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The RCN Library and Archive Services (LAS) team has enjoyed another successful year. We implemented a new staffing structure from January, which included moving to a six day working model and expanding our customer service and archive teams. 2016 was also the first year of implementing our new five year plan, published in 2015. Implementing the plan involved the launch of over 40 new subject guides, in partnership with RCN forums and staff, which have to date been accessed over 30,000 times. As part of our focus on making collections available across the UK and the world we increased our e-book offering by launching Patron Driven Acquisition. We introduced new regional contact roles which further improved our regional services, and increased our role in student recruitment.

We delivered more member training sessions than ever before and launched drop-ins at the Library and Heritage Centre which are proving a considerable success. The RCN centenary occupied the team throughout the year, and we launched two centenary exhibitions, contributed to the centenary film and expanded our presence and services at Congress. We also launched our centenary exhibition website This is Nursing and made our collections accessible to more users internationally through adding our collection information to WorldCat and COPAC.

Anna Semmens and Teresa Doherty
Library and Archive Services Joint Managers
Very useful session. The librarian helped me define my search terms and also improve my understanding about the key terms and definition of my literature search.”

RCN library user
Facts and figures

Library and Heritage Services

- Footfall to Library and Heritage Centre: 229,721
- Items borrowed: 13,589
- 6,993 items renewed
- 13,434 face to face enquiries
- 2,942 telephone enquiries
- 2,435 email enquires
- 289 web chats

Enquiries

- Items added to the collection: 3,998
- 136,994 full text journal articles downloaded
- E-books accessed: 22,780
- 382 enquiries to RCN Archives
- 26 researchers using the Archive collections
- 230 attendees at 1:1, drop-in and library training sessions
- Literature searches were undertaken for members and 81 literature searches for RCN staff
Events and exhibitions

1,930 twitter followers to @rcnlibraries (by end of 2016)

- exhibitions: 3
- events: 54
- tour groups: 32

3,102 visitors

- 55% public
- 39% members

Library outreach and supporting member recruitment across RCN England

- L&A staff presented at 35 student recruitment events across all the RCN England Regions
- A total of 18,788 rail miles were accrued travelling to and from these events
- L&A services were represented at 43 different conferences and events

Meetings with university nursing librarians
**2016 Highlights**

**Growing team**

We welcomed a number of new staff during the year; Diane McCourt, Collection Development Manager; Sibylla Parkhill, Customer Service Information Specialist; Lisa Gardner, Phil Segall, Janan Nuri as Customer Service Information Assistants; Tim Spring and Miriam Keaveny as new Graduate Trainees - Customer Service; and Sophie Volker as Archive Collections Specialist. All new staff were welcomed into the team, and our year saw many inductions and training sessions take place alongside our regular CPD sessions.

**Centenary celebrations**

The centenary activities throughout 2016 showcased the development and progress of the RCN and nursing. The library team launched *The Voice of Nursing* exhibition which received positive media attention and was mentioned in a *Women’s Hour* special *The RCN at 100*. The handling collection, developed specially for the centenary, was taken to ten locations around the UK, including Congress, Nurses’ Day in Cavendish Square, and the parliamentary reception at Speaker’s House.

**Collaborations**

2016 saw a number of collaborations between the RCN and external organisations to ensure that services continue to expand. The family history project with Ancestry came to fruition last year (August) and we have begun working with Mary Evans Picture Library to increase the visibility of the RCN’s image collection. First to be added to its catalogue was 100 World War 1 images.

**Catalogue developments**

During 2016, we shared our cataloging with some key external partners including WorldCat and Suncat. We made the first contribution to COPAC which has 90 specialist, national and university libraries listing their holdings centrally, ultimately making our collections more accessible. We also added 30,000 e-books to our catalogues and pamphlet cataloging.
We provided training to more of our members than in any previous year. We also launched regular drop-in training sessions, which continue to take place every Wednesday afternoon in the Library and Heritage Centre. These sessions have been well attended with lots of positive feedback from members. Alongside these we have continued to offer information skills training by appointment which have been very successful.

Our online training offer was expanded, to enable more members to get support and access training remotely. We published 45 library subject guides on the RCN website which provide easy access to quality information resources on a range of nursing topics. RCN forum members and professional leads contributed to this by recommending resources, e-books and journals for the guides. Two of the new guides Getting Started using the Library and Doing your Dissertation introduce members to the library in an easy and approachable way and include our new YouTube guides. We attended nine forum conferences specifically to promote the subject guides supporting those forums, as well as marketing the guides at larger member events including the joint reps conference; reaching 380 members.

