

## **Slide 1**

I would like to talk to you today about audiovisual material found in what you might call 'traditional' archives, and the various options we have of dealing with this.

I'm an archivist and I'm Head of Modern Records at NLW

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Modern records are mainly the records of organisations dating from the C20th, but as, for example, the Church in Wales still exists today, I am very fortunate in that I deal with documents dating back as far as the C14th as well as contemporary records.

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I'm an archivist, and speaking to you today as a curator, not as someone with any great technical knowledge and expertise.

'Traditional' archivists have a reputation of being rather dusty and conservative in their outlook.

When I started working as an archivist 18 years ago, these were my tools

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I dealt with 'traditional' archival material

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Paper and vellum, for example

Here's an extract from a late C18th census compiled by a bishop in Wales.

We have minute books, letter books, reports, accounts

We have maps, diagrams, photographs and slides, promotional literature

But there was the occasional example of 'non-traditional' archival material

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Audiovisual tapes and floppy discs

What I'd like to talk about today is how the nature of the 'traditional' archive is changing rapidly.

NLW, along with countless other archival institutions, is receiving more and more examples of 'non-traditional' archival material.

To illustrate how the content of archives is changing, I want to focus on examples from two very closely connected collections which we hold in NMW

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Brith Gof was an experimental theatre company and Clifford McLucas was their artistic director

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BG founded by Mike Pearson (no relation!) and Lis Hughes Jones

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They performed extensively in Europe and South America

Some examples of their work

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Mabinogion

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Elements of Japanese Noh theatre into the retelling of traditional Welsh stories

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Another Mabinogion production, performed in Harlech Castle

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Street theatre in Poland

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Mike Pearson solo performance

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Development of physical elements of Brith Gof's performances

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Clifford McLucas joined the company as artistic director in 1987

A trained architect, he brought with him radical experimental views on scenography and set design to Brith Gof, and their site-specific performances (always a crucial aspect of their work) took on a completely new dimension

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A few examples of their work after McLucas joined the company

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Pax

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Aberystwyth railway station

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Mike Pearson was by now Professor of Theatre Studies at Aberystwyth University, and he began using material in the collection to use in a series of symposia based around specific performances.

NLW was able to provide him with copies of audiovisual material which the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales, based in the Library, transferred from tape to CD and DVD

5 or 6 symposia so far

All of these symposia have been recorded, and these recordings will eventually find their way into the Brith Gof archive in NLW

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An adaptation of one of the earliest known British poems, Gododdin

Gododdin was premiered in a disused car factory in Cardiff, where the building was transformed using 600 tons of sand, nearly 50 trees and 30 wrecked cars and a set that flooded as the performance progressed, making the physical performance extremely difficult. Reviewed very favourably, the production drew comparisons with Francis Ford Copolla's *Apocalypse Now*.

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Part of McLucas's design for the Cardiff production.

Performance space was somewhere between an ice hockey rink and a football pitch in size, with the sand rising to a height of 32 metres

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Colour representation of the design

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Cross-section, showing the how the water flooded into the performance space from a high-pressure source

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Erecting one of the 6 metre high conifers

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Music by Test Dept

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Shot capturing the intensity of the performance

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The aftermath of the performance in Cardiff, which went on to be performed in Scotland, the Netherlands, Germany, and in a sand quarry in Italy

Documentary about the production has been posted on YouTube  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gjZ-bnXhYw&feature=related>

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Mike Pearson originally studied as an archaeologist

1993, started collaborating with McLucas and another archaeologist, Michael Shanks, exploring a concept known as 'Deep Mapping'

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Paraphrase

Their first collaboration was another site specific performance in rural mid Wales

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A performance called 'Three Lives', presenting an intertwining of the lives of three women from the C19th and C20th to reflect, among other things, notions of rural deprivation, displacement and miscarriages of justice.

Three 'houses' were made up of scaffolding erected among the ruins of a farm. The audience were brought by bus and seated in an auditorium also made of scaffolding and running through a neighbouring forestry plantation.

This project led on to another called *Three Landscapes*

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Shanks was now based in Stanford University in California, where McLucas was a visiting lecturer, and they teamed up with a theologian from Stanford to embark on a mixed-media project which sought to look at new ways of representing site, region and place using a mixture of text, photography, and graphic and audiovisual material.

The three sites were

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Monte Polizzo, a prehistoric site in Sicily

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Hafod, an C18th estate in mid Wales

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The San Andrea fault in California

So what archival legacy has the work of Brith Gof and Clifford McLucas left us with?

Performances and projects highly experimental, so were the methods of preparing for and recording these

Just about all available technology was utilised at one time or another.

Huge amount of paper-based material (storyboards, set designs, promotional material, reviews, etc.) as well as photographs and thousands of 35mm slides

Also...

