

 **The National Archives**

The image shows the exterior of The National Archives building. A prominent curved sign above a glass-enclosed walkway reads "The National Archives" in a dark, sans-serif font. The building's facade is light-colored with large, white cylindrical columns. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

The National Archives

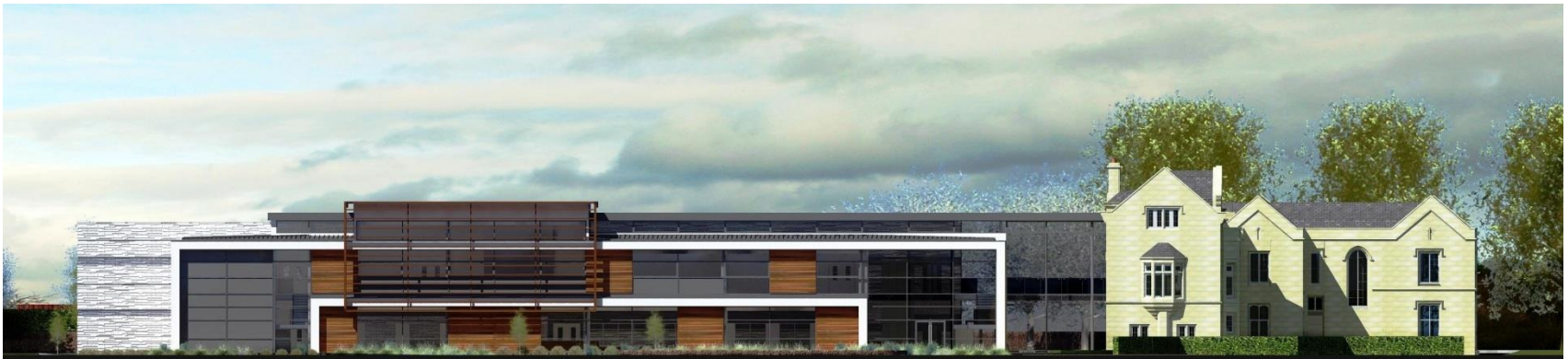
**The end of value? Digital  
Archives as Cultural Property**

**James Travers – Cultural Property  
Manager, The National Archives**



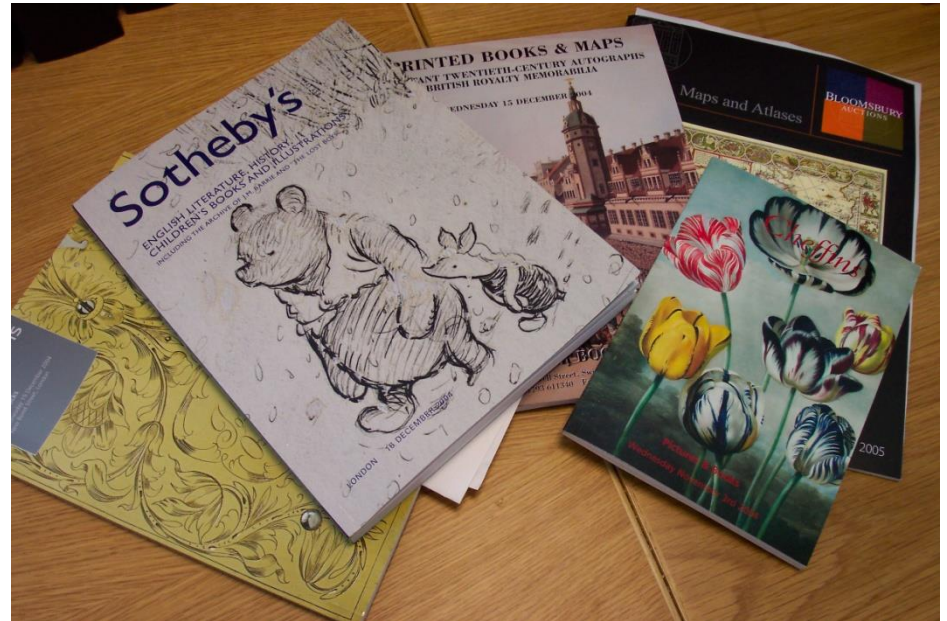
# Cultural Property Manager

- All about ££££
- Two main areas of work: sales and advice to grant awarders
- Getting strategic benefits for the sector – supporting policy
- Decision-making based on established comparators
- Shared sense and types of value



