



JISC Project Plan

Overview of Project

1. Background

Background

The project, via the Museum of English Rural Life's web site www.reading.ac.uk/merl, will allow access to 13,000 glass negatives of the Farmers Weekly and Farmer and Stockbreeder collections. The selected images date from 1920-1965 and form 10% of the museums glass plate collections. The survival of a collection of this scale and importance is exceptional. Digitisation offers the only practical way to ensure their long term accessibility and preservation. In practice, handling originals is not a practical option for researchers and in the absence of any useable documentation for most of the collection this material remains inaccessible. Fortunately, some information for some of the images has survived for a proportion of both the Farmers Weekly and Farmer and Stockbreeder collections, but these still require museum staff to assist researchers when seeking to identify images. Thus, alongside the digitisation programme, the images will be catalogued as part of this project.

The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) is a national centre for the history of food, farming and the countryside, established by the University of Reading in 1951 and Designated in 1997. As the first specialist museum of farming and rural life in this country, MERL houses the most extensive and comprehensive collections of their type in England. The Museum of is the main national UK repository for photographic collections relating to agriculture, the countryside and rural life.

As set out in the Ordinances of the University, the functions of the Museum are:

- To acquire and manage nationally important collections relating to the countryside and its history
- To operate a range of public services arising from these collections
- To contribute to the University's teaching and research and to its role within the wider community

The Museum is widely recognised for its pioneering role in the formulation of procedures for processing, cataloguing and conservation of rural collections, with its methods adopted by a generation of social and rural history museums that began to appear from the late 1960s. Its reputation as a collection of national and importance was established through its innovative approach to applying an ethnographic methodology to social history in the context of museums, and reflected in work such as the influential recording of Geraint Jenkins in the 1960s through to the recent survey of the contemporary picture by Professor Ted Collins (published in 2004 by the Countryside Agency as *Crafts in the English Countryside: Towards a Future*). More recently, it has facilitated the development of the nationwide Rural Museums Network and today it is active at a national and international level in all aspects of rural museums.

With its recent move to a new site in 2005, as a result of £11 million capital programme, the museum's priorities are to develop and facilitate increased accessibility to its collections. Since 2004, the Museum has seen a step change in its overall usage. During 2007-8, over 20,000 visits were made to the Museum (compared to just over 4,000 in 2002-3, the last figures before the move to the new site) and the website received over 67,500 visits and 162,500 hits. At the same time successful initiatives generated by the Museum to develop research and teaching linked to the collections has provided the impetus for a wide range of projects that have enhanced accessibility to its collections. These range from digitisation and preservation projects to the support of research fellowships and

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developing new approaches to collections-based teaching and learning as part of the University's Centre for excellence in Teaching and Learning in Applied Undergraduate Research Skills

(http://www.reading.ac.uk/cetl-aurs/CETL-AURSPROJECTS/AccessToCollections/Access_to_Collections.asp).

This project therefore is informed by a detailed knowledge of research and teaching needs in the sector that reflect growing interest in, and awareness of, the value of utilising visual records not simply as illustrations, but increasingly as primary sources for enriching knowledge and understanding of the history of the English countryside. It will also build on previous projects that have sought to develop collections preservation and accessibility in line with current University strategies for research, teaching and learning, and community engagement.

Case for the Project

The project fits closely with the Museum of English Rural Life's objective to increase understanding of the cultural, social, economic, historical and aesthetic history of English countryside, through access to, and the interpretation of, its collections for both scholarly and wider public audiences. The Museum has strived to give increasing focus to improving accessibility to its outstanding range of photographic and visual records, as demonstrated through a number of recent initiatives including projects to digitise and make available online over 50,000 pages of Victorian farm machinery catalogues, a project to transfer reel to reel films of the Ministry of Agriculture and National Dairy Council, and a project to preserve by re-packaging and conserving the 130,000 glass plate negatives Farmer and Stockbreeder and the Farmers Weekly magazines, involving more than 100 volunteers. However, although increasingly recognised for their importance, the photographic archive and in particular its glass negatives, remain the most inaccessible of all its collections.

