Tools of the Trade: Historical Textbooks and other Teaching and Learning Resources
The 2013 Friends of Newsam Library and Archives study day

On Wednesday 6th of February our annual study day, sponsored by our Friends, took place. The inspiration for the theme of the day was the rich historical textbook collections held by the library and recent and current projects to catalogue the geography, history, science and technology textbooks.

The day began with a brief overview of the archive collections by Deputy Archivist Becky Webster, followed by Dr Toby Simpson, the Learning and Engagement Manager from The Wiener Library. Dr Simpson gave an illuminating and shocking talk about how German children were taught Nazi values through propaganda in textbooks from 1933-1945, which had been the subject of a recent exhibition at the Wiener Library. We are very fortunate here at the Institute of Education to be within walking distance of such a rich collection with a profoundly important history, not to mention a beautiful reading room and expert staff.

Next, Nazlin Bhimani and Antony Daws from the IOE Library spoke about the historical textbooks collection and supporting research, and the history of the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) and its resources.

After lunch, Bernard Barker recounted his experiences as a history teacher in the 1970s, and the controversy surrounding his innovative and inspirational teaching style. Bernard’s latest book (due in January 2014) is ‘Education and Social Mobility: Dreams of Success’.

The final slot of the day was occupied by two current MPhil/PhD students from the IOE, Alice Kirke and Sean Curran, both of whom received AHRC funding for their research. Alice, an education historian, spoke about landscape and the environment in the history of education, looking specifically at the contested understandings and practices of rural education. Sean spoke about his research with the National Union of Women Teachers collection and looked at case studies of how women’s archive collections can be used effectively in outreach and education.

The day ended with a showcase of many of the archive and library collections that were mentioned throughout the event. The study day was well attended and generated lots of interesting questions, discussions and debate. A huge thank you to everyone who attended, and special thanks to the speakers. We look forward to embarking on the planning of the 2014 study day!

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Friends News

The Library and Archives have had a busy few months since the last Friends’ newsletter. In early February we had another of our lively annual study days and we have also been working on a number of exciting projects to extend access to our archives and special collections. We have dedicated much of this issue to this project work, so we hope you enjoy finding out more about what we have been up to, as well as our plans for the coming months.

Our next event will be the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Thursday 4th July from 2pm-4pm. In addition to the usual AGM business, the archivists will be talking in greater detail about the work they have been doing to preserve and make accessible our digital archives. This is something we initially covered at our study day in January 2012 when staff from the GTCE came to talk about the project to transfer their digital collection to the IOE.

Since then the archives team have been doing a lot of work in this area and the IOE is now at the forefront of caring for digital archives. We will, of course, send out a reminder closer to the time, but please do keep the date free and we hope to see many of you there.

Library and Archive Online Resources – an update

In our last newsletter we introduced LibGuides, our new online resource to the Library and Archives. Since then we’ve been working hard to develop content to open up our collections and promote our services to both internal and external users, and since the official launch in September the site has had nearly 60,000 visits. We thought you would like to see how our work is going, so here are just a few examples of recently created guides.

We now have 30 Collection guides including introductions to our Archives and Special Collections. We are currently creating individual guides for all of our archive collections and new guides are made available on a weekly basis.

There are also fifteen guides designed to help staff, students and external visitors in teaching, learning, and research—particularly on how to utilise technology for research. Just one such guide provides assistance to researchers on how they can use the micro blogging site Twitter to network, publicise their skills and research, keep up-to-date with the academic community and gather information through crowd sourcing.

New guides are created, and existing ones updated, on a daily basis. You can keep up-to-date by using the RSS feed and by signing up for email updates.

Other new guides include:
- Women and Education
- Accessing Resources Remotely
- Researching Family History
- Ebooks
- RSS: staying current with research
- Endnote, Mendeley and Zotero
- A range of guides for staff including a guide to staff and services, Information Literacy and Library Digitisation.

