

Viewpoint

The Benefits of Creative Residencies: The Bartholomew Archive

Karla Baker and Beverley Casebow

At the National Library of Scotland (NLS), we have a commitment to provide easy access to our collections and to deliver services that are open and available to all. Our goal is to break down barriers and help to engage more people in education and learning. One of the ways in which we seek to do this is through our exhibitions. We mount a series of large and small-scale exhibitions throughout the year and host a permanent exhibition of material from our John Murray Archive. Our exhibitions are complemented by a programme of talks, tours, workshops and other outreach activities that help us to engage with our community in a variety of ways.

In 2012, planning began for a major exhibition, 'Putting Scotland on the Map: The World of John Bartholomew & Son', which focused on the Bartholomew Archive. The Bartholomew Archive records almost 200 years of the history of Edinburgh-based map-making firm, John Bartholomew & Son Ltd. A total of 110 metres of general business records are complemented by 3,000 engraved copper printing plates, 6,000 glass printing plates, 16,000 proof maps, 177 volumes of printed maps and a collection of hand-made tools, photographs, oral history recordings and original artworks. It is regarded as one of the most complete archives of its kind in the world.

Led by the material in the Bartholomew Archive, the exhibition focused on the little-known story of the map-making processes used at Bartholomew. Many of the techniques the exhibition explored are now obsolete but we revealed skills Bartholomew's staff learnt during apprenticeships that could take as long as seven years.

To complement this celebration of craftsmanship, we were keen to explore the possibility of working in collaboration with artists who, it was hoped, would respond to the Archive in an imaginative and original way. In the end, two creative residencies were created: one Writer in Residence and one Artist in Residence. This Viewpoint summarises how we went about it and concludes with the reflections of two members of staff who were closely involved with the exhibition: Karla Baker, the exhibition's curator and Beverley Casebow, our Learning and Outreach Officer and Artist in Residence lead.

The early planning stages focused on some of the fundamentals of the residencies. We agreed on the level of support, both financial and curatorial,

that we could provide and we determined our key aims. We hoped to achieve the following:

- To provide an inspiring opportunity for one writer and one textile artist to develop new work, to further their professional practice, and to work collaboratively with another practitioner
- To provide and widen access to the NLS's collections and curatorial knowledge
- To engage new audiences and to explore different, creative ways of interpreting and responding to the NLS's collections

In terms of the key outputs of these residencies, our goal was for our artists to achieve the following:

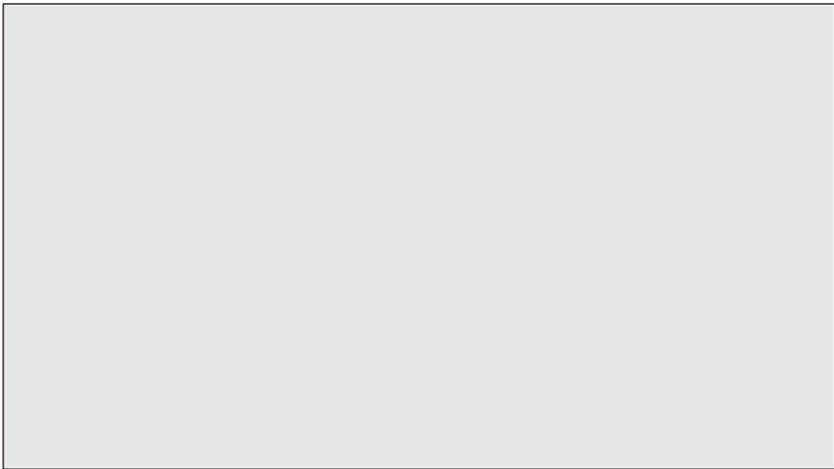
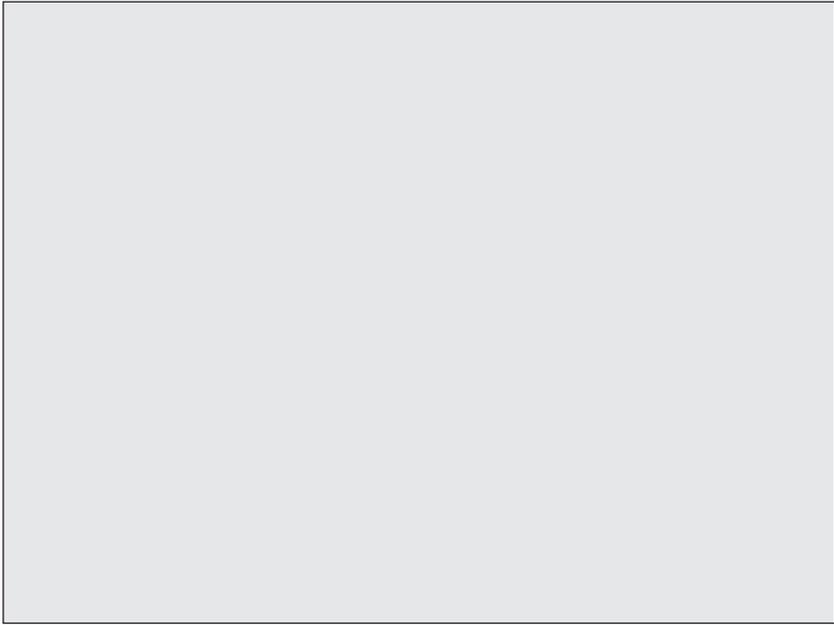
- The production of new collaborative and solo works
- The construction and delivery of workshops for Library staff, local school children and people with visual impairment

