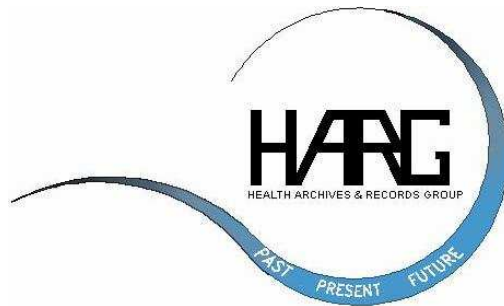


Health Archives and Records Group

Annual General Meeting

Chair's Report

2008/2009



Colin Gale

Membership Secretary

(Chair vacant)

Introduction

The Health Archives and Records Group (HARG) is an informal practitioner association which meets to discuss issues of common concern two or three times a year (often in London, but at least once a year outside it). It provides a useful forum for those working in archive repositories, or in corporate and/or clinical health records management, to collaborate and share experiences. It is open to anyone in the UK and Ireland with a professional interest in health archives or records, and attracts professionals working in local authorities, medical education, royal medical colleges, the private health sector as well as the NHS.

As well as providing a forum for discussion, HARG aims to be proactive in providing tangible professional guidance and support to health professional colleagues and from time to time undertakes to provide documents and guidance of value to the health sector. It is a affiliate of the Specialist Repositories Group of the [UK and Ireland] Society of Archivists. The Society's financial assistance enables HARG to widen its reach by offering a means of all who work with health archives or records to find workable approaches to common issues; and thereby contributes to the achievement of the Society's own objectives. HARG values the ongoing support of The National Archives in meeting attendance and provision of advice.

HARG was first convened in 1989 under the title 'Health Authority Archivists' Group' (later changed, first to the 'Health Archives Group' and then in 2006 to its present name). HARG's mission statement and aims are as adopted at its 2006 annual general meeting (Paper B and C respectively, available at http://www.healtharchives.org/docs/HARG_AGM_minutes_26_May_2006.pdf).

Membership and Structure

Membership of HARG is an informal matter: there is no bureaucracy to undergo in joining and no fee to pay. The Membership Secretary maintains an email circulation list to which meeting papers and other announcements are sent. In the last two years this list has grown by 18%, from 110 names to 130.

Any matters fundamental to HARG's identity or functions are subject to a vote of all members, at the annual general meeting or by e-mail vote at any time. However, between meetings day-to-day activities are undertaken through a committee of up to twelve members, elected by the membership at the Group's annual general meeting. The committee takes forward work on specific issues through ad hoc sub-groups, each of which is led by a committee member. Terms of reference for the committee, and responsibilities of committee members, have been laid out in Paper D and E respectively of HARG's 2006 annual general meeting (see http://www.healtharchives.org/docs/HARG_AGM_minutes_26_May_2006.pdf).

Finances

Since 2006 the Specialist Repositories Group (SRG) of the Society of Archivists has allocated HARG a small operating budget to cover expenses relating to meetings and the like. In 2006 the amount provided was £200, in 2007 £250, and in 2008 £300 (a further £300 is allocated for 2009). 2006-2009 expenditure was as follows:

2006 expenses (financial year: January – December)

£66.30	AGM venue (St Bartholomew's Hospital: May 2006)
£41.50	Chair's travel (Cornwall to London: September 2006)
£12.00	Committee member's travel (London to York: February 2006)
£42.30	Teleconference (November 2006)
£34.59	Teleconference (June 2006)
£196.69	Total

2007 expenses (financial year: January – December)

£29.99	HARG website (due end of June 2007)
£43.99	Teleconference (May 2007)
£54.60	Chair's travel (Cornwall to London: June 2007)
£49.30	Minutes Secretary travel (London to Wakefield: September 2007)
£47.40	Meeting venue (Wakefield: September 2007)
£12.60	Teleconference (November 2007)
£11.80	Chair's travel (to London: January 2008) [extended deadline to 31 Jan]
£249.68	Total

2008 expenses (financial year: January – December)

£ 14.20	Committee member's travel to AGM (May 2008)
£ 22.50	Refreshments (tea & coffee) at AGM (May 2008)
£ 29.99	HARG website annual hosting fee (June 2008)
£ 38.30	HARG speaker's travel for SRG session at SoA conference (August 2008)
£ 6.30	HARG speaker's additional travel costs for SRG session at SoA conference (August 2008)
£ 50.00	HARG leaflets x100 copies for SoA conference (August 2008)
£ 31.78	HARG meeting refreshments (tea & coffee) at General meeting (September 2008)
£106.00	HARG leaflets x150 for publicity distribution at conferences etc (December 2008)
£299.07	Total

2009 expenses (financial year: January – December)

£300	Hire of meeting room, Thackray Museum
£300	Total

HARG manages its expenditure carefully to obtain maximum value, and to support the effectiveness of its contribution towards achieving the objectives of the Society of Archivists. It is grateful to the SRG and to the Society of Archivists for their ongoing assistance. HARG does not actively seek financial assistance from any other quarter, but from time to time it may consider partner or sponsor proposals with defined objectives (e.g. meeting sponsorship, publishing projects). It is indirectly supported by those employers whose members may legitimately access travel / training / conference budgets to attend (or indeed host) HARG meetings.

