

Meeting of the Group for Literary Archives and Manuscripts Monday 31 October 2005 at The British Library

Minutes

Present: Bill Simpson (joint Chair), Chris Sheppard (joint Chair), Jamie Andrews, Fran Baker, Charlotte Berry, Alex Cave, Nia Daniel, Clive Field (for part of meeting), Chris Fletcher, Jessica Gardner, Stella Halkyard, Kathryn Johnson, Richard Price, Dorothy Sheridan (for part of meeting), David Sutton, James Travers, John Wells, Anne Young.

1. Introduction: All present at the meeting introduced themselves. B. Simpson announced that he had reported to the UK Literary Heritage Working Group on GLAM developments, and that Clive Field would be addressing this meeting.

2. Apologies for absence: Michael Bott, Iain Brown, Judy Burg, Carol Burrows, Jeff Cowton, Philip Endean, Elizabeth Gow, John Hodgson, Katy Hooper, Patricia McGuire, Bernard Meehan, Stella Panayatova, Marie Reddan, Robin Smith, Maureen Watry.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2005: approved.

Agenda item 4 was postponed until C. Field's arrival.

5. Rationale for establishing a literary archives and manuscripts group

C. Sheppard talked through section 1 of the discussion document which was circulated prior to the meeting. This part of the document was intended to articulate the reasons why literary archives and manuscripts are 'different' and to justify the establishment of GLAM. The arguments set out in the document were agreed by those present.

There was some discussion about section 2 of the document (possible activities of GLAM) at this point, which is reported below under point 6. C. Field then joined the meeting.

4. The UK Literary Heritage Working Group

B. Simpson introduced C. Field of the BL, who is one of the leading members of the UKLH group, and thanked him for agreeing to speak to GLAM members.

C. Field outlined UKLH developments to date. This national group – which grew out of a BL initiative – was set up earlier in 2005, with the purpose of addressing issues surrounding the acquisition and retention of modern literary papers in the UK. The group includes representatives from the library and archive community, as well as leading members of the literary community (Andrew Motion and Michael Holroyd) and Joan Winterkorn of Quaritch. It was felt that the group should be chaired by a national figure who was independent of any interest groups; Chris Smith (now the Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury) agreed to take on this role. It is hoped to broaden membership of the group out to other communities as well.

The group recognizes that it cannot influence university or national library budgets, so its initial focus has been on establishing a dialogue with the principle funding agencies, in particular the HLF and the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF):

- HLF: in the short-term the lottery funding climate is not favourable to archives and manuscripts, particularly in the light of plans for the Olympics, which form the current priority for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. There is due to be a review of HLF funding in 2009. The immediate objective of the UKLH group in relation to the HLF is to ensure that funding at the present level is maintained, and to raise public awareness of the value of literary papers and the importance of their retention in UK institutions.
- NHMF: this is a small fund, currently £5 million per year, although this will increase to £10 million in 2007/8 as a result of recommendations put forward in the Goodison Review [HM Treasury review of the effectiveness and efficiency of support to museums and galleries, to help them acquire works of art and culture of distinction (including archives & MSS) that might otherwise be sold abroad].

The group is also having constructive ongoing dialogue with other funding bodies, such as the Friends of the National Libraries and the National Art Collections Fund (NACF). It is hoped that as a result of these, the UKLH group will be able to advise collecting institutions when they are applying for acquisitions funding.

One of the most important short-term aims of the group is to foster a national climate in which there are more incentives for writers to sell their papers to UK institutions. The NACF [through its *Living and Giving* scheme] is focusing on incentives to owners of cultural or heritage material in the form of income tax deductions if they *give* such material to public institutions. The UKLH group does not feel that this is realistic in the context of literary papers. They are therefore putting forward two sets of proposals aimed at encouraging writers to *sell* their papers to public institutions in the UK:

- An income tax incentive for those who sell to public institutions. They propose a *douceur* type arrangement, which would involve a division of the financial benefit between the collecting institution and the author.
- The extension of the Acceptance in Lieu scheme (which applies to inheritance tax) to living authors. Under the UKLH proposals, writers could deposit their papers in a public institution during their lifetime, and at the point of deposit a promissory note for ultimate acceptance in lieu would be made out.

The group has had meetings with HM Treasury representatives, and these two sets of proposals will be amplified with a view to them being considered by HMT in preparing their pre-budget report. The formal submission is to be made shortly.

In response to HMT's enquiries, the UKLH group has demonstrated that the UK is behind other countries in introducing schemes like this; the group is also keen to supply HMT with information on the number of collections purchased from living writers by public institutions each year; some institutions have already been approached to supply this information.

The major constraint of the proposals is that institutions will still have to buy literary papers. HMT is also concerned with potential abuse of the schemes.

The UKLH is starting to raise general awareness of the issues, e.g. a recent piece was run in the *Times*.

[D. Sheridan joined the meeting at this point].

C. Field invited questions and comments.

D. Sutton suggested that the solution to the risk of abuse might be provided by GLAM, who could provide a guarantee that the schemes would be carried out only in relation to accredited institutions.

In response to other queries, C. Field provided the following information:

- There is a distinction between the new proposals and sales by private treaty: in the latter, the writer still pays full income tax; under the UKLH proposals, there would be income tax relief which would be shared between the writer and the collecting institution.
- There should be some indication from HMT within the next 4-6 weeks as to whether the proposals are accepted.
- A more authoritative ongoing register of literary papers collected/purchased over a period of time by UK institutions would be very useful to the UKLH group, and GLAM may be able to work towards this.
- The emphasis of the proposals to HMT is on acquisition rather than costs incurred during the subsequent life cycle of the papers (e.g. for cataloguing).
- The emphasis of the proposals is on individuals during their lifetime, because HMT may have reservations about conferring new tax concessions on corporate bodies.