The residencies were advertised through our website as well as via relevant specialist organisations, including Creative Scotland, Craft Scotland, the Scottish Book Trust, the Scottish Writers' Centre, the Society of Authors in Scotland, EDGE Textiles and the Textile Study Group. They were funded through support from a number of private donors, corporate sponsors and charitable trusts; each artist was awarded £3,000.

The application and recruitment process was as rigorous as that for any new member of staff. Applicants were asked to submit examples of their work, either samples of written material or photographs of their artwork, along with a supporting statement; 35 applications were received. The applications were sifted by a panel that included Jackie Cromarty, Access and Outreach Manager, Shelly Skail, Business Analyst (Project and Procurement Unit) and Beverley Casebow and Karla Baker. The same panel invited shortlisted candidates to interview, held in our main administrative building on the Royal Mile. Each shortlisted candidate was scored according to four criteria: quality and artistic merit of work; relevant skills and experience; reasons for applying; and evidence of interest in maps and heritage collections. Following this process, Diane Garrick, a Shetland-based textile artist and Tom Pow, a writer and broadcaster, were appointed our Artists in Residence.

Tom and Diane came to work with the Bartholomew Archive – and our general map collections – between February and May in 2013. They were treated as temporary members of staff: both were provided with an official Library email address, a desk, a computer and, for Diane, a temporary workshop. Both Tom and Diane received a crash course on our map collection and were also given the opportunity to spend time exploring our shelves and plan chests without supervision.

As Tom and Diane explored our map collection they began to focus their interest on specific subjects. While the Bartholomew Archive acted as a focal point, Diane also took inspiration from the historical mapping in our general collection, with a particular interest in maps of Shetland. Tom was drawn to some of the great characters who worked for, or managed, Bartholomew, such



Plates 1-2 *EH* (detail) by Diane Garrick, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, 2013.

as John George Bartholomew (1860–1920), one of the firm’s most charismatic managers.

Diane Garrick produced a number of new works during the Residency. One of the largest pieces, *EH*, remains on display in our Maps Reading Room, in our Causewayside building in Edinburgh. (Plates 1 and 2). *EH* was created using the technique of free machine-embroidery. When writing about her inspiration, Diane said:

Edinburgh’s heritage and history was the starting point for a fascinating journey through maps ... I was particularly inspired by John George Bartholomew’s 1919 ‘Chronological Map of Edinburgh’, as well as several of the Post Office plans that had to be frequently updated in order to keep up with the speed of change.