We completed a review and report on our literature search service to examine how our current offer is received and ensure it reflects the changing information needs of our members and staff. The review involved significant research into our users’ experiences and included holding our first LAS focus group. The report produced key recommendations and the team is currently planning implementation which will include significant online service developments.

“Extremely helpful. I was unsure about how to conduct a search for articles but I feel much better about how to search now.”
Feedback from a drop-in training session participant

“Thank you so much. What a wonderful service. I am so pleased to have received this - and just days after I submitted - I’m very impressed.”
Feedback from literature search service user

“Fascinating talk and insights.”
Feedback from attendee at Nursing Loud and Proud lecture

“Thanks to the staff who helped me with all of the documentation I needed for my revalidation.”
RCN library user
The RCN’s centenary exhibition *The Voice of Nursing* was launched at the beginning of the year which celebrated 100 years of nursing and the RCN. This received a significant amount of press attention during 2016 and was featured in a range of internal and external publications, including RCNI’s *Nursing Older People Journal*, *RCN Bulletin* and *Nursing Standard*. It has also been widely acknowledged in the museums and heritage sector, with articles in CILIP update, a review in *Museums Journal* and advertisements in *Time Out*. The exhibition was mentioned in a *Women’s Hour* special *The RCN at 100* for which the library team gave a tour to presenter Jane Garvey.

The centenary year offered us the chance to work in new and exciting ways. We provided research and contributed to articles in RCN publications and external media. The Archive team supplied images and research for the centenary film, the presidents’ wall and the historical timelines project. The RCN Archive holds over 5,000 badges and we were very happy to help with preparations for the design of the new badge and the centenary range sold in our shop which included mugs, cards and jewellery.

The LAS team contributed to tours and open days including the first ever Open Doors in Edinburgh. We worked with members to deliver our *The Right Sort of Women* exhibition and events series, an exhibition looking at our nursing founders, celebrating their contribution in our centenary year.

We developed a handling collection for the centenary, which has been enormously popular. The collection was taken to 10 RCN centenary celebrations around the UK including RCN Congress and the RCN Nurses’ Day marquee in Cavendish Square, London. A particular highlight was presenting the collection at the RCN Parliamentary reception at Speaker’s House, introducing MPs and high profile stakeholders to nursing history and our collections. We also hosted a reception for the Centenary International Conference in November, offering tours of the building, exhibitions and installation of the unique research project the *Time Travelling Operating Theatre* to 200 delegates.

Being involved in the exhibition *The Right Sort of Women* was a very new and interesting experience for me. Handling the actual first minutes, the photographs and all of the artefacts which related to the founders was exciting and made the history come alive.”

Alison O’Donnell  
(guest curator on The Right Sort of Women, RCN History of Nursing Society)

Congratulations! What a special exhibition and what a splendid history.”

Chinese Nursing Association visitors to the *Voice of Nursing* exhibition

Images:  
The *Voice of Nursing* exhibition at 20 Cavendish Square
Events and exhibitions

2016 saw the Events and Exhibitions programme include a number of new events, in addition to the expansion of our core series of historical seminars and public lectures. We held 56 events on a wide variety of nursing topics including birth control, vaccination and sexual health, which attracted more than 3,000 attendees. We increased the number of public lectures, celebrating major occasions including LGBT History Month, Black History Month, Disability History Month and International Women’s Day and invited significant nursing figures to speak, including Professor Dame Elizabeth Anionwu and other RCN fellows.

The Krypton Factor, a nursing history gameshow, was an example of successfully trialling new event formats during the year. The gameshow’s debut at Congress in Glasgow in June had a high turnout and excellent feedback that the interactive session “really got into the nursing spirit.” The Audience Engagement team also worked with the Centenary Programme Manager to deliver three other events, taking the popular HQ Open House on tour and exploring the history of nursing through textbooks and uniforms.

Another huge success during 2016 was winning the Museums at Night Connect competition to host an event with contemporary artist Peter Liversidge. We were up against three other heritage sites and won with almost 40% of the public vote. Members were involved throughout the project, with the text for the artwork generated by nurses through an online competition. Six winners participated in a sign painting workshop with Peter, and their panels were incorporated into the final installation displayed in Cowdray Hall. The evening was a sell out and received much praise from attendees.