# Sales monitoring – scope and changes

- Specialist dealers
- Local non-specialists
- Online auction sites
- Changes since 2003
- 250 from 50
- 400 from 130
- Impact on valuation



# Funding context - tangible cultural property

- Public schemes Tax system
- Public funds
- Private funds
- Success generally evidential heritage value rather than as objects
- Level of consensus around value







# Export and Cultural Property Policy

- Annual Sales Report
- Documents Working Party of the Reviewing Committee
- Export policy briefing paper

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/protecting-digital-cultural-assets-report.pdf>



# Review, innovation and uncertainty

- Funding landscape – Cultural Gifts Scheme
- Wave of reviews
- Funders
- Agencies
- Professional networks



Image courtesy of London Metropolitan Archives



# Research Sabbatical – Possible digital futures

1. That the current mechanisms are robust and flexible enough to deal with digital as they are
2. That there are minor gaps in skills, knowledge and provision that we can readily identify and mitigate
3. That digital presents a radical challenge to our conception of significance, and that radical change is necessary
4. New mechanisms are required to maintain the status and secure funding for archives as cultural property
5. That archives over time will lose their status as cultural property and should concentrate on seeking discretionary funding and protection from other sources not designed to support pots and paintings but rather other types of data.



# Initial findings – implications for heritage value

- The market in archives
- Skills and capacity in the book and manuscript trade
- Current hybrid collecting
- Rights issues and opportunities – future research
- Current state of review and uncertainty in government, funders and networks
- Professional practice



# Stewardship Costs and Value

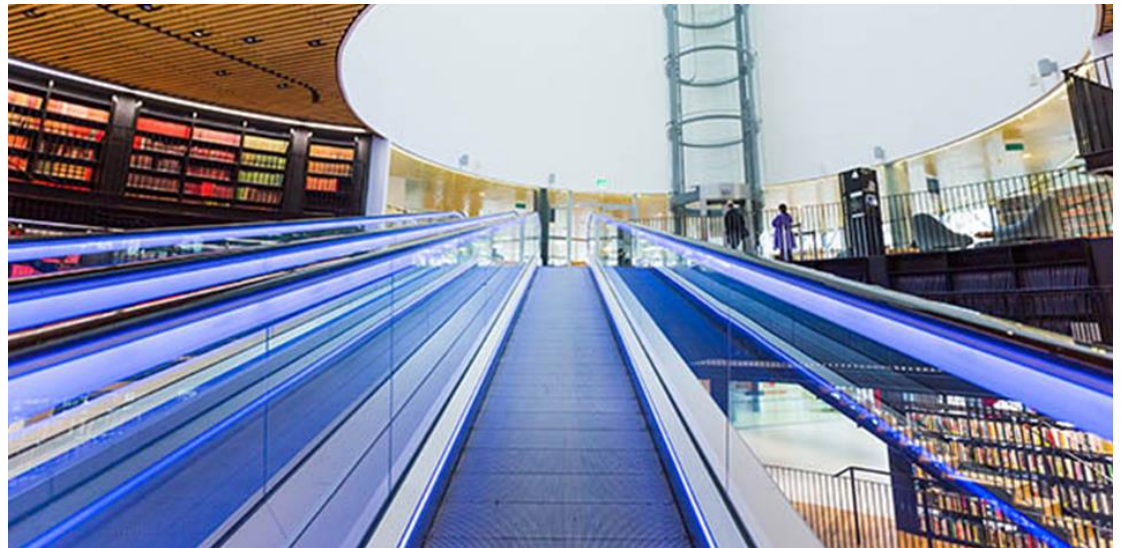
- Can you build status on liability as well as purchase price?
- Narrowing of acquiring institutions
- NLHF 'Collecting Cultures'
- Conditional Exemption
- Advice in situ to owners and advisers
- Campaign tweets





# Recommendations

- Professional practice
- Relationships with funders
- Capacity building
- Shared data and expertise



The Library of Birmingham

## Further Research

- Authenticity and value
- Access control and value
- Archival science and the commercial market in digital
- Transitional value
- Rights and concepts of ownership



Image courtesy of Bath Record Office



The National Archives

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# Questions and Suggestions?

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