

# UKeiG Information Manager of the Year 2016: In Her Own Words

As told to Dion Lindsay  
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Marlize Palmer was presented with the 2016 UKeiG Information Manager of the Year Award at CILIP's AGM held at the Leeds City Museum on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> September. She is the Welsh Government's Head of Information and Archive Services and Departmental Records Officer.

Nicky Whitsed, recently retired UKeiG Chair, represented the Group at the AGM and Dion Lindsay interviewed Marlize for eLucidate a few weeks later.

Here is an extract from her glowing nomination:

*"In the wake of the Cabinet Office review conducted by Sir Alex Allen into Government digital archive keeping last year Marlize persuaded the Welsh Government to trial the use of Nuix, a leading eDiscovery tool, and in four weeks in Spring 2016 her team proved the acquisition's worth by indexing over twenty-two million items and providing nearly seventy thousand items for solicitors to review for national enquiries. Later, in a pilot to test transferring born-digital records to The National Archives (TNA), Marlize's Historical Review and Appraisal Team worked with TNA to design its new digital transfer model which is now seen as a government-wide workable solution."*

## Introduction

The information management profession in government is changing fast. The emergence of big data, social media, cloud and mobile-based services presents massive challenges and opportunities for information professionals and librarians working in government and at the Welsh Government in particular.

Information work is often complex and varied; the distinction between primary and secondary information sources hardly exists in a digital environment.

We (Welsh Government IM professionals) are also acutely aware that our users have different information needs, different confidence levels and different practical requirements at different stages of the development of a policy or bill. It requires a bespoke and personalised service package at a time when budgets are being reduced year on year. Our information professionals are increasingly using analytical tools (eDiscovery) to improve the "find-ability" and usability of valuable information.

First and foremost, as a special library, providing information to colleagues in the Welsh Government must support the Welsh Government's Civil Service core values: integrity,

honesty, objectivity and impartiality, by giving access to up-to-date and relevant information resources to support the machinery of government and in evidence-based policy making.

Expertise is one of the most important knowledge assets and largely resides in the heads of our employees. A large number of civil servants will be retiring in the next five years or so. Capturing this knowledge is both necessary and challenging, especially because the majority of existing approaches have not been designed to integrate with the organisation's working practices and culture.

It is therefore often difficult to stay focussed and not to "spread one to thin". Nevertheless, we aim to provide a modern, efficient and welcoming information service for all Welsh Government staff, and for all others with valid reasons to make use of the Welsh Government's library and archival collections and facilities, so enabling the Welsh Government to fulfil its statutory and strategic aims.

**Dion: What does it take to keep an organisation ahead of the curve in information management?**

We continually look for ways we could improve our products and services and make Welsh Government information available so that it can be re-purposed and shared with others for the benefit of the Welsh Government and the wider Welsh public sector. Innovation, continuous improvement and agility help us to deliver at the leading edge of library and information services.

It is vitally important that we understand the Welsh Government's business. We don't just need to know the sector, but also the threats and opportunities our organisation is facing. Understanding the perspectives of our users is also of vital importance: for example, asking our users what they did with the information that was provided for them and how useful it was, and we will continue to do so. These questions help us focus our services and the level at which we pitch our work and to align our services to meet the needs of our customers. There is no point in providing, for example, research briefs which users find too dense to read.

Brexit will require the Welsh Government to make policy both fast and well - and in some cases in new areas; and the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) places new auditable obligations on us to show that we are doing the job properly. It is clear that it will take some considerable time before the political process and the EU negotiations necessary to set Brexit in motion will be completed (or even provide any degree of clarity). Planning and finding Brexit-related solutions has and will continue to challenge information professions and the resources we have access to. Given the high degree of uncertainty, chances are there'll be more than one plan and short turn-around times to provide good and accurate information to support decision-making and the different issues and opportunities arising from the EU referendum decision. This might include information on a wide range of topics such as exchange rates, export and supply chain management, legislative issues, for example.

Knowing what our users know enables us to ensure our solutions match their information needs. Keeping up to date with trends also helps us predict what requests might be coming in the future and be prepared to drop services if they aren't of value to Welsh Government's ambitions.

A Library and Information Service such as ours has to build strategic relationships within the organisation, its service users and externally, to develop and implement effective strategies for our users in their policy, law making, CPD and research activities.

