

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Sunderland
Unit of Assessment: 30 History
Title of case study: NE Mining Archive and Research Centre (NEEMARC), University of Sunderland Murray Library and online
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

NEEMARC, since 1994, has ensured the collation, preservation and storage of trade union records from the Durham Miners' Association and the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS), in partnership with the Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers and the University of Sunderland.

This makes the documents available for all researchers, free of charge. Access began with walk-in library usage, and in 2013 some of the records have been digitized and available online.

A wide range of public users, regional, national and international, has drawn upon this archive, enabling the development and reinforcement of family, community and regional identities.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)
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The archive could be seen as an output embodying research, particularly as digitization has progressed to make it an open and crucial electronic resource (REF 01.2012, p.85). It is also, though, a resource with increasing impact, as it both reflects high-quality research and offers a means for ordinary people to undertake research into their families, communities and regional identities.

The archive has been located because of the close relationship with the trade unions and because there has been a longstanding research focus in the University of Sunderland on the formation of organized labour and the political reaction to their industrial campaigns.

Key findings of the research are that labour organizations predate the Industrial Revolution by more than 100 years. Such organizations defined the region's national reputation in the 18th century, but, more importantly, also shaped a sense of local and regional identity (Morgan and Rushton, 1998 and 2007). Regional militancy was already seen as a national problem by the authorities of London, a city dependent on NE coal. The most important aspect of this preindustrial activism was the general participation of many of the seagoing as well as landward sides of the coal industry in collective action, and the co-ordination of employers and local authorities on a regional basis to organize against them.

In the nineteenth century, the foundation of the miners' union, the first 'classic' trade union in the industry, and the development of an extensive and distinctive social culture in the mining communities, laid the foundation for the character of the North East as a region, shaped by the Great Northern Coalfield (Jones, 1995, and Flanagan 2008). It has been argued that this is still a vital heritage in the popular memories of the NE.

The creation of the NEEMARC archive, within a context of a regional policy of preserving and memorializing the coalfields and their people (Beamish Museum, County Durham, Woodhorn Colliery, Northumberland), has led to reflection on these processes and their implications for local identities (Howard, 2008, Howard and Hannam, 2010). The usage of the archive confirms the centrality of the coalfield and its communities in the heritage of the region and for its greater diaspora.

Impact case study (REF3b)**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

Note as evidence of quality that Morgan and Rushton's two outputs were submitted in RAE 2001 [1] and 2008 [2])

Publications

Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton [Reader and Professor]:

[1] (1998), *Rogues, Thieves and the Rule of Law. The Problem of Law Enforcement in North-East England, 1718-1800* (London: UCL Press), Chapter 10.

[2] (2007), 'Violence, Social Order, the State and the Absence of "Regulation" in Working-Class Communities in Eighteenth-Century England', in *Assaulting the Past: Placing Violence in Historical Context*, edited by Katherine Watson (Newcastle upon Tyne: The Scholar Press), 104-23.

Stuart Howard [Senior Lecturer],

[1] (2008), 'Interacting with the Archive', in J. Bacon (ed.), *Arkive City* (University of Ulster, 2008), Ch.2

[2] Howard, Stuart and Hannam, Kevin (2010), 'The making of two mining museums: Bowes and Beamish, North East England', in: *Mining Heritage and Tourism: A Global Synthesis* (London: Routledge Advances in Tourism 19), pp. 13-22. ISBN 978041556090

Research Students

Carol Jones, (PhD., 1995) 'Industrial Relations in the Northumberland and Durham Coal Industry'
Flanagan, John (PhD, 2008), 'Workplace protest and popular politics on the North East coalfield 1844-1869'

Grants:

A large Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £272,000 in 2008-9 enabled NEEMARC to construct a state of the art archive centre within the University of Sunderland Murray Library, under the directorship of Dr Stuart Howard (Senior Lecturer in History) and, from the University Library Services, former colleague Dr Stuart Halliday. The total budget was £340,000, including matching funding from the University in terms of staffing and other costs.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The NEEMARC archive is both a physical, library-based resource, and, increasingly an online resource by which original documents can be accessed and searched. It is a developing facility, with plans to draw in and work with as wide a range of the public as possible. The most measurable impact is the extent to which it has been used since its inception as a research resource by those outside the academy.

