

# INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IN LITERARY MANUSCRIPTS

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Literary archives are not like other archives. Their importance lies in who made them and how they were made, the unique relationship between author and evolving text, the insights they give into the act of creation. The supreme example of this magical combination of form and content might be the manuscripts of Marcel Proust, lovingly preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, 171 volumes of cross-hatched text, with later additions on small pieces of paper - the famous *paperoles* - glued onto almost every page: a wonderfully dreadful conservation challenge. Literary archives often have a higher financial value (or at least a higher price) than other archives. They are far more likely to be found in libraries than in archives offices. In many countries of the world literary archives are housed in private foundations (such as the Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa in Rio de Janeiro), in literary museums (such as the Museum of Japanese Modern Literature in Meguro-ku, Tokyo), or in literary houses (such as the Maison de Balzac in Paris). In countries such as the USA, Canada and the UK, university libraries play the leading role, but this is by no means true in all countries.

In contrast with most other types of archives – business archives, medical archives, architectural archives, religious archives or municipal archives, for example – literary archives are often scattered in diverse locations without any sense of appropriateness or “spirit of place”.

In some cases the literary archives will have gone to another country and caused some controversy in the home country – as with the Carlos Fuentes papers in Princeton University Library or the literary papers of Leopold Sédar Senghor in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (his political papers, however, remain in the Archives nationales du Sénégal). In other cases serendipitous acquisition or purchase has led to locations that could never have been guessed. People in this room know better than I do how it came about that the Ernest Hemingway Archives ended up in the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum or the J. R. R. Tolkien Archive in the Marquette University in Milwaukee. I am still hoping that one day an Australian colleague will tell me the full story of how it came about that one of the finest collections of literary manuscripts in Australia is to be found amongst the military training resources of the Australian Defence Force Academy. The examples abound of literary papers in locations a long way from home: papers of Franz Kafka owned by Oxford University; papers of Paul Claudel owned by Cambridge University; Raymond Queneau and Wilson Harris in the Ransom Center in Austin; Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka in Harvard; Jean Anouilh and Yehuda Amichai in Yale; Mario Vargas Llosa and Giorgos Seferis in Princeton; Angus Wilson and Iris Murdoch in Iowa; for John Betjeman, whose papers are in the University of Victoria, British

Columbia, it would be difficult to be very much further from home. You all know dozens of other examples.

The uniqueness of literary papers; their magical windows into the act of literary creation; the special skills needed to use them; and the absence (in most countries) of locational logic all mean that the world of literary manuscripts is one where collaboration is particularly needed.

Until recently, however, such collaboration has generally been the exception rather than the rule.

The first efforts at collaboration (unsurprisingly) involved sharing information about diverse locations. Without external funding, such projects depended on voluntary submissions of information - and were inevitably characterised by unevenness of coverage and approach. A project on British literary manuscripts was hosted by the University of London in the 1970s, but faded away owing to lack of resources and the failure of some important institutions to submit information. The Library of Congress's NUCMC is probably the most successful example of locations work based on voluntarily-submitted information, although it is funded and its scope extends far beyond literature.

In the 1980s the British Location Register broke new ground as a fully-funded project whose researchers travelled to inspect literary collections and to list them themselves in a standardised form. To put it crudely, what was new was that people were paid to go and list parts of other people's collections. The *Location Register of Twentieth-Century English Literary Manuscripts and Letters*, published in 1988, revealed for the first time the number of British institutions which collected literary manuscripts (several hundred of them) and gave information about complementary collections around the UK and Ireland and wonderfully improbable collection locations. Since 2003 the most up-to-date version of the Location Register has lived on the web behind the alias [www.locationregister.com](http://www.locationregister.com).

The Location Register's example was followed by others - notably the Artists' Papers Register ([www.apr.ac.uk](http://www.apr.ac.uk)) and *Le répertoire national des manuscrits littéraires français du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, which has always generously acknowledged the inspiration which the British Location Register provided.

As the editor of the Location Register for over a quarter of a century, I am a biased witness, but I think it may be fair to affirm that the work of the Location Register began a process of bringing into more regular contact the British and Irish institutions which were building collections of literary archives.

In 2005 this process moved a huge step forward with the formation of GLAM (the Group for Literary Archives and Manuscripts), on the initiative of the enthusiastic literary archives team at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

The founding of GLAM reflected a belief that there was more to be gained in literary manuscripts work in the new century by adopting a collaborative starting-point than by having a competitive starting-point; much to be gained by sharing information and best practice in a systematic way; much to be gained by avoiding competition in collection-building as far as possible (especially avoiding competition in the auction room); together with a feeling that perhaps the crazy collecting scramble in modern English Literature which characterised the 1980s and 1990s (rather later in the UK, thus, than in the USA) was beginning to burn itself out.