It is important to drive change by regularly reviewing practices and developments to ensure ongoing improvements.

**Dion: Your team has participated in many research projects over the years. Have you any lessons you can share with eLucidate readers?**

It's true: over the last ten years we've participated in a number of research projects in an effort to stay ahead of the information management curve. Some of these projects were successful and others were real "clangers". All of them helped us to learn some valuable skills and lessons. Some of the successful projects did not progress because of budget, technology, compliance or timing issues. Below are examples of some of the projects we participated in:

- Loughborough University (Dr Gillian Ragsdell and Prof Tom Jackson) - "Exploiting Email: Extracting Knowledge to Support Knowledge Sharing" and some elements of their "Email and stress" projects.
- In 2010/11 the Welsh Government's Information Management team engaged in a Digital Continuity Project with a research team from the University of Wales Newport (now Cardiff Metropolitan University) to conduct a Proof of Concept project. Guidance Software Inc. provided the eDiscovery software used by the research team. The aim of the project was to find out what "unstructured information" and records the Welsh Assembly held, where they were and to identify steps which could be put into place to ensure the digital continuity of unstructured information needed to do business and to dispose of information no longer needed. (1)
- Aberystwyth University - In 2012 we experimented using Archivematica (Open Source software) to capture and preserve the Welsh Government's presence on the Internet, including social media platforms.
- We participated in The National Archives' (TNA) Digital Records Infrastructure (DRI) Transfer Pilot between August 2014 and January 2015. The aim of the pilot was to develop the process by which digital records will be transferred to TNA in the future. The Welsh Language Board hybrid collection was selected, appraised, sensitivity reviewed and transferred as part of the pilot.

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<sup>1</sup> Palmer, Marlize and Vildalis, Stilianos (2011). Digital continuity at the Welsh Assembly Government: de-duplicating and classifying an unstructured email vault and shared drives. Presented at The Future of Electronic Information and Records management in the Public Sector Conference, 6 - 7 July 2011, Fielder Centre, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield

- We transferred a bilingual Welsh/English collection of Welsh Language Board (WLB) information and records as part of the pilot project to TNA. The series contains digital records, held on both our Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS), iShare, and shared drives, but also includes legacy paper files brought over to Welsh Government following the WLB merger in 2012. The paper files remain in hardcopy format, but have been registered onto iShare (with a digital identifier and metadata) in order to record and manage them.
- Before any records can be transferred to TNA, they must be appraised and selected based on their historical value and reviewed for sensitivity. Digital appraisal presents additional challenges due to the varying nature of these records, as well as massively increased volumes of information.
- Following the successful transfer in January and February 2015 of one thousand, seven hundred and forty nine megabytes of data, made up of fourteen digital files containing two hundred and thirty five digital documents (one hundred and eleven from the WLB shared drive, eighty nine from iShare, mixed media, and thirty five virtual iShare records), the Historical Review Team produced a report to consolidate the Welsh Government's findings from each stage of the pilot and provide a final overview of its successes and failures. We received CILIP's Government Information Group (Gig) Annual Award 2015 for this work.
- Website and social media archiving: working with an outsourced provider. This project was a result of our failed attempt at trying to use the Open Source software mentioned earlier. Archiving websites and social media gives organisations such as the Welsh Government the chance to provide access to legacy information that they may not necessarily want to keep on their "live" website. Web archives should be harvested in their original form and be capable of being delivered as they were on the live web, providing a record of web content as it was available at a specific date and time. When a website is archived, the context of the information it provides is maintained, meaning that users can view the information in the context in which it was originally presented. We are particularly interested in ensuring that we will be able to "playback" captured sites in their native format without crashing our [website](#). Work is ongoing.

We have also undertaken our own internal projects such as:

- A trial project to add information about two thousand nine hundred and ninety Ministerial Decisions was successfully completed. These records are now searchable in the Publications Catalogue. A project to add the remaining Ministerial Decisions (2007 - 2014) is nearing completion.
- Various scanning and digitisation projects were undertaken to make our collections more accessible. Some were more successful than others. Our latest project was the digitization of approximately nineteen thousand land reclamation images for upload onto our Library Management System. These images are a visual representation of a land reclamation programme in Wales, which resulted in major transformational change to the Welsh landscape, and to the well being of communities blighted by abandoned industrial sites. The project ensured that comprehensive records were preserved for re-use and research purposes. We are planning to invite Welsh Government staff to "crowd tag" these images to enrich

our rather limited cataloguing data. The digitisation of this data and how it has impacted knowledge discovery, storage, and retrieval is being evaluated.