Email us at lib.enquiries@ioe.ac.uk
Piloting a collection of children’s composition

In 2012 a Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) grant was awarded to researchers from the Institute of Education, together with the Newsam Library and Archives, to pilot the development of a collection of children’s composition. The project defines ‘children’s composition’ broadly to include multimodal historical and contemporary texts produced by children aged 5-18 in formal or informal educational settings. Thus materials include, but are not limited to: exam scripts, essays, project folders and exercise books; diaries, log books and accounts of out-of-school activities; audio recordings, film/video, photographs and art work.

There is no extant collection of children’s composition from past generations enabling researchers to develop rich comparative analyses of changing practices over time and place. The collection therefore has the potential to provide access to materials relating to children’s experiences that would be of particular interest for childhood studies, research into children’s lives and composition practices in schools within and outside of the national curriculum.

The project builds on pre-existing resources, expertise and networks developed largely through a major three-year Leverhulme Trust-funded project ‘Social Change and English, 1945-1965’ which ended in July 2012. This project has demonstrated the value of original children’s composition as a key source of data in historical enquiry in education, important in reconstructing classroom experiences and moving towards a ‘social history of learners and learning’. The project has collected and uncovered multimodal pupil work from London schools dating from the 1940s to the 1980s, including dozens of pupils’ exercise books and samples of writing, reel-to-reel recordings of children/ teachers inside and outside the classroom, a 16mm film shot in South London and video recordings of pupils.

In addition, the project unearthed records of two research projects: ‘Development of Writing Abilities, 11-18’ (1966-1971); and ‘Writing Across the Curriculum, 11-13’ (1971-1976). These projects collected 2122 samples of pupils’ writing, which were not fully analysed even at the time of the original study, and which constitute a valuable starting point for a collection of children’s composition.

The HEIF funding has enabled the preservation and cataloguing of the writing samples from these two research projects as well as identification of examples of composition from other archive collections. Funds have also been used to digitise some of the audio and video materials and further funding is being sought to digitise the remainder of the collection.

Plans are also underway to establish a partnership with the Museum of Childhood as a basis for developing the collection into a ‘living archive’. This would allow visitors to the museum to interact with the collection and make their own contributions, thereby creating a valuable evolving resource for researchers, teachers and the broader public.

Dr Jude Fransman
Postdoctoral Researcher
Department of Culture, Communication and Media

Not yet a Friend?

The Friends support the future development of the Newsam Library and Archives as a unique resource for research in education, and especially its role in preserving the UK’s educational heritage by acting as a national centre for archives and special collections.

Subscription rates:
- annual individual £25
- annual current student £10
- annual corporate £50
- life £300

To join the Friends, contact our Secretary, Rebecca Webster.

Tel: 020 7612 6983
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Exciting news from the archives –
an update on the National Union of Women Teachers project

In our last newsletter, Kathryn reported on the successful completion of the project to catalogue the archive of the National Union of Women Teachers (NUWT). Since then, Kathryn has sadly left us to begin a new project to catalogue the records of Lionel Robbins, whose collection is at the London School of Economics. Kathryn completed an amazing amount of work during the time she was with us. Thanks to her hard work the collection is now freely available to search on the online catalogue and we also have a number of online resources on the collection – see http://libguides.ioe.ac.uk/nuwtcollection for more information. We were all very sad to see her go, but she is already well into the cataloguing of Robbins’ papers and you can follow her work on LSE’s blog: http://lib-1.lse.ac.uk/archivesblog/

Once the cataloguing was completed we always wanted to open the collection up to new user groups and we have a very exciting update to tell you about. In February we were awarded a grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to use the collection to create an external education programme. The project will last for one year and during this time we will develop a range of resources and events for various audiences.

We will work with teachers and colleagues at London Metropolitan Archives and Bishopsgate Institute Library to build online lesson plans for school groups from Key Stage 2 to A-Level. We will also provide opportunities for onsite visits to the archives so children can engage with the collection firsthand. The subject content of the collection means it is ideal for using the British Library’s ‘Campaign! Make an Impact’ Programme, which helps children learn about the importance of active citizenship. By using the primary sources of historical grassroots campaigns they learn how constructive action can lead to positive outcomes. Back in the classroom, they can put this learning into action by creating and running their own campaign about something that concerns them.