Measures of Impact:

The method of access to the archive will change to become largely online as the process of digitization develops. The following gives

(i) Walk-In Users 2011-2012:

Of 128 registered users in academic year 2011-2, 69 (54%) were academics; 2 (2%) were school students; 57 (44%) were from outside the Learning/Teaching world

Of the academics, 66 (96%) were undergraduates, mostly from Sunderland, 3 (4%) were postgraduates. One of the latter was from another University (Tubingen in Germany).

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Of the users from outside academia, the 'area of interest' breakdown was

Personal interest (unspecified)	30	53%
Family History	12	21%
Mining History	9	16%
Local History	4	7%
Social History	2	3%
Total	57	

Online users:

It is already evident that online access has resulted in a rapid increase in the scale and geographic scope of usage of the archive. These are early days in the process of digitization which will be continued in 2014-6. Methodologies for evaluating the purpose of online access and its meaning for the public are still under development. The evidence below is a preliminary analysis of the usage of the archive online. Between April 2012 and January 2013 the NEEMARC website was used by 816 people situated in 104 British towns and cities who may have made multiple visits.

The largest concentration of correspondents was in the region, particularly Sunderland and Newcastle, but significant numbers resided in Glasgow, the Midlands and London and the south east. There were thirty four worldwide users drawn from countries in five continents, the most frequent foreign visitors being from the United States (26), France (16), Australia (13) and Germany (13). Peak times for the use of the site are February to March and October to January reflecting the term times and research periods in schools, colleges and universities. Between April 2012 and January 2013 of 816 visits 502 were new visitors and 343 returning visitors.

[Source: Google Analytics]

The digitized records came online in March 2013, so it is early days in the process of analysing the users and collecting feedback from them as to their background and interests. One of the future projects is to design more precise measures and follow-up interrogation of users.

(ii) The Process of Creation of the Impact and the Role of the University of Sunderland

- The creation of the archive was a crucial research activity for the Unit, but the supporting research gives us a depth when it comes to advising both the providers of these vital records and their users.
- NEEMARC is a cumulative archive which add to the collection in the future, and continuing collaboration with the trades union and the Institute of Mechanical and Mining Engineers (Newcastle upon Tyne) continues to develop.
- The academic staff of the University of Sunderland, as part of the NEEMARC partnership, has provided the physical base for the archive, and, through the Cultural and Regional Studies Beacon, the funding for its digitization. The online access is via the University's website.
- We can say, on the basis of the available data, that the non-academic users are driven by interests in family and community history, with personal interests sustained by their descent from mining families

Dr Stuart Howard also a consultant and contributor to 'Britain In Their Sites: Peterlee', BBC Radio4, May 2009, presented by Tristram Hunt, produced by Julia Johnson (in it NEEMARC was referenced explicitly).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

Administrative Reports:

NEEMARC Audience Development Plan

Trade Union Endorsement:

It is notable that NEEMARC is not purely a University of Sunderland project, but one which fulfils the participating trade unions' ambition to make available to as wide a public as possible their records and history. In this sense, the impact of NEEMARC is the result of the commitment of all concerned.

For example, two of the participating union leaders, who also sit on NEEMARC's Steering Committee, have reviewed its development and assessed its future in the following terms.

[1] Durham Miners' Association – in a recent letter confirmed that NEEMARC is essential to their impact on the wider sense of history: they congratulate NEEMARC for helping people “nationally and indeed internationally to learn of the significance of North-East Mining on the cultural and social values in our society and its impact on the global economy” [25 April 2013]

[2] NACODS - commented in a letter that ‘preservation and access to these records will be a great asset to this area the UK and could only serve the public good by making them available to the general public’ [8 May 2013]

Web access to the archive:

An Introduction to the Special Collections is at :

<http://library.sunderland.ac.uk/resources/special-collections/>

The archive online is under the Sunderland Special Collections Catalogue is available at:

<http://leektar.sunderland.ac.uk/CalmView/default.aspx>

Type 'digitised' in the search box