B. Simpson thanked C. Field on behalf of GLAM, and invited him to speak to the group again in the future, possibly on an annual basis.

Before leaving the meeting, C. Field also gave permission for UKLH group minutes to be circulated to all GLAM members.

6. Planning an initial programme for GLAM and setting priorities

C. Sheppard presented section 2 of the discussion paper, relating to an initial programme of activities for GLAM; the interim committee had seen the mapping of collections as an important priority (i.e. producing a simple and easily accessible guide to collections in the British Isles, without the level of detail of the Location Registers), as well as gathering details of collecting policies and information about acquisitions. Electronic literary archives and the DPA were also important issues; promotion and inter-institutional collaboration activities come further down the list of initial priorities. The following comments and queries were put forward:

- Addressing the issue of born-digital literary archives would be a good initial flagship project; it would be outward looking (rather than focused on specialized areas of professional concern like cataloguing), and would be of value to everyone in the sector (D. Sutton).

- Cross-sectoral collaboration should be stressed, to make it clear that GLAM is not just for university and national libraries (and thus like a subset of AMARC) but also for other repositories like public libraries (D. Sutton).
- Gathering together institutional collecting policies would be very useful for The National Archives/HMC, who frequently advise creators of archives about appropriate places of deposit (J. Travers).
- A number of people present had reservations about whether the collection-mapping plans would be sufficiently distinct from existing initiatives to justify the work involved. In response, J. Gardner explained that the product of GLAM's work would 'sit on top' of other resources like the NRA, Location registers etc. It would be more descriptive, with rich contextual information, and should give a clear overall picture of our literary heritage and its significance. C. Sheppard pointed out that all the current resources and initiatives (like the NRA, Archives Hub, Location Registers) are very different. The GLAM resource would give a consistency and uniformity to these; it would provide more 'digested' information.
- C. Fletcher queried whether the collection-mapping and related activities would be of benefit to researchers as well as custodians. In response it was suggested that the boundaries between custodians of literary papers, writers, and researchers are fluid, and that the resource would benefit the whole of this literary community.

Initial priorities:

While some members felt that an electronic literary archives initiative should be the first priority, it was ultimately agreed that the mapping activities should form the initial focus of attention. These activities will include: mapping literary archive and manuscript collections in Britain and Ireland; gathering details of collecting policies from different institutions; identifying significant gaps in collections and collecting policies; and undertaking a survey of literary material acquired by institutions during the last 3-5 years (which would also point up where problems have occurred in attempting to acquire material). The interim committee will plan the methodology for this and draw up a questionnaire for circulation to the rest of the group.

In relation to electronic literary archives, it was pointed out that the focus on collection mapping does not preclude setting up smaller working groups to address other issues. The collection-mapping exercise should also include an area of questions relating to the acquisition of literary archives containing born-digital material. N. Daniel suggested that it might be useful to invite the Paradigm project archivists and others active in the field (including a colleague at the National Library of Wales who has written a thesis on the subject) to speak to the group.

The interim committee will consider how best to take the e-records issue forward.

7. GLAM's constitution and related practical matters

C. Sheppard presented the third section of the discussion document relating to GLAM's proposed goals and constitution. The following points were made:

- Subscriptions and types of membership: B. Simpson suggested that there may be more commitment to the group if subscriptions (e.g. £50 per year) were charged; he also

considers institutional membership preferable to individual membership, and suggested that member institutions should support staff who wish to be active members of the group. It was ultimately decided to keep things simple in the early stages and to defer the issue of subscriptions and membership types. No treasurer will therefore be appointed initially.

- Committee model: it was agreed that this was the best way forward, and that the interim committee should continue in its present form for another year; it should present its conclusions about a proposed constitution for GLAM in a year's time. C. Sheppard will therefore continue as chair, and B. Simpson will be the group's official link to the UKLH group. J. Gardner invited any other interested parties to join the committee, and C. Fletcher volunteered.
- Web officer: no web officer will be appointed at this stage; two members of staff from the Systems Department of the John Rylands University Library are willing to provide behind-the-scenes technical advice, and to develop and maintain a website for GLAM.
- Frequency of meetings: it was agreed that meetings of the group as a whole should take place three times a year, with the committee meeting more frequently. C. Sheppard offered Leeds as the venue for the next general meeting.

[Post-meeting note: a comment was received from Bernard Meehan of Trinity College Library, Dublin, about the use of the terms 'UK' and 'national' in GLAM paperwork; he suggests using the form 'Britain and Ireland', which reflects the group's intention to represent literatures of the British Isles as a whole. This will be taken into account by the interim committee when putting together future documentation.]

8. A.O.B.

There will be a UKLH group conference in autumn 2006 at Senate House Library. Professor Warwick Gould and C. Fletcher are both involved in organizing this. It was agreed that GLAM should have a speaker at the conference, and it was also suggested that a collaborative exhibition might be put together to coincide with the event.

D. Sheridan offered Sussex as a future meeting venue for GLAM.

9. Date of next general meeting

The next meeting of the larger group will take place in Leeds on Friday 10 March 2006, time to be confirmed.