The central theme of the project is engagement with the local community. All the partner schools will be in London and free events will be organised for local adult education groups. There will be a range of events, including local guided walks organised to coincide with national events such as Women’s History Month and Local and Community History Month. We are also planning to work with local residents to create oral histories, to capture their experiences of education in London during the twentieth century. These new resources will then be preserved in the archives and made accessible to anyone who wishes to use them.
In addition to developing an education programme, the project will also enable us to digitise sections of the collection and make them freely available online. This will include digitising the run of The Woman Teacher - the Union’s journal - from 1919-1925 to make it full-text searchable. This will be particularly exciting as we will work with Camden’s volunteer groups to recruit members of the local community. Our volunteers will then run this aspect of the project developing their own digitisation skills in the process. It is our intention that, through this work, we can help members of the local community develop the skills they need to gain employment.

It will be a fantastic project and we are grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for providing the grant. Once the project has been completed we intend to build on the work already achieved to make more of our archive collections accessible to a wider audience. We would also like to thank the History of Education Society UK and our Friends, who provided the initial funding in 2010 which has enabled us to achieve so much with the collection, and our alumni who part-funded the purchase of equipment which will support the digitisation aspect of the project.

Becky Webster
Textbook research is a growing area of academic activity, with many students and scholars doing comparative analyses of UK and overseas textbooks. However, this growth in research has highlighted methodological problems confirmed by the literature produced.

The methodologies most commonly used in textbook research include both quantitative methods, which measure the number of times a word, concept, event or date occurs and the amount of space allocated to an event, and qualitative methods such as discourse analysis, cultural analysis, semiotics, linguistic analysis, visual/iconographic analysis and so on (Nicholls, 2003). Eckhardt Fuchs from the UNESCO-funded Georg Eckert Institute (GEI) for International Textbook Research in Germany states that despite using these tried and tested methods, a key deficit in textbook research is “a lack of empirical knowledge on the impact of textbooks as well as on the transformation of knowledge between textbooks and students, and the frequent lack of contextualisation” (Fuchs, 2011).

Of course finding such empirical evidence is not always possible and this is one reason why textbook research is not always considered to be a ‘weighty’ enough academic area of research. The fact that textbook revision is so often closely linked to textbook research provides further complications in this research area in education (Pingel, 2011).

The Historic Textbooks Collection at the IOE

The Newsam Library’s Historic Textbooks Collection, with approximately 32,000 books, is one of the largest of the IOE’s Special Collections and is comprised mainly of 20th century British school textbooks. The collection covers all education levels and all subject areas but has particular strengths in geography, history, science and technology. The open accrual policy allows continual addition of out-of-print textbooks from the Curriculum Resources collection which have been superseded by newer materials, as well as donations from other libraries. The single most important criteria for adding material to stock is that the book is a text intended for school use in an established subject and is published in the UK.

Accessibility

The majority of the collection is catalogued on cards and is stored at the University of London Depository in Egham, Surrey. It usually takes 4-8 days for items to arrive once requested via email. This is cumbersome and much of the collection is ‘hidden’ as only a basic record is listed in the card catalogue. Even if it were possible for researchers to visit the store they would find it impossible to browse as the books are arranged by accession number rather than by subject.

Visibility

In 2009 the Frederick Soddy Trust funded the cataloguing of approximately 4,200 Geography Textbooks. This means that one of the largest sections of this collection is now fully catalogued and available to browse via the online catalogue. In 2011, as part of the UK Open Education Metadata project, the Library was again successful in obtaining funds from JISC to catalogue approximately 5,000 items from this collection together with School Exam Papers. History and Science and Technology textbooks and the corresponding exam papers and syllabi published between 1900 and 1950 were selected for this project. The project made use of linked data technology which simply equates to ‘throwing’ the catalogue records (meta-data) out into the Internet (so that the records are findable via Google) and allowing other libraries and researchers to find them, re-use them and perhaps enrich them by adding additional information. This will have the added benefit of alerting potential new researchers to our collections. Work on this project is still in progress.
Two research case studies

The following provide two recent examples of researchers using the Historic Textbooks Collection at the IOE. The first is a PhD student from Santa Barbara, California who is looking at how evolution was taught to students between 1920 and 1960. This researcher had found out about the IOE collection from a reference to an item he was examining at the London Metropolitan Archive. He had no idea we had such a large collection of textbooks and said,

The ‘Historical Textbooks Collection’ was a true Godsend as now I didn’t have to IDENTIFY the textbooks myself; they were done for me [via the card catalogue] ... the IOE Historical Textbooks Collection is awesome.