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Audio formats:        Audio cassettes  
                              2” master audio tape  
                              Digital audio tape  
                              Mini discs

**NB** Regular collaborator asked for a copy of part of the soundtrack to *Gododdin* that she had recorded. This was done on Ampex 456 ¼ “ tape. Notoriously unstable, have to be ‘cooked’ before they could be played. This is done in an egg incubator!

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Visual formats:        Reel to reel  
                              Betamax, VHS and Umatic cassettes

Video8, Hi8 and Digital8 cassettes

Mini DVDs

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Digital carriers: 3 ¼ “ floppies

Zip discs

SyQuest 44MB removable disc cartridges

CD-Rs

Huge number of different types of software used to create the material found on these carriers

A good example of one of the main problems facing archivists, that of dealing with changing or possibly obsolete formats

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AppleMac

Apple MacBook

Pocket drive

External hard drive

Cambridge Z88

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Problem with the CDs in the collections. A substantial number could not be accessed.

IT Section developed a system whereby the contents of the CDs were transferred to a server and the contents accessed from there. This has been extended to deal with CDs and DVDs arriving in the Library in other collections.

Highlighted the fact that, if they are not kept in the correct environmental conditions, CDs might not be the long-term storage solution that most people think they are.

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How are we as ‘traditional’ archivists going to approach the cataloguing of these two fascinating collections?

Constrained to some extent by accepted archival practices such as ISAD(G)

We would like to be able to link directly from NLW online catalogue to the audiovisual and digital material.

However, should we be considering a move away from conventional cataloguing and presentation? Return to this point.

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Current economic climate - NLW can't devote the necessary resources to this project

So, applications for funding from external bodies to cover:

- The employment of archivists to cover my staff while we develop ways of cataloguing multimedia collections
- Staff in the Screen and Sound Archive to digitize the audiovisual material
- The migration and preservation of the digital material
- Additional server space

A substantial amount, over €250,000

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Delivery and presentation:

Linking from the catalogue using the 856 MARC21 field should work.

Must abide by the Library's standard metadata practices

Make sure we keep abreast of changes in streaming audio and video technology – what is going to be available in 2 or 3 years' time?

**BUT** what if we weren't so constrained by accepted archival practices?

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There are a lot of websites out there which act as archives

The archive of the dancer Siobhan Davies is a good example of this

<http://www.siobhandavies.com/>

Many artists actively encourage users to download material from their websites, manipulate it in some way, and then resubmit it – the concept of 'Archiving the Archive' – raises some collective archival eyebrows

Many utilise Creative Commons to enable this.

And of course Web 2.0 technology has brought even more options

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In April 2009, the Indianapolis Museum of Art launched ArtBabble, a Cloud-based hosting service for art-related content.

<http://www.artbabble.org/>

Collaborators include the Smithsonian Art Institute, the Museum of Modern Art and the Guggenheim Museum in New York

Cost-effective streaming of high definition videos

Awarded the 'Best of the web' award at this year's Museums and the Web conference

Let's return to Michael Shanks, by now Professor of Classics and Social Anthropology at Stanford

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He had been looking into the concept of archives, and proposed this three-stage model

Archive 1.0: the archives of bureaucracy in early states – for example, palace and temple archives

Archive 2.0: pretty much where we are today, with easy access to archives based upon hierarchical classification

Archive 3.0: new artificial architectures for the production and sharing of archival resources, what he terms the animated archive. Web-based archives will fall into this category.

However, Shanks has taken a different approach in his work with...

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Lynn Herschmann Leeson

An American artist and film maker, Chair of the Film Department at the San Francisco Art Institute

Cited as 'the most influential woman working in new media', and has used photography, video, film, performance and installation over a number of years. Straight away we can see parallels with Brith Gof and, in particular, Clifford McLucas.

Shanks and Leeson have collaborated on a project based on her archive which is called 'Life Squared', and the platform chosen for this project...

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The online world of Second Life

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An early installation of Leeson's, originally created in the Dante Hotel in San Francisco with Eleanor Coppola, wife of the film director Francis Ford Coppola, has been recreated in the virtual Dante Hotel in Second Life.

Here we have Archive 3.0 – animating the archive.

The Life Squared project addresses the question of the future of the library, museum and archive in the context associated with Archive 3.0, when collections are no longer primarily of books on shelves, objects in glass cases, pictures on walls, documents in archival boxes, but now include mixed analogue and digital forms.

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2007, Leeson's film *Strange Culture* premiered simultaneously at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah and on Second Life.

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In conclusion (while we look at the wide range of formats contained in the two collections)

Much more of a challenge than a problem.

These last examples of web-based archiving and presentation are in many ways alien to traditional archival thought, but we need to confront these issues and deal with them.

We are going to be dealing with increasingly complex multi-media archives, and not just from the arts world.

What we archivists mustn't lose sight of is the fact that archival practices should remain valid whatever the format, but we shouldn't be afraid to deal with any format which comes our way.

As long as the archive community recognises and accepts this, and we work alongside our technical colleagues, then these rich and varied collections will be there for users in the future.

It's all a very different scenario to this...

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Pal Deas / Thank you