be done and who should fund them. JW stressed the ethical/moral implications of providing valuations by means of independent valuers – and the difficulty of balancing the need to ask a fair price, but not to incur major costs for your institution.

JA suggested pulling together the kind of information many GLAM members hold about the purchase price of past acquisitions; although every archive is unique, this might still provide some kind of guidance on prices and the market. It would be dependent on member institutions' willingness to share this kind of information, but it was agreed that it would be a valuable step towards establishing a set of processes to match those of professional manuscript dealers. JA stated that the British Library would be prepared to make public information about purchase prices, but recognized that this might raise problems for other GLAM members; he suggested that the best recommendation in this area might be to encourage members to consult each other on a one-to-one basis about prospective purchases. He also stressed that it should be assumed any valuation made by a MS dealer is 10% too high, and that collecting institutions should be robust in negotiating reductions.

3) Uses (JG)

Recommendation: When GLAM members make regular returns about acquisitions, they should also report on the uses being made of their literary archives and manuscripts; GLAM should formulate a set of annual key performance indicators to gather this kind of information in a standard format.

FC suggested that it might be helpful to have regular informal meetings at which GLAM members could share experiences relating to the use of literary archives/MSS. JA stressed that this would provide good publicity and strengthen the case for acquisitions.

To sum up, a timetable was established: CS undertook to draft the survey report in its entirety and circulate this to the committee shortly after Easter.

4. Report on the last UK Literary Heritage Group meeting

CS reported that he has replaced Bill Simpson on the UKLH Group, at Bill's suggestion on his retirement last year.

The more recent UKLH minutes will be circulated to GLAM members, but CS reported briefly on the following:

A recent meeting with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Andy Burnham, was positive; he read English at university, is interested in 20th-century poetry, and has experience at the Treasury; he realizes that the UKLH's proposals on tax concessions are modest in terms of cost.

The UKLH Group is interested in finding out how far GLAM members make use of available funding streams, and would like to collect information as soon as possible on what purchases have been funded and how. CS suggested that this might take the form of generalisations drawn from the survey responses, and some more detailed specific case studies.

UKLH members are also interested in continuing to publicise literary archives and manuscripts. Andrew Motion is particularly interested in finding out more about the kind of uses that Jess Gardner reported on at the Manuscripts Matter conference. CS stressed that the survey results are not fully representative, in that only one example of an innovative use was required whereas some institutions are obviously doing much

more. JA has promised UKLH to do some research on use-related activities that are currently going on and which were not reported in the GLAM survey.

The value of FC's idea about experience-sharing meetings was stressed. It was suggested that the initial event might take the form of a day-long workshop on outreach and use; this might form the meeting after next.

FB is also considering proposing a themed issue of *ARC* focusing on literary archives and manuscripts, and will contact the editors about this.

5. Report on CURL Special Collections discussion event on 5 February

CS reported on this event, at which Richard Ovenden provided an overview of Special Collections and their future. In his talk he emphasized the distinctive nature of literary archives and manuscripts.

There was also a session on improving education for Special Collections staff in the future, and Jess Gardner gave an extended version of her Manuscripts Matter presentation on uses of literary archives and manuscripts.

Some of the discussions at this event overlapped in content with the kind of things being covered by GLAM in the survey.

The meeting was significant in marking the first time CURL has focused on Special Collections as a distinct topic for some time; while this is positive, CS wondered if Special Collections should be treated separately in this way rather than represented within general discussions focusing on functions like cataloguing and preservation more broadly.

JA reported that the British Records Association is holding its annual meeting at the British Library on 2 December 2008. They have asked for a programme focusing on literary archives and manuscripts. JA suggested that a GLAM panel session along the lines of the MSS Matter session might be useful. CS will chair this, and 2-3 other people are needed to make up the panel; Stella Halkyard and Jess Gardner were both recommended as candidates.

6. Future meeting venues and topics

The National Library of Scotland has been offered as a venue for the next meeting in September. The visit would focus on the John Murray archive, possibly with a talk from the writer in residence and staff involved in the interpretative and educational elements of the project. It was pointed out that the CILIP Rare Books Group conference is taking place in Edinburgh in September, so it would be useful to co-ordinate dates around this; FB will contact Robin Smith at NLS.

The workshop on use, and session with representatives from the HLF and V&A, are also planned topics for meetings in the near future.

7. GLAM website

FB has begun working on the long overdue 'useful resources' section of the website. One element of this will be a bibliography of works on literary archives/MSS which is being compiled in response to various enquiries from students on the subject.

The archive is now being formally archived by the UK Web Archiving Consortium. This means that any submissions (e.g. images) to the website in future will need to come with copyright permission to copy for the purposes of archiving as well as permission to be displayed in the current website.

The website was also selected by the UK Legal Deposit Advisory Panel as part of a survey of opinion on proposed methods of extending legal deposit to websites and electronic publications; FB will be speaking to a research and policy consultant to give her opinions on the options suggested by the Panel.

8. A.O.B.

None

9. Date and location of next meeting

FB reported that the National Library of Scotland had confirmed their offer to host September's meeting (see item 6 above).