# Archives Hub Impact Survey 2014

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*[Contributing to the Archives Hub] increases the number of collections catalogued online, leading to more users, leading to more impressive stats for fundraising. On this basis,* ***Archives Hub is highly important in the strategic development of our service -*** *Museum archive*

Contributions to the Archives Hub come from a variety of repositories across the UK, from small specialist collections to huge research institutions. For some of them, the Archives Hub is the only online window into their collections; for others, contributing to the Hub is a single component of wider outreach and dissemination activities.

We wanted to understand more about the impact that having their descriptions on the Archives Hub has had on our contributors. A survey was sent out in November 2014 to gather feedback on catalogue interfaces, usage, and evidence of use of the Archives Hub to discover their collections.

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*'Now we can see what sorts of things you have up in your attic'... that was the reaction of a prominent dance historian. – Education and Research Institution archive*

## About the respondents

We received 43 responses, mainly from Higher and Further Education institutions.

### Coverage

A slight majority (40%) of respondents have a small proportion of their descriptions on the Archives Hub, with the rest of the respondents equally split between their collections being ‘substantially’ and ‘significantly’ represented.

**Among respondents from HE and FE, the proportion of those ‘substantially’ represented (most of their archives described on the Hub) rises to 40%, and they make up 75% of the substantially represented repositories**.

## Other online interfaces

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*Archives Hub is our sole cataloguing system and so* ***without the Hub we would be unable to manage or provide access to our collections****. – Charity/religious archive*

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*Without the Archive Hub, we could not advertise [our archive’s] existence to researchers.- HE archive*

69% of those with an online catalogue interface are from HE/FE. **None of the specialist repositories who responded have an online catalogue interface**.

56% of the respondents with an online interface to their catalogue feel that it only partially meets their requirements.

For 44% of respondents, the Archives Hub offers the only online interface to their collections.

Other online access to archive descriptions includes: (some/all) materials catalogued on the library OPAC; lists, PDFs, or ISAD(G) descriptions on the repository’s website; and material on other union catalogues.

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*We use Archives Hub as our only online searchable catalogue for our collections. Without it we could only offer pdf listings on our website which would drastically diminish resource discovery. – HE archive*

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*[The Archives Hub’s] existence means for the first time we can have an archival catalogue that exposes our collections, used in conjunction with the digital archive on the repository, it means for the first time internationally important collections will be discoverable and accessible. - HE archive*

*The Archives Hub has enabled the Library to put descriptions of its archive collections online for the first time ever.* ***This has been a hugely important step.*** *Currently it provides us with our only way of getting our descriptions online. – Specialist repository*

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## Evidence of impact/benefits

We asked respondents which metrics they tracked, and whether they had seen any increase in these since adding their collections to the Archives Hub.

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*We are very pleased with the impact the Archives Hub has already had on the use of our archive collections. – Specialist repository*

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*We have got 4 requests in the last 5 weeks. Before the [Archives Hub] we didn't receive requests to view particular material at all. – Education and Research Institution archive*

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*Putting our collection descriptions on the Hub has definitely increased use of the archives we hold – HE archive*

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*Interest in the archive collections, and researcher visits, have increased since we joined the Hub – Specialist repository*

While all metrics tracked had increased, not all respondents were directly able to attribute this to the Archives Hub, noting that other factors may be involved, such as contributing to the Archives Hub being one part of a larger cataloguing and outreach effort. Others said that they had joined the Hub too recently to see impact yet.

### Archives Hub referrals

Only 7 respondents routinely keep records of how visitors heard about their collections, but many of the respondents shared anecdotal evidence of their collections being discovered through the Archive Hub.

