

## **Volunteering in Archives**

The Archives and Records Association (ARA) recognises the enormous contribution made by volunteers to supporting archive services. It is committed to providing a voice for volunteers within the archive sector and encouraging the diversification of volunteering opportunities. The ARA's Public Services Quality Group (PSQG) sub-committee on Volunteering is driving forward improvements by monitoring and disseminating activities, encouraging partnerships and sharing good practice on volunteering within the sector. It also ensures that the effort and enthusiasm of volunteers is celebrated through the national award for archive volunteering.

Volunteers provide much needed 'added value' support for archives by helping, for example, to enhance access and improve the preservation of collections. They also help strengthen links with local communities and offer effective learning and networking opportunities. The use of volunteers has also to be seen within the wider context of providing effective, efficient and sustainable services and as a critical but not the sole building block for delivering such services.

The ARA believes that archive services require the range of skills and experience of qualified, employed, staff directly accountable to their governing body who can advise that body and lead on such matters as legal compliance, digital preservation, physical storage and security, conservation, cataloguing and access. It does not consider that volunteers can or should be used to replace appropriately experienced professional or para-professional staff as the principal stewards of the United Kingdom and Ireland's unique documentary heritage.

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