As a pilot for the development of a repository for the Museum's vast, but largely hidden photographic collections (in excess of 1.2 million images), the project will focus primarily on digitisation that will highlight the potential scope of this material for research and teaching. The associated electronic catalogue will aim to enhance the interpretation of this material by drawing extensive links with the Museum's complementary collections of objects, archive, and published sources. Farmers Weekly and Farmer and Stockbreeder can rightly claim to be the key trade journals for the UK farming industry. The Farmer and Stockbreeder, in particular, was a leader in its field and offers an unrivalled source of visual material illustrating the transformation of the English countryside from the era of horse power to tractors, and from manual labour to machinery. The content of the material, as might be expected, covers images reflecting a wide range of agricultural, rural and contemporary issues, of both national and local significance. Important strengths include often little known images from the Second World War - Women's Land Army, Prisoners of War at work on the land, war damage on farms - as well as all aspects of animal husbandry, illustrating, for example, now extinct breeds, agricultural shows, experimental farms, food production as well as an extraordinarily detailed depiction of farm life & labour.

In terms of its immediate benefits and mapping to a particular area of research interest, the project will coincide with new research to be carried out by the Dr Clare Griffiths who has recently been appointed as the Sir John Higgs MERL Fellow for 2008-9. Her work as MERL Fellow will focus specifically on the Museum's photographic collections to look at the changing image of farmers and farming during the course of the twentieth century. Dr Griffiths is a distinguished scholar of rural and agricultural history, with particular interests in agricultural policy and rural politics. Her books include 'Labour and the Countryside: the politics of rural Britain 1918-1939' and this new focus to her work will be innovative in exploring how photography as primary evidence in relation to analysing changes in the countryside (rather than solely as a source of contextual illustration). The project, we envisage, will also make a significant contribution to inspiring and shaping new areas of potential cross-disciplinary research on landscape and the environment, particularly in the area of understanding British landscapes and environments and how they have been represented and addressed to specific rural audiences and how a photographic archive of this kind can be interpreted.

Teaching and learning based at the Museum's is now one of the major areas of usage for its collections. The project would provide access to essential resources for two of the current taught programmes (*Object Analysis and Museum Interpretation* and *Public understanding of the countryside*), with the scope for incorporation into other areas of teaching both through MERL and in supporting the curriculum across a wide range of disciplines in other parts of the University and more widely in the HE and FE communities, as well in supporting our high quality schools and life long learning programme. The digitised materials will create new resources for student learning. Our teaching concentrates on developing research skills and independent study of the Museums' collections. This, in turn will result in the creation of additional resources, through the outputs of research-focused student project work, which we will aim to disseminate more widely as a further outcome of the project.

2. Aims and Objectives

The project aims:

- To develop as a pilot for a larger digitisation project an approach and methodology for the digitisation of MERL's photographic collections
- To compile an appraisal scheme for permanent preservation of the glass negatives within the first month of the project
- To assist the long term preservation and accessibility of unique images from the glass negative collections
- To ensure that these glass negatives are available to as wide an audience as possible
- To evaluate the project and its outcomes to help inform the development of future initiatives to extend the digitisation of the Museum's collections
- To create new standards for cataloguing and metadata relating to images for use by the Museum in future

The project objectives are:

- To digitise 13,000 glass negatives of the Farmers Weekly and Farmer and Stockbreeder collections
- To create a website concerning the project which will provide context on the collection for a range of audiences, including an online exhibition
- To develop tools and the methodology required to undertake digitisation projects for the MERL photographic collections
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As a pilot for a larger digitisation project for the remaining 90% of this collection (a further c. 117,000 glass negatives), this project will initiate the development a repository to provide accessibility to this uniquely comprehensive photographic record of English arable and livestock farming and husbandry practices, for a period of unparalleled transformation in the English countryside. The creation of this resource will support current priorities in teaching, learning and research and make it freely available to the Museum's increasingly extensive learner community who seek access to this material as part the most comprehensive collection of objects, books and archives relating to the history of food, farming and the countryside.

The website will also provide an online exhibition of selected items digitised by the project but also provide some context to the images to assist academics with teaching. This will provide context to the images and will help publicise the project to the academic community and the general public. We are aware that our audiences are increasingly reliant on electronic resources to undertake their research and expect to find relevant images for their research and teaching by searching the internet. Most academics, students, picture researchers and general researchers request images that have already been published or that are accessible via our website. We therefore feel it is essential to digitise and make accessible a wider range of images from these important collections.

3. Overall Approach

Context

A starting point for this project has been our knowledge of existing usage of this collection and the major barriers that exist to its wider discovery. At present only a tiny fraction of the images from our collections can be accessed via the internet, and thus the main objective of the project is to greatly enhance access to what is the most comprehensive archive of press photography relating to English agriculture for the twentieth century. The project therefore will create digitised images of 13,000 glass plate negatives the Farmer and Stockbreeder and Farmers Weekly photographic archive, dating from 1920-1965. These images will be catalogued and made available via the Museum of English Rural Life's website (www.reading.ac.uk/merl/research/merl-research.asp). At the end of the project 13,000 glass negatives will have been appraised for permanent preservation, digitised, catalogued and made available via the Museum of English Rural Life's website. A website created on the University of Reading's Content Management System and therefore sustainable for the future will have been created which will provide context to the images and include an exhibition which will publicise the project to the academic community and the general public.