In the process of collaborating with writer Tom Pow, the journey progressed into a philosophical and conceptual exploration of the meaning of maps. Charted on a contemporary postcode district map, the journey begins with the historic and becomes – the map as a journey through life.¹

EH includes short lines from Tom’s poem *Silences*.²

Some of Diane’s other new works, including a Shetland Quadriptych, have been displayed at various galleries and events on Shetland and beyond. Following the conclusion of the residency, Diane was invited to speak at an event at Edinburgh College of Art, run by the Business Archives Council of Scotland. The aim of this event was to encourage art students to explore the unexpected and hidden inspiration that can be found in business archives.

Tom Pow wrote extensively throughout the residency and his book of poems, *Concerning the Atlas of Scotland: And Other Poems* was published by Polygon in 2014 (Plate 3). As Tom remarked, in a short interview filmed for our YouTube Channel:

‘I’m coming out of here with a whole range of poems, all united by maps and it reconfirms my thought that, In the beginning, was the Map’.³

Tom and Diane helped to develop and deliver a number of events. These events were targeted at three main groups, primary school children, adults with visual impairment and a session for members of staff.

‘Mapping Imaginary Islands’ was a project developed with Sciennes Primary School. The aim was to explore the concept of maps through art and creative writing. On the first day of the project, a P6 class of 31 pupils visited the Library for a two-hour ‘Introducing Maps’ workshop. This hands-on session explored the questions, ‘What is a map? Why do we use maps? How are maps made?’

¹ Artwork label by Diane Garrick, *EH*, NLS, 2013.

² T. Pow, *Concerning the Atlas of Scotland: And Other Poems* (Edinburgh, 2014).

³ NLS, 2013. *NLS Writer in Residence, Tom Pow*. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fqNAVAItis>.

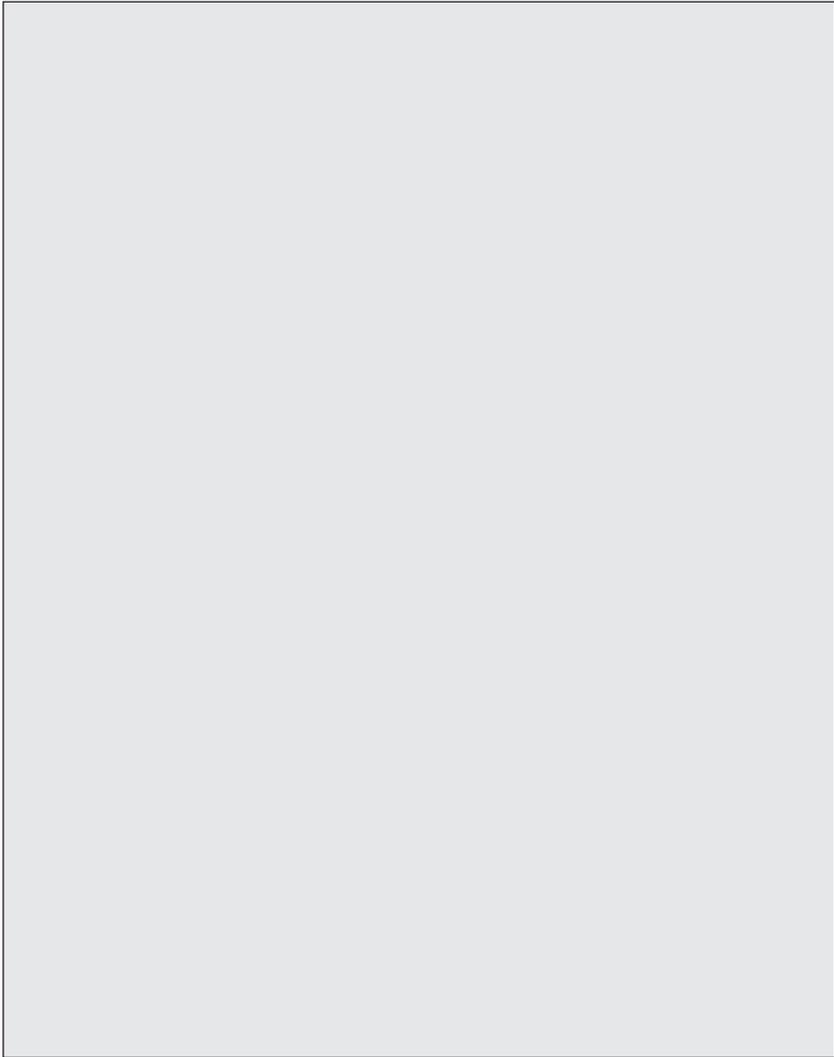


Plate 3 Cover of Tom Pow's book *Concerning the Atlas of Scotland: And Other Poems* (Edinburgh, 2014).

