

Case Study: LMA

Summary

London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) developed a relationship with Standard Chartered Bank which led to two and a half year funding.

Details

Unsurprisingly, as part of the City of London Corporation, LMA receives many deposit requests from businesses based in the City or pan-London area, offering high quality material. LMA has increasingly taken a strategic approach to engaging and working with business depositors.

According to Richard Wiltshire, Senior Archivist for Business Archives, this is partly out of necessity in the current funding climate, but also recognises the greater value that can accrue to both LMA and its users, as well as for the business itself in terms of branding, marketing and communications.

Richard says that corporate interest in heritage tends to be cyclical and linked to business performance. 'Standard Chartered Bank had gone through big changes but in 2009/2010 they were commissioning a history to be written for their anniversary. They offered to deposit more material and provided an endowment.'

'Our short proposal led to a partnership agreement which funded the equivalent of three archivists for two and a half years to work on over 330 linear shelf metres of records, as well as an additional project to digitise all the photographic images in the collection to support the new book.'

'Later, one of the Bank's facilities managers who was interested in history arranged a meeting for staff association and pensioners, and we did a temporary loan of items back.'

Richard points to several advantages to working with a corporate partner. 'They can sometimes be a lot less effort than making standard funding applications for collections. They trust you as the professionals'. Though he warns, 'it might more difficult if a business wanted to micro-manage the process and risks'.

He advises that you need to understand how the business is structured and who to go to about the archive and funding. 'It might be Marketing, Secretariat or Legal rather than the person responsible for the archive.'

We're getting a lot of general researchers using the collection who are loving it.'

Lessons

- Richard suggests you can 'think about using anniversaries to target and build relationships with businesses'.
- 'Look for other opportunities within the business and additional activities you can offer them'.