### **Dion: Experimenting with new technologies**

I already mentioned our experiments using Open Source software. The failure to successfully embed Open Source software in our IT environment has led to the use of analytical tools (eDiscovery) to help us deal with the large volumes of both unstructured and structured information we manage and provide on a daily basis.

There are numerous current and emerging issues surrounding the “discovery” of information and knowledge which are evolving quickly and relentlessly, irrespective of the location or type of library model being used, for using analytical or eDiscovery tools to identify and extract e-records that are of interest to cross-cutting inquiries, Public Accounts Committees (PACs) overseeing government expenditure, internal investigations and to comply with the Public Records Act’s 20-Year rule.

In our case our eDiscovery tool helped us to manage information overload by the provision of processing facilities to enable the de-duplication and filtering of data; visualisation of the connections between data custodians; the processing, display and review of family groups of Electronically Stored Information or ESI files; and concept clustering to name but a few.

Having a tool, although not perfect, helps an information professional to search large volumes of digital evidence from a number of devices or systems, and adds the ability to sift, interpret and act upon in a rapid manner, thus improving information provision to the timescales our users demand. The tool also helped to identify relevant personal information, by the use of keywords, quickly despite there being large volumes of information. This is necessary to protect personal information and help with compliance with information management legislation such as the Data Protection Act.

The tool also helped us to answer inquirers’ requests efficiently, for example: “do you have any material dating back to xxxx?” It also enables us to produce high-level reports that can be generated regularly to monitor the overall digital collection.

Other activities that helped our librarians to keep up to date with developments in information management are networking via CILIP, Information and Records Management Society (IRMS), Committee for Departmental Librarians (CLD), NetIKX, [NGLIS](#) and the Association for Departmental Records Officers (DRO), to name but a few.

**Dion: Technically, civil servants working for the four nations are UK Civil Servants. Nevertheless, there are presumably differences from an Information Professional perspective between working for Welsh Government and Whitehall/Scottish Government/NI**

Wales is different. We are proud of ourselves in Wales as a small, smart and agile country. There are some of the same key legal and constitutional challenges facing us in Wales as in the UK and Europe. As Wales develops as a country with an emerging Parliament, with growing powers, as Scotland becomes increasingly autonomous and Northern Ireland pursues its own unique pathway, as London seeks greater powers and if there is a continued push for city regions, the opinion in Wales is that the UK constitutional structure is becoming increasingly incoherent. Our First Minister of Wales has repeatedly called for a Constitutional Convention to address some of these issues. As information professionals this is an interesting context to work in and deliver information services to support the Welsh Government to deliver its Programme for Government known as [“Taking Wales Forward.”](#)

Nevertheless, the Welsh Government’s information professionals are members of the UK government’s KIM profession. There is a lot of interaction and cooperation. For example, as Head of KIM in the Welsh Government I attend all KIM Leaders' Network Meetings. Welsh Government information professionals are also members of the various Task and Finish Groups and members of CILIP’s Government Information Group, and the Network of Government Library and Information Specialists. We also attend the GKIM profession’s yearly conference.

**Dion: A lot of your work outside research projects involves supporting Bill teams and lawyers**

The Welsh Government’s librarians undertake a significant amount of work to support our legislative programme such as the identification of consequential amendments and legislative mapping for proposed Welsh Bills and the implementation of Welsh Acts. This legal information retrieval work, for example, involved finding and identifying legislation relevant to:

- Pupil referral units
- The revision of Water Strategy for Wales
- Specific clauses and provisions in Bill debates

Legal discovery work undertaken by Welsh Government librarians aims to help policy colleagues get up to speed with the breadth and complexity of the legislative landscape, arming them with an understanding of the extent of the proposed changes, and providing information to help with early consultation with our Legal Services.

We are increasingly asked to assist with specialist consequential work. For example, we worked with the Bill teams to identify the impacts of the Social Services & Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014, and to identify consequentials in primary and secondary legislation. This work has contributed to the creation of the following Orders:



- The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (Consequential Amendments) (Secondary Legislation) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 No. 351 (W. 109)
- The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (Consequential Amendments) and Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Wales) Regulations 2016 No. 216 (W. 85)
- The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (Consequential Amendments) (Secondary Legislation) Regulations 2016 No. 211 (W. 84) - This order amounts to >60 pages of consequential amendments.