Our close work with the forums continued with the Public Health Forum and History of Nursing Society’s exhibition exploring public health nursing. *A Healthful Form of Work* marked a significant progression in the temporary nursing history exhibition programme and the space was developed to include a new case, additional panels, floor graphics and an accompanying video, that showcased even more of our collections.

“Thank you and your team for such wonderful organisation of a unique and novel event for us nurses! I really will treasure those memories and I’m very humbled to have been involved in this project with Peter Liversidge. There should be more novel events such as this! Events such as this are exciting, interesting and different… a wonderfully powerful way of expressing nursing and care through art.”

Museums at Night, member

“Very insightful event. Well run with inspiring talks and really good to have an event with plenty of time to ask questions.”

Event participant
1. Staff dressed in historical and current nursing uniforms promoting the Museums at Night event
2. Participants at Museums at Night
3. The handling collection at Congress 2016
4. Museums at Night final display
5. Visitors to the Health Form of Work exhibition
6. Peter Liversidge at the Museums at Night event
7. Participants at Museums at Night
8. Peter Tatchell and Jason Warriner at an LGBT History event
Marketing and communication

With more events and services on offer in 2016 than ever before, we created our first strategic marketing and communications plan. We introduced a variety of new ways to communicate about our services and events to ensure that we reached as many of our users as possible.

Our first Library and Heritage Centre Open Day for staff was a great success with our handling collection being one of the highlights. Around 60 staff visited us and learnt about our services and how we support members and staff through a variety of activities including exhibition tours, nursing history talks and literature searching demonstrations.

During 2016 we reworked how the LAS team engaged with members at Congress, by rebranding the internet café as the PC Station and extending the services available. The smart new station was prominently placed for members to easily access computers and promote library services. The library team hosted a successful selfie competition on Twitter, offered on the spot literature search training, as well as help getting started on Twitter. During Congress @RCNLibraries was very active on Twitter, running the competition, and tweeting the different fringes and presentations being given by library staff. During June, we gained 85 new followers, 39 of them during Congress week.

2016 saw the launch of our quarterly online newsletter which proved to be an excellent tool to keep users up to date with key changes and highlighted new service developments and events. On the back of this success, and to meet our aim of maximising the reach of our marketing by varying the formats and methods of communication, we are preparing to launch a library blog in 2017. This will be hosted on the RCN website and will provide regular and detailed information and commentary about events and services as they happen, complementing the Twitter feed.

We had an unprecedented response to our first annual library survey in October, with over 500 questionnaires received and over 75% of respondents rating our services as good or excellent. This wealth of information will help us tailor our services to the needs of our users in 2017 and beyond.

“It was worth it! It has made me more confident in facing the challenges that assignments in my university bring.”

RCN library database training user
Service development

The LAS team is continuously looking to improve and develop provision of, and access to, services across the board.

As a way to increase access to the collections for those who are not eligible for RCN membership we established a library subscriber’s service. Subscribers receive onsite access to our databases and electronic resources and limited borrowing rights, opening up the wealth of nursing resources held at the RCN to a new audience.

Creating a welcoming start to the user experience in the Library and Heritage Centre has been a long-running project throughout 2016. As part of the programme to redesign the whole space along more user friendly lines the welcome area was refreshed, opening up access points to the exhibition and main library and creating an open plan entrance.

The RCN History of Nursing Society continued to support our exhibitions and events programme by giving talks at public events across the UK. In 2016, we collaborated with them to run a volunteering pilot; by regularly committing to help with archive projects such as indexing or repacking archives, members enabled us to increase access to our archives. The History of Nursing Society members were delighted to have the opportunity to engage with the nursing archives and plans are underway to develop this pilot further.

In November, we submitted an application to The National Archives accreditation programme, demonstrating how we meet benchmarks for UK archives. This entailed a robust review and development of the archive team’s activities to ensure we provide best value for the RCN.

Online and catalogue development

We’ve continued the development of the library website, originally launched in December 2015, improving access and adding content including exhibition details, excerpts from our oral history collection and YouTube videos of some of our public events.

We proactively shared our catalogues with key external partners. We shared additional catalogue entries with WorldCat which is aimed at the public and is the world’s largest network of library holdings and services; also with Suncat which lists journal holdings of over 100 UK libraries to help more specialist users. We made our first contribution to COPAC this year, which has 90 UK specialist, national and university libraries listing their holdings centrally.

These projects have increased the visibility of the RCN’s specialist nursing collections to multidisciplinary users and researchers which has led to increases in photocopy requests and loan requests from other libraries. It has also led to an increase in the use of both our historical collection of nursing books and journals by researchers, family historians and the media.