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*A gentleman from New Zealand traced the obstetrician who delivered his mother through the finding aid on the Archives Hub, and we then went on to introduce him to the obstetrician's son! – Specialist repository*

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*Before using the Hub our enquiries were mostly associated with* ***family historians*** *or* ***academics*** *that knew about the archives and had strong connections with the school.* ***We have been contacted by a different audience****, undergraduates and researchers unaware of our holdings. – Education and Research Institution archive*

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*We know that overseas enquirers are discovering the collections - this can only be via the Archives Hub – HE archive*

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*E-mail enquiries indicate that a large number of users are now finding items from our archive collections through the Archives Hub.- Specialist repository*

Some respondents were able to share figures for referrals from the Hub, with a museum archive saying that approximately **1/3 of their users find their collections through the Archives Hub**, and an HE archive hearing the **Archives Hub mentioned in about 1/5 contacts** with potential new readers.

### Other Archives Hub benefits

Contributors often point out that contributing to the Archives Hub has many benefits to the institution beyond increased use. Some of these fall into some general broad categories:

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Benefits to staff: time saved; cataloguing facilitated; tools and advice to help with the job

*The [Hub] editor allowed us (and continues to do so) to easily create a description and publish it online with pretty little fuss! – Museum archive*

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*Archives Hub* ***saves approx. 1 hour per week staff time*** *emailing out word document copies of catalogues to prospective users – Museum archive*

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*Because we are now able to direct researchers to the Hub we do not need to search the collections on their behalf, therefore saving staff time on enquiries – Specialist repository*

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*Archives Hub is easy to use and allows us to have volunteers creating online catalogues – Museum archive*

Benefits of wider participation and exposure: being part of a wider community; presenting a professional service; advocating for the value of the archive

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*It has added value to the advocacy of the special collections service in increasing the potential audience – HE archive*

*Good to be able to show it to management/stakeholders as proof of work done. It looks professional and the exciting projects done by Hub (like sharing data with Archives Portal Europe) sound good to management ears. And it's free. – HE archive*

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*I think it's good for our collections to be presented in context of other UK collections – HE archive*

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*It has enabled us to export collections to other portals and thereby broaden access – Specialist repository*

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*helps professionalise our service – HE archive*

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#### Benefits to users

*I think people who have not used archives before may be nervous and put off because they don't have the chance to familiarise themselves with the catalogue and plan their visit in advance.* ***Being able to browse archive catalogues online is akin to going onto a shop website before entering the intimidating show room****! – Museum archive*

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*It certainly helps us to guide our users to relevant sources outside the University. – HE archive*

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*I suspect that it has helped some of our users avoid a wasted journey. The number of enquiries has actually gone down, as I think* ***users can find the information they need online, so aren't contacting us to ask for it*** *- they now tend to get in touch to make an appointment, rather than with collection queries – HE archive*

#### The Hub as community resource

*Archives is a small sector and most repositories are under-resourced meaning it is difficult to publicise collections. This means that* ***archival resources can be underused, with their potential still to be unlocked****. Ideally Archives Hub would have increased resources for marketing archives, e.g. staff and campaign budgets. If Archives Hub had more money for marketing, it could get more users going onto Archives Hub, discovering archival resources held around the UK and becoming archive users. If Archives Hub had more marketing resources, this would help cross body campaigns to have greater impact such as 'Explore Your Archives' week – Museum archive*

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## Where next?

We are very grateful to our contributors for responding to this survey, and giving us such a valuable understanding of the impact and effect of being part of the Archives Hub. **Nearly every respondent reported at least one tangible benefit,** and although some more recent contributors said that they hadn’t seen any increases in use yet, they were sure they would do so in the future.

The Archives Hub continues to grow, with over 250 contributors from across the UK. We will continue to add new contributors, increasing the value of researchers, and providing more repositories with a respected, highly visible online gateway to their archive collections.

Contributing data to the Archives Portal Europe means that we are able to increase the international visibility of these collections, placing the unique value of UK archive collections at the heart of the European cultural and heritage landscape.

This survey has clearly shown that the Archives Hub holds a valued and valuable position. We will continue to monitor the value of the Archives Hub, to researchers, contributors, and the wider archive, research, and education communities.

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*I think the Hub is a great resource and the* ***staff have been incredibly friendly, approachable, enthusiastic, helpful and generously free with their time*** *whenever I have contacted them – Local authority/government archive*