Before setting out their “modest proposal” for the formation of GLAM, our Manchester pioneers looked for other models around the world. To their surprise, they could find no other such group in existence anywhere - certainly not in the English-speaking world. The Section for Literary Archives of the International Council on Archives seemed to have gone into abeyance. They concluded: “The absence of a professional network for those curating [literary] collections was a gap waiting to be filled”.

These are the admirable aims which GLAM in due course adopted (from the GLAM website - [archives.li.man.ac.uk/glam/glam1.html](http://archives.li.man.ac.uk/glam/glam1.html)) :

- To promote awareness and raise the profile of literary archives and manuscripts within the curatorial professions.
- To provide a support network for those who specialise in the field of literary archives and manuscripts, sharing information and giving advice.
- To create a framework for building partnerships to undertake inter-institutional projects relating to literary archives and manuscripts.
- To encourage a collective approach to particular aspects of literary archives and manuscripts stewardship.
- To establish a literary archives and manuscripts network for the purposes of communicating with the wider literary community.
- To develop ways of encouraging and enabling research and learning by developing partnerships with a wide range of audiences in the literary community.
- To encourage cross domain working with rare book librarians, museum curators and others working with collections connected to those in the literary community.
- To engage in dialogue, within the British Isles and internationally, with major institutions, agencies, and organisations with regard to the stewardship of literary archives and manuscripts.

The GLAM team has also provided some good basic definitions of what is meant by “literary” in a manuscripts context:

- Poetry
- The novel
- Other forms of fiction (including short stories and novellas)
- Other prose writing, such as essays and letters by or relating to 'literary' figures
- Writing for drama, in the theatre, or for radio, television and film
- Life writing, including literary biography, autobiography and self-representation
- The writing of criticism (both theoretical and practical) relating to creative writing, including editing, reviewing and the histories of literature
- The process of publishing or otherwise supporting the production and dissemination of literature

And also the characteristic phases of literary manuscripts themselves

- Pre-compositional phase: notes, sketches, drawings, work plans, notebooks, marginalia, annotations.
- Compositional phase: rough drafts, reworkings, corrected fair copies.
- Pre-publication phase: reworkings of manuscript and definitive manuscript.
- Post-compositional phase: author's proof copies, editor's proofs, collated proofs, other production records.
- Post-publication phase: author's annotated editions of a published work.

Since 2005, GLAM has conducted an important survey of its members to understand what they are collecting and why; how much money they have been able to spend (this information is kept confidential); problems, issues and attitudes of its members. It organised a successful conference on the subject of Access. It has member meetings with opportunities for general working discussions (benefitting from the fact that the UK is a very small country). It has set up a Cataloguing Working Party to do some practical

work on appraisal, authorities, standards and good practice. And it has made considerable progress in cooperation on collection-building.

In an article about British and Irish literary archives in the most recent issue of *Archives* (collaboratively authored by four GLAM members under the title ‘Magical and meaningful’) we wrote:

There is no national collecting policy, but there are professional understandings. No-one, outside of the University of Reading and Trinity College Dublin, is now likely to start a new Samuel Beckett collection, for example. If further Charles Causley papers came onto the market, it seems certain that colleagues would now be more likely to notify the University of Exeter than to think of bidding themselves. This is real progress, a huge advance on where we were a quarter of a century ago, and a genuine platform for further advances in both cooperation and awareness.<sup>1</sup>

GLAM is a success-story with ambitions and intentions matching exactly the theme of this RBMS conference. Its success came to the attention of a group of archivists at the Beinecke Library, who then took the initiative to set up the Group for Literary Archives and Manuscripts (North America). We all like a good acronym, and GLAM was just too appealing not to copy (they did courteously ask permission, I should add). Their web-address, established in February 2010, is beautifully simple: [glamna.org](http://glamna.org).

The goals of GLAM (North America) are as follows:

- Provide those who create, manage, and use literary archives with a forum for collaboration and discussion, both online and at meetings. Organize symposia in order to bring together members and other interested parties.
- Foster partnerships across institutional and professional boundaries in order to facilitate collaborative research and joint-projects pertinent to literary archives.
- Provide resources for those who create, manage, and use literary archives, in order to ensure appropriate appreciation for, and custodianship of, literary archives.
- Address legal and ethical issues, such as copyright, privacy, and cultural property, as they relate to literary archives. Partner with national and international organizations in various related fields.

The UK version of GLAM has attracted a membership of over 120. Although it is early days for GLAM (NA), their membership is already over a hundred, and I hope that those of you with literary collections will consider giving it your support.

As its first substantial project GLAM (NA) is working towards a “how to use” manual for literary archives. The first phase of this, a user-study at the Beinecke Library, is under way and a report-back will be given at a New England Archivists meeting on 27 August 2010. There will then be a GLAM (NA) meeting, with invited speakers, in November in John Betjeman’s second home, the University of Victoria, British Columbia.

