

## **Utilizing Archives and Collections: Textile Education, Industry and Practice**

### **EDITORIAL**

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Archives and collections exist as repositories of the past, containing artifacts and materials awaiting reactivation in order to discover new meaning. Textile practitioners - designers, artists, researchers, historians and educators often use historical sources for reference and inspiration. Design company archives are used to promote brand heritage and for design reproduction and adaptation. The importance of utilizing archives and collections within textile education, industry and practice has been evidenced by the substantial number of submissions received by the Journal in response to the special call for papers surrounding this theme; this is the first of two special issues. The initial call invited submissions that addressed archive and collection utilization and proposed topics including: learning from history and tradition; interpretation, appropriation, adaptation and innovation; methodologies and creative approaches; archives and collections as pedagogy; collaborations with the heritage, museum and library sectors; engaging social groups and communities, local authorities and the public; valuing history to inform future generations; descriptions of collections and user-centered projects; copyright and intellectual property. The three co-authored research papers and exhibition review which comprise this special issue explore combinations of these topics. Collaboration is a key factor between the various individuals engaged in the different projects discussed.

The first paper 'The Living Archive: Facilitating Textile Design Research at Undergraduate Level Through Collaboration, Co-Creation and Student Engagement' describes a project between Loughborough University and The Collections Resource Centre (CRC) in Leicestershire, United Kingdom (UK). Through a 10-week student bursary scheme, funded by Loughborough University's Doctoral College, second year undergraduate Textiles: Innovation and Design student Lucy Grundy utilized archival garments as source materials to create unique design ideas and textile outcomes exploring various digital practices of relevance to academia and industry. Processes used to innovate include jacquard weaving, digital printing, three-dimensional (3D) printing and digital embroidery. The project included meetings and co-working with the CRC Collections Engagement Officer and an interdisciplinary supervisory team with expertise in textiles, science, product and industrial design. The focus was the archive as pedagogy with student and supervisor as practitioner-researchers, adopting qualitative and quantitative methods. Project outcomes include tools and strategies for development and utilization with larger groups of students, to further evolve the student as researcher model and develop research environments for textile design higher education. It is evident that access to and engagement with physical textile items within the archive was fundamentally important to the project.

Teaching and learning is the focus of the second paper which reports on a project in progress. Concerns surrounding the ease of sourcing and using existing online digital imagery by textile students in design work provides the rationale for forming the drawing workshops reported upon. 'Drawing on the Archive: Re-evaluating Copying for the Design Curriculum' provides an overview of existing studies which highlight the benefits of copying to learning, but also the negative impact of copying on the design industry and therefore reluctance to use copying as a teaching method. The investigation aimed to reintroduce 'constructive copying' to textile design higher education curricula. The authors reviewed relevant

literature and undertook copying activities to devise a series of drawing workshops with undergraduate students as research participants at Heriot-Watt University, UK. Methods of data collection included reflective journals, focus groups and different forms of interviews. The workshops utilized historical printed textile designs (printed onto paper) as sources for exploration of copying techniques through drawing. The first workshop focused on archive material for reinterpretation, whereas the second involved sketchbook-based observation, analysis and narrative reconstruction. Prior to the workshops, the authors formed a 'copying vocabulary matrix' comprising terminology to describe different copying approaches. This matrix informed the content of the drawing workshops and provided a tool for description, reflection and analysis. The authors posit that drawing based copying exploring different methods through enhanced observation leads to in-depth engagement with the visual material, enhances reflection on the use of drawing for design and heightens awareness of the visual characteristics of archival references.

The third co-authored paper describes a collaborative research project involving staff from the departments of Fashion and Textiles, Archives and Collections, and Alumni Relations at the Glasgow School of Art (GSA), UK. The GSA archives were central to the project which investigated the history of the School's fashion show. Despite not having a course resulting in a specific fashion qualification until relatively recently, GSA has had an annual fashion show since 1947. Various sources within the archive were utilized with discovered, borrowed or newly acquired materials from GSA alumni forming an element of the enquiry. The paper charts the history of the GSA fashion show, from student run charity-fundraiser to learning and teaching activity within contemporary textile and fashion design higher education. Throughout the fashion shows history collaboration is a key feature whether between groups of students, the student union, across schools, departments and or with external parties. Documenting the history of the event alongside the evolution of textile and fashion design education at GSA indicates potential for further development. This includes opportunities to enhance cross-disciplinary collaboration, potential for outreach through connections with local communities and continued emphasis on responsible design. The project has resulted in acquisitions to GSA's archive and further activities surrounding fashion show related artifacts, information and oral histories. Physical objects, documents and records have been vital to build the history of this fashion show and potential issues are highlighted surrounding capturing and storing digital content as part of the records of the institution's future history.

Concluding this special issue is an exhibition review of 'Lace Unarchived' which was held at the Bonnington Gallery, Nottingham Trent University (NTU), UK. Curated by Professor Amanda Briggs-Goode and supported by Dr Gail Baxter, this exhibition presented an array of historical and contemporary artifacts associated with the Nottingham Lace industry. The exhibition sought to explicate the legacy and impact of the Nottingham Design School on design and manufacture both regionally and globally. Contemporary exhibits from designers, artists and manufacturers depicted varying innovative interpretations of Nottingham Lace alongside items and records from the Lace Archive, which is housed within the School of Art and Design at NTU. Collaboration was central to a number of the exhibits, for example between Morton Young and Borland (MYB), Dr Sara Robertson and Sarah Taylor; Cluny Lace Company Limited and Burberry; Sophie Hallette and Mal Burkinshaw; and with an NTU student project partnership with Oasis. The exhibition and accompanying symposium, held at Nottingham City Museum and Galleries and Newstead Abbey, led by Deborah Dean, formed part of a series of events in Nottingham to celebrate the legacy of lace. This final example of archives and collections utilization evidently brings together textile education, industry and practice. The submissions in this issue focus on projects which have taken place in the UK, the subsequent issue expands this geographical focus. Thank you to the team of specialist reviewers for providing valuable and constructive feedback on the utilizing archives and collections submissions.