Approach and methodology

Staffing and management: The project has been designed to be delivered by two project staff: the Project Manager and the Archive Assistant. The project team will be directed by the Project Director and report regularly to a steering group.

Appraisal process: The scope of the project in terms of what images are selected for inclusion will be determined by the appraisal process at the start of the project, when the initial selection of the images to be digitised will take place. As part of this process we envisage that on closer inspection we will decide that some of the glass negatives in our collection will not be selected for permanent preservation as there may be duplicates or very similar images. The project team will compile an appraisal scheme for these collections which can then be used on the larger digitisation project of the whole collection. The appraisal scheme for permanent preservation will be submitted by the project manager to a project steering group which will include academic representation.

Training and skills: An important element in this will be to ensure staff are adequately trained both in knowledge of the subject matter of the collection and in the appropriate technical skills. This will include training in scanning, web design, cataloguing, and in handling the glass negatives as outlined in the National Preservation Office Preservation of Photographic Material guidelines.

Main work packages: These will cover the key tasks identified in the project plan and will be subject to a strict timetable and regular review.

Critical success factors: These will include: effective planning and monitoring of project workflow; development, testing and implementation of appraisal scheme; completion of the programme of digitisation and cataloguing within the project timetable; completion, testing and evaluation of image database, dedicated website and an exhibition; assessment, through evidence, of impact on discovery and dissemination of the projects outputs, including beyond the life of the project.

Workflow design: The workflow programme will ensure that 1084 glass negatives are digitised each month of the project to ensure that 13,000 glass negatives are digitised by the end of the project (September 2008).

The selection of the images will be undertaken by the Project Manager, in consultation with the Museum's Archivist and Photographic Assistant. The images will be selected using the original classification scheme created by the Farmers Weekly and Farmer and Stockbreeder Magazine together with the partial contact card indexes which exists for both collections. The aim is to ensure a wide range of images from both collections is digitised.

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The glass plate negatives will be scanned on the project's Microtek i900 scanner. The majority of scanning will be done by the Project Archive Assistant, who has been trained in the handling of the glass plate negatives. The images will be scanned at 400 dpi, as .tif files, no alterations will be made to the images, except to lighten or darken them in extreme cases. These will then be the 'master' images. All images will be stored on the Museum's shared network drive, provided by the University.

The images will then be catalogued by the Project Manager; in the early stages of the project this will be done on Microsoft Excel. The images will be quality checked at this stage. The images will then also be saved as .jpg files, for use on the website. The .jpg images will be cropped and any minor adjustments to the quality of the image will be made. In Summer 2009, the catalogue entries on Microsoft Excel and the .jpg images will be exported to the Museum's collections database. A selection of the images will also appear on the project website, part of the Museum's website, to showcase the collections as part of an online exhibition.

The ultimate objective will be for the project images to be embedded and therefore searchable on the Museum's cataloguing system. In 2008, the University agreed funding to upgrade the present OLCIS system; a project is now well underway to procure and install a new system by Spring 2009, with a view to migrating the project images and data to the new system by Summer 2009. Progress to the workflow plan will be closely monitored by monthly reviews.

Interoperability and standards: The glass negatives will be catalogued using the General International Standard Archival Description Second Edition 1999 Second Edition (**ISAD(G)**) issued by the International Council on Archives (ICA). For creating authority records (the biographies and corporate histories): The International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families ISAAR Second Edition 2004 **ISAAR(CPF)** issued by the International Council on Archives (ICA). For indexing names: Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families are indexed using the National Council on Archives' rules on name formation (**NCA Rules**). To index subject terms: The **UNESCO** Thesaurus. Metadata of digitised images will be catalogued to recognised standards.

4. Project Outputs

Deliverables: The project will create an appraisal scheme for glass plate negatives which can be applied across all similar collections held at the Museum.

The project website will provide project information and an introduction to the Farmer and Stockbreeder and Farmers Weekly collections, as well as an online exhibition showcasing the images.

The project will digitise and catalogue 13 000 glass plate negatives from the Farmers Weekly and Farmer and Stockbreeder collections. This will form the basis for standards and methods for future cataloguing for similar collections.

The project will create a report and recommendations for future digitisation projects at the Museum.

The project will be publicised by means of an exhibition in the Museum.

