

ICA Congress 2012 – Paper proposal (proposed as part of panel from University College London with papers from Alexandra Eveleigh and Anthea Seles) .

Overall Panel title: Surfing the winds of change. New UCL research supporting the transformation of professional archival practice in the digital age (Flinn, Seles, Eveleigh)

Paper title: Sustaining independent archives – delivering participatory approaches to archival heritage.

Dr Andrew Flinn, University College London, UK

Objective. Outlining current research into measures to support and sustain independent and community curated archival heritage.

Findings . This paper reports on the on-going research concentration in the Department of Information Studies into independent and community-led archives, and the work of the speaker with the UK Community Archives and Heritage Group to support and sustain community and independent archive activity. The paper pays particular attention to the emerging relationship between archivists and other professional heritage workers and their partners in the independent sector. Arguing that in the future many (public sector) archivists may identify a substantial role in supporting archival activity outside their institutions, this paper illustrates this by giving examples of collaborative activity bringing mutual benefit to archival collections held in mainstream repositories and in communities.

First the paper introduces the idea of community-led and independent archives, noting the role they can play in supporting collective memory and identity, before outlining the challenges these bodies face sustaining their activity. The rest of the paper examines the potential for mutually beneficial partnerships between professional archivists and community archives. In particular the paper will introduce work that is being done by the UK's Community Archives and Heritage Group and others with regard to digital preservation, cataloguing standards and software and accessibility.

Key conclusions. In line with the theme of this conference this paper will suggest that the ideas underpinning professional practice and the location / focus of some of that practice are in a state of flux and change. If we recognise that significant and trustworthy records exist inside and outside

formal repositories and archival spaces, and that the sustainability of these records and the institutions that support them cannot be guaranteed, then adopting a more outward focussing and participatory approach to archival practice will benefit all.

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Biography. Andrew is a member of the ICA-SAE steering committee and Director of the Archives and Records Management Masters programme at University College London. His is interested in the creation and curation of community history, oral history, and the contribution that access to heritage might make to social justice. He has written widely including most recently 'The impact of independent and community archives on professional archival thinking and practice' in Jenny Hill (ed) *The Future of Archives and Recordkeeping* (London 2010)