This researcher has since shared with us photographs of book covers, tables of contents and his notes from the textbooks he used. We hope to make this material available via the catalogue records. This example illustrates both the need for us to promote our ‘hidden’ collections better (and we have made a start on this by using IOE LibGuides) and the importance of working closely with researchers by practically embedding ourselves in their workflow. This will allow us to gather relevant information from their research in order to re-use it to benefit other researchers and to learn about our own collections.

The second researcher, also a PhD student and Research Fellow at the Georg Eckhard Institute, is analysing representations of Africa from WWII in English and German textbooks in relation to their underlying social debates. He consulted the English, History and Geography textbooks from 1940 to the present (mainly O-level/GCSE). Although the GEI has a large collection of textbooks, this researcher wanted to add books to his research sample and consult some didactic materials in the Library. His complaints were not being able to browse the collection and having to wait for the items to be brought over from Egham.

Some challenges

With respect to the textbooks collection and the challenges faced by the Library, there are a number of issues relating to the present collection: how does the Library ensure that this significant collection is no longer hidden and is easily accessible to researchers? The two cataloguing projects described above are a step in the right direction but additional funding is required to catalogue the rest of the collection.

Further, space has always been at a premium; so making this collection virtually available is a step we need to consider (just as the GEI with their mass textbooks digitisation project). However this too requires significant funding.

There are also challenges relating to building the collection in this increasingly ubiquitous digital world. Specifically, how will we collate and preserve born digital content – both the adjunct (and sometimes additional) websites associated with contemporary print textbooks (mostly behind pay walls), and the challenge of the digital textbooks ‘purchased’ by the Library. Then there is the additional challenge of preserving the new interactive digital textbooks.

Associated with this digital content are the two ubiquitous problems of digital rights and the issue of the obsolescent software and hardware for viewing and interacting with digital content.

Much work remains to be done in considering these issues. There are no answers or solutions to these new challenges but there is an urgency in ensuring that these materials are preserved in order to enable textbook research in the future.

References


Nazlin Bhimani
After this year’s AGM the Library and Archives will be hosting a reception to celebrate the publication, earlier this year, of *A life in Education and Architecture: Mary Beaumont Medd* by Dr Catherine Burke. Drawing on the archive of David and Mary Medd, held here at the IOE, the book provides a detailed exploration of the relationships between individual architects, educators, artists and designers that laid the foundation and shaped the approach to designing new school buildings in post-war Britain.

It explores the life and work of Mary Medd (née Crowley 1907-2005) who was, alongside her husband and professional partner, David Medd, one of the most important modernist architects of the 20th century. She devoted the major part of her career to the design of school buildings and was pioneering in this respect, drawing much inspiration from Scandinavian architecture, arts and design.

More than a biography, the book draws attention to the significance of relationships and networks of friendships built up over these years among individuals with a common view of the child in educational settings.

We hope that many of you will be able to join us for the evening. If you would like to attend, please RSVP to Rebecca Webster at rebecca.webster@ioe.ac.uk or 020 7612 6983.

Reviews of the book:

“Burke’s book offers everything from an education and practice manifesto to a compelling romance. The narrative overlays within the text capture valuable insights into the infrastructure of key design projects, including clients, creative collaborators and educators working towards a common enterprise.” The Times Higher Education Supplement (Harriet Harriss)

“Michael Gove should stop reinventing the wheel and get a history lesson on architecture and education by reading Catherine Burke’s newly published book on Mary Medd, née Crowley. In A Life in Education and Architecture, Gove will learn about the remarkable work of a socially committed Quaker family who were at the forefront of the reformation of child welfare and school building design.” Yasmin Shariff, The Architects Journal