The “how to use” manual is also on the work-programme of the UK GLAM and this will be discussed at a meeting of the two GLAMs in London next week. We want to avoid duplicated effort and if the UK GLAM can borrow and adapt the work begun by GLAM (NA), so much the better.

GLAM and GLAM (NA) are good national models of collaboration. Is it possible that their definitions and their aspirations could help to bring about a wider international collaboration in literary manuscripts? The early indications are positive.

The vehicle for international collaboration exists, in the International Council on Archives (ICA), which is a splendidly representative body, with members in no fewer than 190 countries, and an Executive Board with a Chair from Holland, a secretariat based in Paris, and leading Executive members from countries as diverse as Fiji, Senegal, Algeria, Trinidad, Curacao, Vietnam, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Australia, Switzerland, Austria and Finland, as well as the USA and the UK.

At the Executive Board meeting in Tamanrasset, in the Algerian Sahara, June 2009, I was asked to investigate the possibility of bringing back to life the moribund Section for Literary Archives of ICA - drawing on the good experiences of GLAM in the UK. At the following Executive Board meetings in Malta (November 2009) and Seoul (two weeks ago - ICA does meet in very varied places), I was able to report, slightly to my surprise, that I was getting excellent and wide-ranging backing for this new collaborative venture.

For the Section to succeed, it would need to have a wide international acceptance, especially from outside the English-speaking world, and that is starting to happen. We have recruited into membership literary archives specialists in Israel, Mexico, Russia, Trinidad, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Spain and Senegal. There are challenges for us in respect of countries where literary manuscripts are usually held in libraries. Although many university libraries are in membership of ICA, very few public or special libraries join. In fact the Section for Literary Archives is a useful reminder to ICA as a whole that there are many important archival collections not held in archives offices.

There are particular difficulties with French literary manuscripts, because many of the literary collections in France are held in the public libraries of French towns and cities. There are good examples of this in Grenoble and Rouen. Although the university in Grenoble is named after the novelist Stendhal, his literary papers are in the Bibliothèque municipale de Grenoble, and the literature students at the Université Stendhal go to the public library to conduct their research on Stendhal’s manuscripts. Similarly the great collection of literary manuscripts of Flaubert is in the Bibliothèque municipale de Rouen. The Centre Flaubert at the Université de Rouen is doing excellent work with its electronic edition of the letters and other digital resources, but all the original manuscripts belong to the city’s public library.

France is in fact the one country which we have found to be going against the tendency for literary manuscripts to be in unguessable locations. The network of French public libraries has long seen it as part of its remit to collect the literary papers of local

authors. So the papers of Sainte-Beuve are in the public library at Boulogne-sur-Mer; the papers of Roger Vailland similarly in his home town of Bourg-en-Bresse; the papers of Marcel Aymé are in the Bibliothèque municipale de Dole; the papers of Alfred Jarry in the town of Laval, where he was born; a large collection of papers of Valéry Larbaud can be found in the Bibliothèque municipale de Vichy. I have chosen these further examples because they are not great cities like Rouen or Grenoble. Dozens of fairly small French towns have fine collections of literary manuscripts of local authors. A challenge for our new Section will be to interest them in our ICA activities.

The new Section for Literary Archives also has to find a way to involve the museums, writers' houses and private foundations which I mentioned at the beginning of this talk. These are serious challenges.

Nonetheless the Section for Literary Archives (ICA-SLA) has returned to life. Our determination is that it will be a Section characterised by projects and work-programmes rather than pleasant gatherings. It will be something of a "virtual" Section. But I hope it will get things done.

There are a number of projects in view. Work has already begun on an international directory of repositories holding literary manuscripts, which is how I have learned so much about French public libraries and Japanese literary museums.

Another possible project involves identifying literary archives which are to be found outside their country of origin. I would want to ensure that this piece of work is conducted in a neutral and informative way, so that it is of benefit both to the countries where the authors were born or lived and to the countries where their papers are now housed.

We have also been asked to consider so many other projects - ranging from a survey of writers' houses to work on born-digital literary papers and, in particular, a collaborative enterprise on international copyright - that I have had to move to leaven the enthusiasm with a request for patience and realism (and I hate doing that), because we are all volunteers with our own real jobs to do.

I would like to finish by inviting RBMS members to contribute to the new ICA-SLA venture. If your institution is in membership of ICA, you could become its literary representative (no cost, no obligations). I should be especially grateful for the help of RBMS members who could offer information about collecting institutions in the USA or elsewhere and about US collections of non-US literary authors. And (given that I am trying to avoid expensive international meetings, especially by joining up with meetings already programmed), I would like to think that at some future time a meeting of the ICA-SLA could actually take place as part of an RBMS summer conference. In collaboration.

## FOOTNOTE

1 Fran Baker, Jessica Gardner, Chris Sheppard and David Sutton: 'Magical and meaningful: thirty years of literary manuscript collecting in the UK and Ireland, 1979-2009.' *Archives* 35 (no. 122), April 2010, pp.21-27.