The following week, Tom and Diane worked with the same class back at their school. The pupils worked in groups to create maps of imaginary Scottish islands inspired by the story of Robert Louis Stevenson and his map of Treasure Island. The pupils brought their maps to life through visual detail and creative writing.

Tom and Diane delivered two events for blind and visually impaired adults. The events were developed in collaboration with Artlink, who advised Tom and Diane on how to develop activities and workshops that would work well with this audience.

Diane led two workshops in our Maps Reading Room. Following a general introduction to the map collection, participants had a chance to handle some traditional map printing blocks. Diane talked about her experience of the residency and participants were able to handle her work, which is tactile in nature. Diane then worked with the group to explore simple printing techniques, such as lino cutting, as a way of developing a deeper understanding of the map-making process.

Linking directly with the exhibition, Tom delivered a full-day workshop for a visually impaired audience at our George IV Bridge building. In the morning, Tom led a described tour of the exhibition, which included readings of some of the poems he had written during the residency. After the tour, Tom led a poetry-writing workshop; the poems were inspired by memories of place and mental maps of places, and were transcribed and recorded by sighted members of the group and later added to SoundCloud.⁴

Lastly, Tom and Diane ran a three-hour workshop for Library staff. Tom introduced a number of writing exercises that were used to develop poems relating to maps and memories of significant places. Some of the words and phrases were then used as inspiration for a printing activity led by Diane.

Perhaps one of the most significant, lasting legacies of these Residencies came from a workshop in audio description. Audio description is a technique that helps to make events, such as exhibitions, more accessible for people with a visual impairment. The training was delivered by Anne Hornsby of Mind's Eye Description, who is a pioneer in this field. This training session helped to increase the number of staff in the Library with these skills from two to over ten.

Through the hard work of our Artists in Residence we achieved all of the objectives we had set out at the beginning of the process. Tom and Diane were given privileged access to our collections and the expertise of our staff. They successfully produced the individual and collaborative works that we hoped our collections would inspire and they successfully designed and delivered the range of workshops that we had wanted.

Our artists' ability to engage with people in an original and creative way allowed them to connect with groups who might otherwise feel marginalised by the complex visual nature of maps and archives. It was exciting for us to see our

⁴ https://soundcloud.com/susan_artlink/jam-journeys.

collections used in ways we would never have imagined and it allowed us to see our collections in a new light too. The Creative Residencies were an incredibly positive experience.

The Curator's Perspective

From the moment the suggestion was made, I was excited about the prospect of working in collaboration with two Artists in Residence.

As an archivist – and former curator of the Bartholomew Archive – I always sought to encourage and facilitate access to this remarkable collection. Alongside the core activities of arrangement, description, cataloguing and conservation work, the Bartholomew Archive Project (funded by the John R. Murray Charitable Trust from 2007 to 2014) consistently endeavoured to embrace a wide range of alternative means to achieve this goal. As well as encouraging a variety of researchers to consult the Archive, we also pursued online activities such as an innovative web feature, a blog and Twitter feed.⁵ We worked in collaboration with the Scottish Working People's History Trust to record a series of oral history interviews. The archive was promoted through a variety of specialist magazines and book publications, and a programme of talks, tours and small exhibitions in our Maps Reading Room. Arguably, however, the exhibition of 2012/13 was the most ambitious of all these activities.

The planning process for our exhibition programme begins many years in advance. From the moment a Bartholomew Archive exhibition made it on to the calendar it had been my intention to focus on the map production process. This subject not only allowed me to showcase the best of the archive but it was a great opportunity to celebrate the skill and dedication of Bartholomew's unsung heroes – their incredible staff.