Knowledge and other outputs: The knowledge and experience to have been gained through project will have a critical impact on the future development of the MERL photographic collections and their potential exploitation as a digital resource. It will provide greatly enhanced knowledge of the content of the glass negative collections which because of their fragile medium are rarely consulted or appraised. It will also develop detailed knowledge of undertaking digitisation on a large scale, including the staff training requirements, including the piece rate of work for this type of project.

In terms of the longer term output, the project manager will aim to maintain a detailed project diary as the basis for a project report, a publication for wider dissemination to the professional community and talks and presentations. At least one talk will be held at MERL as part of the 'lunchtime network'

programme and we will actively seek opportunities to publicise the project at other external meetings and seminars.

As the project will coincide with the tenure of the Dr Claire Griffiths as the Sir John Higgs MERL Fellowship we will benefit from access to and advise from a researcher actively working on this material. This will help inform the appraisal process, the project delivery and its outcomes. At the same time the Undergraduate Learning Officer will input into the steering group to advise on the application of the project outputs to teaching and learning.

5. Project Outcomes

- The creation of web based resource will provide access to digitised images relating to agriculture and the countryside, with information to provide context, which will have a positive impact on the number of users and on research, teaching and learning and will appeal to all our audiences.
- Access for students, teachers and academics to the images for the first time. We will work with the MERL Undergraduate Learning Manager to promote these records to students undertaking the University module Public Understanding of the Countryside.
- Preservation of glass plate negatives in digital format.
- Raising the profile of the resources and encouraging a new area of research. During this project we will work with the MERL Fellow, Dr Clare Griffiths, to investigate new areas of research. We hope to build on this during and after the project and promote the collections to other academics.

6. Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Interest / stake	Importance
JISC	Funding body	High
HE Institutions	User group	High
FE Institutions	User group	High
Museum of English Rural Life	Repository	High
University Of Reading	Host Institution	Medium
University staff	User group	High
University students	User group	High
Researchers	User group	High
School teachers	User group	High
School students	User group	High

7. Risk Analysis

Risk	Probability (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Score (P x S)	Action to Prevent/Manage Risk
Staffing-failure to retain	3	3	9	Enforcement of notice period, comprehensive project documentation
Organisational-project not keeping to schedule	3	3	9	Effective management of the project, targets in place for project staff, regular progress meetings for project staff
Technical-loss of digital images	1	5	5	Ensure appropriate back up strategy in place
Technical-failure of equipment	1	3	3	Use of alternative equipment within the Museum

8. Standards

Name of standard or specification	Version	Notes
International Standard Archival Description (General) (ISAD(G))	Second Edition, 1999	
International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families, (ISAAR (CPF))	Second Edition, 2004	
National Council of Archives rules on name creation (NCA Rules)		
UNESCO thesaurus		
Dublin Core Metadata Image Set	Version 1.1	
Image capture: TIFF JPEG		For archive preservation purposes For web delivery

9. Technical Development

The project will use a Microtek i900 ScanMaker scanner to capture images at 400 dpi. Images will be stored as tiff files, to ensure a high quality image for archive preservation purposes. Images will appear on the website as smaller, lower quality, jpeg files for ease of access.

The website will be created on the University of Reading's Content Management System and images will be attached to catalogue records within the Museum of English Rural Life's collection database therefore all metadata created by the project will be sustainable for the future. Images will be stored on the University's server. The University of Reading's IT Services Department maintains the website and servers for the Museum of English Rural Life.

10. Intellectual Property Rights

The copyright of the photographic material to be digitised was assigned to the Museum of English Rural Life by the donors, who were the Farmers Weekly Magazine and the Farmer and Farmer and Stockbreeder Magazine. If there is any question of another potential copyright's holder interest in a specific image this will be clearly indicated on the catalogue record. The intellectual property created by the project will be owed by the Museum of English Rural Life.

Project Resources

11. Project Partners

Not applicable

12. Project Management

Staff

The project will be overseen by Kate Arnold-Forster, as Project Director. Kate is head of University of Museums and Collections Services, k.arnold-forster@reading.ac.uk

The Project Manager is Zoe Watson, and will report to Kate Arnold-Forster, and is line managed by the University's Acting Archivist, Jennifer Glanville. The project manager is full time and will spend all of her time on project management and working on the project. z.l.watson@reading.ac.uk

The Archive Assistant is Danni Mills, who is full time and will spend all her time on the project, d.m.mills@reading.ac.uk

The Project Steering Group will include the University's Acting Archivist, Jennifer Glanville, as well as academic representation.

Technical support will be provided by the University's IT services department.

Training

Training for the Project Manager will include the University's Content Management System for setting up the project website, which will be provided by the University's Centre for Staff Training and Development, in November 2008.