Sub-Group and other Project Work

HARG is a true 'coalition of the willing', and its project work has always taken place within the limitations of the available time of individual members. We are often approached by those who would value a contribution from us, but if we cannot find anyone with the right experience and sufficient time to provide it, the work must be left undone. It is of course better to do a small number of things well than to attempt and fail at a larger number. The opportunities are sufficiently numerous and varied to call for a sizeable number of people willing to play a part. In the absence of an elected Chair since 12 May 2008, I as Membership Secretary have been reliant upon the voluntary effort of all my fellow committee members to keep HARG going. I trust it is not invidious of me to single out the following for particular mention: Eleanor Burgess (Minutes Secretary), Sarah Coombs (who maintains a watching brief on our finances and our website), Catherine Redfern (who until now has led HARG's records management sub-group, but has recently taken a career break and is stepping down from HARG's committee), Jenny Haynes and Kath Webb (who have worked together to convene the research value sub-group). I am also grateful to the other members of committee, Vicky Rea and Stephen Soanes, for their work and interest over the past year.

Records Management sub-group

In 2007 HARG (working in partnership with the [UK] Records Management Society) initiated a project to develop a business classification scheme for the health sector, to follow similar models already created for local government and higher education (see <http://www.healtharchives.org/docs/BCSPressReleaseAugust07V2.pdf> for the initial press release). Unfortunately this work stalled following the departure of Karen Waite from HARG's committee in mid-2008, and the present position, as summarised by Dr Paul Duller (the Records Management Society lead on this project) is that following the identification of ten top-level functions for inclusion in the scheme in 2007, level 2 has been drafted but work is yet to commence on level 3. Dr Duller no longer has a team of volunteers ready to assist in the further development of the BCS, and is considering applying for funding for a consultant to complete the work. To date no-one has stepped forward to take Karen Waite's place as HARG lead on this project.

Research Value sub-group

In September 2007 this sub-group set itself the task of a document outlining the research value of health records and giving generic advice on appraisal, in order to act as a reference for academics and for those tasked with identifying and maintaining medical records for research. This work (the bulk of which was undertaken by Katherine Webb) was completed by early 2009, and the sub-group are actively considering the best route to publication.

Website

HARG's website (www.healtharchives.org) was launched in 2006 as a means of disseminating information on the care of health records and archives in general, as well as about HARG activities in particular, and the quality and pertinence of the material available

on it has been welcomed by members. In 2008-2009, the website continued to improve as a resource with additions including:

- Electronic copy of a HARG publicity leaflet (also made available in hard copy at the Society of Archivists' 2008 annual conference and at the Wellcome Trust's Winter Conference 2008)
- Electronic text of an article by Colin Gale and Katherine Webb published in the journal *Archives* entitled 'Maximising access to historic health records'
- Guide to Lunacy Commissioners' reference coding in early twentieth century asylum records in England and Wales, compiled by Katherine Webb

The site is maintained by Sarah Coombs with assistance from Samantha Farhall and Vicky Rea.

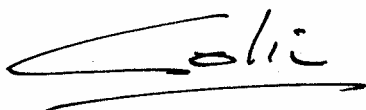
The future

HARG is now in its twenty-first year, and I am confident about its future. I am by no means its longest-standing member, having started to attend meetings in 2001. However, having spent the last three years in the roles of Chair and/or Membership Secretary, I have decided that the coming year will be my last on HARG's committee.

I am sure that HARG will continue to function for as long as there is a need for, and a will on the part of, those entrusted with the care of health records and archives to come together to share news, provide mutual support, brainstorm and make common cause. This is no cause for complacency, however. The success of HARG's endeavours in the medium to long term is dependent upon a constant supply of new members who are willing to play active roles in its affairs for the benefit of the membership, the wider recordkeeping profession and indeed the health sector as a whole.

I would like to pay tribute to HARG's committee for their ongoing hard work and dedication, but also to the entire membership for the interest and enthusiasm that makes HARG what it is: diverse, knowledge-rich, and influential out of all proportion to its size.

Yours,



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Membership Secretary
Archivist
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18 June 2009