“The session was tailored to my specific needs and the facilitator was very skilled with the resources.”

RCN library drop-in session user
I was very impressed with how well the session was managed and I learnt a lot of other things about the RCN online library services. Thank you very much, very impressed.”

RCN library drop-in session user

“An excellent opportunity for people to benefit from 1:1 teaching/learning.”

RCN library database training user

1. Staff recieving RCN Foundation awards
2. An actor dressed as Sarah Swift, meeting visitors on Open House Day
3. Peter Liversidge and Janet Davies at Museums at night
4. Penny Pepper speaking at a Disability history month event
5. International Womens Day reception
6. Hospital badge map
7. An actor dressed as Lady Cowdray, meeting visitors on Open House Day
8. LGBT event
Collections

We piloted member driven e-book selection in 2016 which enabled the library team to match the needs of our membership with the digital stock that we held. Members are able to self-select from 30,000 e-books which have been added to our collection. This 10-fold increase in digital titles enabled us to provide support across the UK to members day or night.

We had a challenging and successful year revising the e-journals available. The team worked hard to secure a deal to enable access to key journal titles including nineteen nursing titles supplied by Mark Allen Healthcare, such as *British Journal of Nursing*, *British Journal of Healthcare Assistants* and *Practice Nursing*. We also obtained agreement to offer both *Internurse* and *Intermid* journal packages for the next three years, and new online titles including *Journal of Radiology Nursing*, *Journal of Travel Medicine* and *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*.

2016 also saw investment in adding more of the RCN’s historical material to our online catalogue. Since October, 800 historical RCN items have been added enabling members to look at RCN publications and leaflets from the 1920-1950s.

The centenary was a perfect opportunity to actively seek donations of nursing materials to enhance our collections, with a corresponding increase in donations from members. The RCN History of Nursing Society deposited interviews and transcripts from its 2016 oral history project. In July, the RCN Fellows centenary tea included a lively discussion on the importance of donating their publications and personal papers; this resulted in several deposits including Dame Professor Elizabeth Anionwu donating a signed copy of her memoir *Mixed Blessing from a Cambridge Union*. In November, the RCN launched *Save Our Story*, a project part of the centenary activities, encouraging forum members to deposit publications, photographs or archives from the RCN projects they have worked on. Significant member interest has been raised and these collecting projects will continue into 2017.

I am really amazed by the services provided by the RCN!"  
RCN library database training user
Throughout 2016 the Library and Archive team proactively worked with colleagues in the England regions and external organisations such as Ancestry. This collaborative work ensured that our services continued to grow and provide our members across the UK with a consistent level of service regardless of whether they are physically near an RCN library.

The Library and Archive team continue to see member recruitment as a pivotal part of our work and integral to the future viability of the organisation. During the Spring and Autumn student recruitment drives, the team attended 42 individual events at universities across England, taking the opportunity to present the unique selling point that is the Library and Archive service. In partnership with other RCN colleagues and departments, this brought RCN membership numbers to their highest ever level.

The regional contacts work continued to build excellent working relationships across all of the RCN England regions. Each region has been assigned a dedicated member of Library and Archive staff to keep colleagues and members informed and updated on all of our services and projects. This has been of great benefit to member recruitment and retention and has also forged strong contacts with information professionals at universities in these regions. RCN staff in the England Regions also benefited from having a better understanding of the services we offer to support their information needs as well as those of members.

The family history project with Ancestry started in 2012 and we were delighted when this piece of work came to fruition in August. Ancestry digitised and provided online access to our copies of UK nursing registers dating 1898-1968, containing over 1.6 million nurses’ entries, whilst in 2016 we also provided new family history guides. We saw immediate and strong usage from family historians and researchers across the world, and in November we introduced a pay-for family history service. RCN members can access the Ancestry website for free from RCN library computers and can also benefit from 15 minutes of free searching via our family history search service.

In 2016, we entered into a collaboration with Mary Evans Picture Library, which provides picture research to its own collection as well as being an agent for major UK heritage collections. Mary Evans’ customers include publishers, newspapers, television and film companies as well as researchers; negotiating commercial licences and providing quick access to high resolution images. In autumn 2016, we sent Mary Evans 100 First World War images, with relevant catalogue entries, to meet current demand. Processes to share our images with Mary Evans were successfully tested and we will continue to add appropriate images during 2017 to maximise the commercial use of our historic image collections.