Training for both the Project Manager and the Archive Assistant on the use of scanning equipment, training will be by the Media Production Department, part of the University Information Services Department.

Training on the handling of glass plate negatives will be provided by the Project Manager (an Archivist) to the Archives Assistant, in accordance with the National Preservation Office Preservation of Photographic Material guidelines

13. Programme Support

As the project progresses advice will be sought from JISC as and when issues arise.

14. Budget

Please see Appendix A

Detailed Project Planning

15. Workpackages

Please see Appendix B

16. Evaluation Plan

Timing	Factor to Evaluate	Questions to Address	Method(s)	Measure of Success
December 2008 to September 2009	Creation of a project website, within the Museum of English Rural	Appropriate content and informative project documentation	Steering group approval	Approval by steering group

	Life's website			
Within the first month	Compile appraisal criteria for glass plate negatives	Delivery	Seeking approval of project steering group	Approval of steering group
October 2008-September 2009	To digitise and catalogue 13 000 glass plate negatives from the Farmer and Stockbreeder and Farmer's Weekly Collections	Image quality Timeliness Quality of catalogue entries	On schedule, quality checking of images	Images digitised and listed on schedule,
September 2009	Create a display in the Museum to highlight the project	Appropriate content	Visitor feedback forms	Increased use of collections
September 2009	Evaluation of project as a pilot project for a larger digitisation project, identify lessons for the future	Future recommendations and lessons	Seeking approval of project steering group	Approval of steering group
September 2009	Create publicity documentation	Appropriate content	Consult Museum Officer for advice on display	Increased use of collections
September 2009	Creation of an online exhibition on the project website	Appropriate content	Steering group	Increased website use and increase in collection use

17. Quality Plan

Output	Creation of a project website, within the Museum of English Rural Life's website				
Timing	Quality criteria	QA method(s)	Evidence of compliance	Quality responsibilities	Quality tools (if applicable)
Dec 2008-Sept 2009	Accessibility and informational value	Consult steering group	Approval of steering group; feedback of users	Project Manager	

Output	To digitise and catalogue 13 000 glass plate negatives				
Timing	Quality criteria	QA method(s)	Evidence of compliance	Quality responsibilities	Quality tools (if applicable)
Oct 2008-Sept 2009	Fitness for purpose	Checking each digitised image	Images successfully digitised on time	Project Manager	
Oct 2008-	Adhering to archive	Checking each catalogue entry	Catalogue entries comply with	Project Manager	

Sept 2009	cataloguing standards		relevant archival cataloguing standards		
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18. Dissemination Plan

Timing	Dissemination Activity	Audience	Purpose	Key Message
Dec 2008-Sept 2009	Project website	Stakeholders, Academics, Students, the public and internet users	To provide information on the project and generate interest in use of the collections	To raise the profile of the project
Sept 2009	On line exhibition	Stakeholders, Academics, Students, the public and internet users	To showcase the digitised images and generate interest in their use	To raise awareness of the digitised collections
Sept 2009	Museum based exhibition	Stakeholders, Academics, Students and the Public	To showcase the digitised images and generate interest in their use	To raise awareness of the digitised collections
Sept 2009	Publicity, with advice and help from Museum's Marketing Officer	Stakeholders, Academics, Students and the public	Provide information about the newly accessible collections	To raise awareness of the digitised collections

19. Exit and Sustainability Plans

Project Outputs	Action for Take-up & Embedding	Action for Exit
Project website, including online exhibition, and project documentation	Ensure website is user friendly, with content information and details of sources of help	The website will remain on the Museum's website hosted by the University of Reading for at least 3 years
Catalogue entries and images in Museum's database	Images are good quality and catalogue entries are informative and conform to archive descriptive standards	The catalogue entries and images will be maintained as they will form part of the database

Project Outputs	Why Sustainable	Scenarios for Taking Forward	Issues to Address
Project website, including online exhibition	The website will remain on the Museum's website hosted and maintained by the University of Reading for at least 3 years	Website maintained	Monitor usage

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Catalogue entries and images in Museum's database	The catalogue entries and images will be maintained as they will form part of the database	Ensure original fragile glass plates do not have to handled, as the tiff images will be surrogates and will ensure the long term preservation and accessibility of the collections in digital format	Security of long term storage
Evaluation of project as a pilot project for a larger digitisation project, identify lessons for the future	Future digitisation project can build on knowledge and lessons learnt from this one	Ensuring project is fully documented	Documentation

Appendixes

Appendix A. Project Budget

Appendix B. Workpackages