
Hidden treasures revealed at Liverpool John Moores University



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In November 2008 learning and information services (LIS) at Liverpool John Moores University hosted an evening reception to celebrate the opening of new accommodation for Special Collections and Archives and the launch of Digital Collections and Archives. In an innovative collaboration, we have been working in partnership with the faculty of media, arts and social sciences (MASS) to develop a shared working environment supporting all aspects of special collections and archives development. The new facility will create a focus for research activities, preservation, cataloguing and the expansion of the existing collections and future digitisation projects. Building and renovation work is being carried out in three phases, in parallel with the development of digital collections in the institutional repository.



LJMU new archives consultation room

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVES

LJMU has a number of unique special collections, including the Everyman Theatre Archive, the 'England's Dreaming' punk archive, the Stafford Beer collection in management cybernetics and the Liddell Hart fashion collection. The research interests of the faculty include British theatre, popular music, British social history, journalism,

new media and youth culture. In collaboration with the academic staff, LIS has developed the special collections broadly around the theme of popular culture, recently acquiring the Ray Coleman Beatles interview tapes and a complete set of the *International Times* underground newspaper, with associated management papers. Prior to the start of the new development, the accommodation for special collections was cramped and difficult for users to access, with no room for expansion.



Logo for *International Times the underground newspaper*

JOINT ARCHIVES DEVELOPMENT

In 2004 staff in the faculty successfully bid for Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) resource enhancement funding to catalogue and carry out preservation work on the Everyman Theatre Archive. At around the same time, LIS purchased the DigiTool software from Ex Libris and began creating the LJMU institutional repository, now called LJMU Digital Collections. At the end of the Everyman project, the catalogue was successfully loaded into DigiTool. This was one of a number of LIS/MASS collaborations and there was interest on both sides in creating the right conditions to increase activity. The faculty had been successful in securing funding for research infrastructure in the 2001 research assessment exercise and expressed willingness to work with LIS to create new space for archives development. LIS agreed to house the accommodation by repurposing existing space and bidding for additional adjacent space. The faculty committee that manages research infrastructure funding provided most of the money for the redevelopment, supplemented by funding from the university's property services department.

THE NEW ARCHIVES FACILITY

Phase 1 of the development took place in the summer of 2007. Two adjacent spaces in the Aldham Roberts LRC (Learning Resources Centre) were refurbished to create an archives consultation area, storage space with compact shelving and improved reading-room space in

the American Studies Resources Centre. This has greatly enhanced access for users of the collections. Phase 2, completed in the summer of 2008, was a much bigger project: to expand the archive storage areas, including climate control, and to create a researchers' work room, a professional sound studio and staff social space. This is where much of the research and development work will take place, including digitisation (print, microform, images, sound and video), cataloguing, preservation and sound recording and editing. The sound studio was delivered as a stand-alone soundproof room and adjacent digital mixing and editing tools. Phase 3 of the development will be carried out as part of the overall refurbishment of the Aldham Roberts LRC in 2009 and will provide accommodation for the LIS digitisation team, currently working in a separate building. When this is complete, research, technical and professional staff will be housed close together in well-designed accommodation, with space for additional staff to work on specific projects. It is envisaged that the new facility will contribute to collaborative working between LIS and the faculty, and increase the potential to attract research funding.

The launch event in November was designed to celebrate the completion of the main phases of the project and to raise awareness of the collections. I worked closely with Emily Burningham, the LIS archivist, staff from the digital collections team, the university's marketing department and a local public relations company, to create new promotional materials. These included new brochures and factsheets featuring images from the eight main collections, a set of postcards, pull-up display banners, a customised Rubik's cube to give to guests and a very eye-catching invitation to the launch evening using a pair of cotton archive gloves which the guests were encouraged to wear when touring the archives. It was a really enjoyable evening, particularly as around 20 LIS staff volunteered to help out by leading tours, designing new posters, providing flowers and



Control centre designed by Stafford Beer for the Chilean economy in the 1970s



Poster for the original production of Shirley Valentine at the Everyman Theatre.

balloons, creating the soundtrack for the Power-Point and contributing ideas for the themed buffet ('Liddell tarts', 'Sex'n'drugs'n'sausage rolls' and Shirley Valentine cocktails). The guests included the Vice-Chancellor and other senior university managers, Aldham and Avril Robarts (who gave their names to our learning resource centres and are very active supporters of university activities), staff from the local libraries, museums and archives and Phil Redmond, creative director of Liverpool's European Capital of Culture activities. Feedback from the attendees has been extremely positive and we will build on the success of the launch by developing the connections and



Frankie Vaughan album cover

partnerships we have made, inviting more students and staff into the new accommodation and building on the foundations that have been laid to apply for more development funding in partnership with the faculty. The first researchers are just starting work in the new research room as I write and we have been offered a number of interesting archives to sit alongside the existing collections. Revealing the hidden treasures of the university has already been very rewarding and we would be happy to share our experiences with anyone who is interested in our activities:

LJMU Special Collections and Archives: <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/lea/77343.htm>

LJMU Digital Collections: <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/lea/83096.htm>.