Since I was, and remain, passionate about this archive, I actively embraced any opportunity to explore and share the collection. The idea of the residencies appealed to me as it seemed fitting that the subject of craftsmanship should be explored through the eyes of other craftsmen and women. It would also be an opportunity to see the archive in a totally new light, through the prism of utterly different eyes.

When it came to the practicalities of the initial planning stages I can't deny that I benefited from the experience and expertise of colleagues such as Beverley and Jackie Cromarty, our Access and Outreach Manager. They not only produced the advertising for the posts but were also able to target where it was placed as well as source the funding. I was, however, involved in the recruitment stage of our Artists in Residence, which was an unexpected but highly significant part of the whole experience for me as it was the first time in

⁵ The web feature referred to is the 'Duncan Street Explorer', which can be accessed at: <http://digital.nls.uk/bartholomew/duncan-street-explorer>; selected posts from the Bartholomew Archive blog, active from 2009 to 2014, can be accessed at <http://blog.nls.uk/tag/bartholomew/>; and the Twitter feed is @CartoArchive.

my career that I had sat on an interview panel. I gained some genuinely useful, professional experience that I have been able to take forward.

Upon reflection, in terms of working with Tom and Diane, I do think there are things I could have done differently. I found striking the balance between directing their focus but not wanting to influence their creativity a little difficult. I wanted them to feel welcome to explore the collection, just as I had done, and to develop a personal connection with it but perhaps, given the brief period of the residencies, I could have showcased the items I felt to be special in a more targeted way. I was also pulled in many directions, with other events and responsibilities connected with the exhibition, and perhaps I was guilty of not offering them as much of my expertise as I could. However, I greatly enjoyed working with Tom and Diane; I think we had a good working relationship that I hope will prove to be enduring.

Both Tom and Diane have an obvious passion for maps, as do I and my former colleagues in our Map Library. Tom and Diane fitted into the team immediately, sharing our office in our Reading Room; Diane's workshop was in a staff area in the same building. While the Bartholomew Archive was the focus of the residencies, the whole team was enthused by the experience and embraced Tom and Diane's presence. Colleagues actively shared their knowledge with Tom and Diane, affording them, in turn, the opportunity to explore areas of interest beyond the Bartholomew Archive.

I found Tom and Diane's enthusiasm and professionalism inspiring. It was exciting to see their ideas develop, to see how they responded to the collection and to witness their growing respect for it. The range of new works and workshops they developed and delivered were interesting, innovative and thought-provoking; everything we had hoped they would be.

Another opportunity that arose directly from the residencies was a day-long workshop on audio description. This is such a valuable skill, something I will always carry with me and that I believe more people should learn. The workshop explored fundamental skills such as how to interact with, and help to guide, a visually impaired person: something that can be intimidating and a little awkward if, like me, you have never done so before. We explored the technique of describing visual materials in a meaningful way, which is harder than you might think. The workshop moved us from the classroom and into the exhibition, where we took it in turns to describe items to the group. I learnt something extremely important by doing this; focusing on a few items and taking the time to really explore them was an amazing way to experience the Bartholomew exhibition and something I would do again, for any audience. Following this training, we hosted an event for a group of visually impaired visitors. I was involved with the morning session, which was a tour of the exhibition. Beverley described the items on which we had decided to focus, I spoke about their cultural and historical significance and Tom read some of his poems that had been inspired by the items. These tours were definitely my highlight of the whole exhibition experience.

For me, the lasting legacies of the residencies include practical skills, such as experience of the recruitment process and the transferable skill of audio description. There are of course the physical legacies, such as Diane's work, *EH*, which can be seen on display in our Maps Reading Room, and Tom's book, *Concerning the Atlas of Scotland: And Other Poems*, for which we supplied the accompanying images and also hosted the launch event. Then there are the intangible legacies, the sense of achievement and satisfaction from being part of such an exciting experience and of meeting two such interesting and inspiring people. Would I do this again? Yes, I would!

