

**Meeting of the Group for Literary Archives and Manuscripts  
Wednesday 1 April 2009, University of Sussex Special Collections**

**Minutes**

**Present:** Jess Gardner (Exeter University Special Collections, chair); Isilda Almeida (East Sussex Record Office); Jamie Andrews (British Library); Fran Baker (John Rylands University Library, Manchester); Fiona Courage (Sussex University Special Collections); Christine Fauch (Exeter University Special Collections); Stella Halkyard (John Rylands University Library, Manchester); Julie Johnstone (Scottish Poetry Library); Katrina Legg (Swansea University Special Collections); Sally Harrower (National Library of Scotland); David Sutton (Reading University Library); James Travers (The National Archives); Karen Watson (Sussex University Special Collections); John Wells (Cambridge University Library).

**1. Apologies for absence:** Judy Burg, Alison Cullingford, Chris Fletcher, Rachel Foss, Hannah Lowery, Chris Sheppard, Fiona Talbott, Grace Timmins, Chris Webb, Susan Worrall.

**2. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2008 at the National Library of Scotland, and matters arising**

The minutes were approved. F. Baker noted that the projected issue of *ARC* was published in March. She thanked all of the contributors and Rachel Foss who edited the issue. It is hoped that there will be further GLAM-themed issues in future.

**3. Location Register**

D. Sutton outlined the background to the original Location Register and reported on current and future developments:

The original *Location Register of 20<sup>th</sup> Century English Literary Manuscripts* (which was very inclusive in its definitions) was published in 1988. The *Location Register of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century English Literary Manuscripts* followed in 1995.

During 1998-2003 funding was received for updating the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Location Register. This Location Register Supplement was somewhat more cursory than the original, but the data was made available online. It was also recognised that there would be value in doing further work to take entries to item level, and to identify literary material in non-literary archives.

The Location Register funders and management committee have agreed that the Register should now be updated over a five-year period. Core funding is already in place for the first two years (2009-10). This period will be spent working with GLAM to expand the data on new acquisitions collected in the GLAM survey, and on raising funding for the subsequent three years' work. Provided funding can be secured, 2011-13 would be spent doing more detailed research, and producing a full Location Register Supplement.

Work has already begun on processing the data about new literary accessions collected as part of the GLAM survey, and this will provide a very good basis for future Location Register work.

D. Sutton is currently working to build up a body of non-funding supporters who will back his applications for further funding. The Royal Society of Literature, the Society of Authors and the UK Literary Heritage Group have already provided their backing. D. Sutton therefore requested: (1) that GLAM would offer its endorsement to the project; and (2) ideas on how the re-processed data on acquisitions should be handled, as this was collected on a confidential basis.

In response: (1) members unanimously agreed that GLAM should endorse all efforts to expand the Location Register; (2) it was decided that F. Baker would alert GLAM members to the planned re-use of survey data in the covering email when distributing the minutes of the present meeting; D. Sutton would also approach individual institutions requesting information on post-2001 literary accessions and asking permission to re-use GLAM survey data.

There was some discussion about linking from the Location Register to the NRA. D. Sutton pointed out that the earlier Location Register Supplement data is not yet recorded in the NRA; J. Gardner suggested that one valuable function of the Location Register would be the provision of data for the NRA, and this might help to strengthen the case for further funding.

J. Gardner thanked D. Sutton on behalf of GLAM for taking this invaluable project forward.

#### **4. GLAM Cataloguing Working Party**

C. Fauch reported on the work of this new group. The production of cataloguing guidelines for literary archives was identified as an important aim of GLAM at an early stage. A member of staff at Exeter University, Ellie Jones, subsequently wrote a dissertation on this topic, which prompted staff at Exeter to suggest establishing a working party to take things forward.

The group has twelve members, drawn from a range of backgrounds (archivists, librarians, academics and an archive educator); seven were able to attend the first meeting in Manchester on 9 March, which was chaired by C. Fauch. Ellie Jones's findings were circulated in advance of the meeting.

It was decided that the group would meet biannually, but keep in contact via email. The roles of chair and minute-taker will be rotated, and Jacqui Grainger has offered to hold the second meeting (in September) at Chawton House Library.

Attendees pooled information about their experiences and their institutional practice in cataloguing literary papers; members from library, archive and academic backgrounds attended, so a range of skills and perspectives were represented.

Various issues came out of the discussions, including:

- the variety of material dealt with in literary archives;
- the difficulty of appraising literary archives;

- legacies of past practice and different systems for cataloguing;
- the range of different in-house guidelines used by members.

It was ultimately decided that addressing the related issues of arrangement and appraisal was beyond the remit of the current working party.

It was agreed that in addition to cataloguing guidelines, a term list (for formats, media, materials etc. commonly found in literary archives) would also be very useful. As a first step, the group is therefore:

- 1) working through each ISAD(G) element to identify any issues specific to literary archives in each case, and to provide illustrative examples;
- 2) augmenting the very useful term list compiled in-house at Seven Stories which has been circulated to group members.

The group will also be looking at subject access terms in the future.

C. Faunch's report was positively received. JG commented that the the cataloguing working party demonstrated how GLAM's work is now moving onto a longer-term basis. She also suggested that a meeting focusing on planning cataloguing projects (including issues like time, cost, project management etc) might be a useful follow-on from the work of this group.

S. Halkyard stressed that the cataloguing guidelines should ultimately become a teaching tool for use on archive courses.

## **5. Report from committee meeting**

JG summed up the business discussed at the committee meeting (see committee meeting minutes for details).

The Sassoon acquisition by Cambridge University Library was discussed. J. Gardner stressed that members should continue to bring things like this to the table; D. Sutton suggested that GLAM should play a role in deciding on the most appropriate home for individual literary archives so that UK and Irish institutions are not competing over acquisitions; this would lend weight to the concept of national collecting policies for the UK and Ireland as outlined in the GLAM survey report. Over time funders like the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund would get used to seeing funding applications endorsed by GLAM.

It was recognised that GLAM's support for acquisitions would have to be informal in some cases, e.g. when material comes up at auction and it is essential to move quickly. If it was established that there were two equally appropriate homes for the same collection, GLAM would have to withdraw from the process.

It was reported that the focus of the next meeting, to be held at TNA, would be: the renewed Location Register project; the NRA and its Literary Digest; and 'hidden' literary papers in non-literary collections. D. Sutton suggested that London Metropolitan Archives may be interested in being involved, in light of the literary material in the Jersey Papers.

The issue of GLAM meeting locations was also discussed, and J. Wells stressed the importance of not being Anglocentric when choosing venues. The compromise suggested by the committee (i.e. one of the two meetings each year being held in a relatively 'central' location) was generally accepted.

#### **6. A.O.B.**

J. Travers pointed out that the current issue of *ARC*, focusing on education and learning, provides some good examples of local authority work in the area of access and audience development.

J. Gardner thanked F. Courage and K. Watson for hosting the meeting and providing tours of Special Collections for attendees.

#### **7. Date and location of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held at TNA in September 2009, date and time to be confirmed.