The Learning and Outreach Officer's Perspective

I have been very fortunate to have been involved in several of the creative residencies which the Library has hosted since 2006, and I have found these projects to be stimulating, surprising, energising, and a highlight of my time at the National Library of Scotland. Having studied Art History, I have a particular interest in how the collections can be used to inspire and support creative practice, and I regularly work with artists, writers and storytellers to find ways of encouraging a wider, and non-traditional, audience to use the Library. In my role as Learning and Outreach Officer, I am also engaged in developing new ways of interpreting the collections, and of making them relevant to contemporary audiences; of finding out what people are curious about, and then looking at ways of tailoring experiences of the Library to meet these interests. This can be achieved through exhibitions, displays, tours, workshops and learning projects, but also by working with creative practitioners who bring new ways of seeing, questioning, and interpreting. This can be exciting, not only for learning audiences, but also for the staff and the organisation as a whole.

Maps have a wide appeal, and are one of the most popular areas of our collections. The Bartholomew Archive, and the related exhibition in 2013, offered an ideal focus for a creative residency exploring written and visual responses to maps and mapping. The Archive also contains material highlighting the lives of the Bartholomew family over several generations, as well as items relating to the staff who worked for the company in a variety of skilled roles, so there are many interesting, personal stories to explore and draw out. I was fortunate that Karla, and her map colleagues at the time, were very receptive to the idea of hosting a residency of this kind, and generous with sharing their time and knowledge with Tom and Diane, and with me, over the three-month period. I personally found it very valuable to have the opportunity to work closely with curatorial colleagues, and with a particular area of the collections, in a sustained way over the period of the residency.

The Bartholomew residency was the first joint residency that the Library had hosted. We felt that, in bringing a writer and artist together, there might be interesting synergies and cross-overs – which, indeed, turned out to be the case. We were keen to focus on textile art for this residency, thinking that it would

allow for a 3D element, but without the necessity for large-scale equipment, or water-based materials. We also felt that stitching, thread, and fabric could be used to explore the textural, visual, and linear aspects of maps to good advantage. Our chosen residents – Tom Pow and Diane Garrick – were at different stages of their careers, and we thought it would be interesting to bring together an experienced practitioner with someone just starting out and beginning to develop their creative practice.

This was my first experience of managing a residency, and I learned a huge amount in the process. There was a fine balance between allowing the residents time for their own research and creative exploration, and having specific goals in terms of learning activities and projects. In order to give Tom and Diane time to settle in, and to familiarise themselves with the collection, the learning activities were all scheduled for the last couple of weeks of the residency, and this period was therefore very busy. I think, with hindsight, that it may have worked better to have hosted the residency over a longer period of time, and to have had two-week blocks in the Library, followed by a two-week rest period.

For this residency, we were keen that staff from across the Library should be given the opportunity to get involved, and we hosted a creative workshop, led by Tom and Diane, which anyone could attend. Also, Diane created pencil sketches of map-making tools in the Archive, which she then displayed in staff areas around the Library, and in the staff lifts. I think this helped to raise people's curiosity not only about the residency, but also about the building's store of collections of which they might not previously have been aware.

The pencil sketches have been added to the collections and are one of the legacies of the residency. The relationship with Tom and Diane is also ongoing, and has provided a focus for a number of subsequent events. Both Tom and Diane took part in the Shetland Book Festival in autumn 2013, as part of the Library's contribution to this event, themed around maps and mapping. The Library will be loaning material to a map display in Shetland in September 2015, and we are in discussion with Diane about running related workshops to sit alongside this. The Library also hosted the launch of Tom's book of poems, *Concerning the Atlas of Scotland*, and the poems themselves remain an enduring legacy of the residency.

The workshop sessions which we ran for a visually impaired audience were also an exploration in using creative ways of interpreting the collections for those with sight loss, and particularly in using poetry and fiction as a means of audio description. We have subsequently built on this by hosting another residency with poet Ken Cockburn, in partnership with Artlink. In this project, Ken Cockburn worked with a group of visually impaired adults, and with Library staff, to explore spaces in the main building. This resulted in a promenade performance, with dramatised readings from fiction relating to each space.

I found the Bartholomew residency to be inspiring, and certainly stimulating for my own work. I learned new skills, particularly relating to recruitment and project management, and it was also a privilege to be able to work so closely with Tom and Diane, to witness their excitement and curiosity about the collections and the Library, and to see the way in which they were able to communicate this to others.