We also arrange training sessions for our lawyers and Bill teams to familiarise themselves with electronic resources and to carry out more efficient searches.

To be able to continue to provide a range of searches to help policy officials and lawyers understand the extent, and to identify, consequential amendments that will be required through the introduction of new Welsh Acts, regular refreshment training is provided. For example, Emily Allbon from the City Law School has been identified via CILIP training to help us improve our legal skills.

**Dion: How does working with The National Archives pan out in this context? What can be achieved for users and the UK?**

The National Archives (TNA) at Kew acts as the official archive and publisher for the UK government and for England and Wales. TNA is responsible for the records of central government and the courts as set out in the Public Records Act 1958 (amended 1967). Public records generated in Wales (both Public Records and Welsh Public Records) are currently the responsibility of TNA. The Government of Wales Act 2006 s146-148 defines Welsh Public Records and makes provision for the Welsh Ministers to assume responsibility for these records. TNA performs the Public Records Office (PRO) function for Wales based on the requirements of the Public Records Act 1958. Records of bodies wholly or mainly concerned with Wales, which are subject to the public records legislation, are transferred to TNA when they reach twenty years old. Some Welsh public records, for example, hospital records, are retained in Wales, mainly in local authority services, which are inspected and approved as “places of deposit” by TNA, working in collaboration with the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD) of the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government’s information professionals work closely with The National Archives on information management matters. The paper and digital records of Welsh Government and affiliated bodies (2) (such as Natural Resources Wales) with long-term preservation value are currently transferred to TNA. TNA and WG’s relationship is formalise by a [Concordat](#) which sets out a framework within which officials will continue to develop relationships between the two parties. TNA’s service is provided free of charge. On an annual basis, Welsh Government staff appraise over one thousand paper files for archival preservation to comply with the “20-Year Rule” using the Welsh Government Operational Selection Policies (OSPs) - available on TNA’s website - to inform selection

<sup>2</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/publications/140312sponsoredbodiesen.doc?lang=en>

decisions. Since 2014 the Welsh Government also transfers a mixture of different digital media to TNA for long-term preservation. Only a small percentage (between 1% and 2%) of Welsh Government records go on to be selected by the National Archives for transfer and permanent preservation.

**Dion: Knowledge Management is at last beginning to emerge as a very visible field in Government - what kind of impact is that having on your service?**

Knowledge management is very much on our agenda. Readers might be aware that government is concerned with losing around 50% of its knowledge and corporate memory by 2018 because a significant number of civil servants will be retiring and/or taking voluntary exit. The Cabinet Office has tasked Civil Service Learning to look into ways of capturing the knowledge in people's heads before they leave the Civil Service and has expressed a specific interest in the Welsh Government's HeadStart project and toolkit. Our HeadStart project was put in place to capture the knowledge of the one thousand staff (approximately 15% of the workforce) who left the Welsh Government over a fourteen month period around 2010/12. At the time we estimated that the first five hundred to leave had eight thousand three hundred years of experience between them. Support for the programme stopped in 2013. We are currently working to refresh, update and re-instate the capture of the institutional memory of our aging workforce who are close to retirement. Data analytical tools might help in "marrying up" tacit and explicit information.

**Dion: What conferences and actual/potential CPD activities have caught your eye?** CILIP, CILIP Cymru and IMRS conferences are always interesting and worth attending. Welsh Government IM staff members are encouraged to present at these conferences as part of their CPD.

We also attend the annual CILIP Government Information Group GKIM conferences. ICKM 2017, the 19th International Conference on Knowledge Management was held in London on January 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 and the IRMS 2017 conference will be held in Glasgow. The central theme for the IRMS Conference will focus on driving business transformation and how to become a bona-fide "Agent of Change" within your own organisation. This resonates with our current IM environment.

[Dr Gillian Ragsdell's](#) Knowledge Management Research Group seminars are always interesting and worth keeping an eye on.

There are a number of Knowledge Management conferences that look relevant and interesting, for example, the 12th International Forum on Knowledge Assets Dynamics (IFKAD 2017) on the theme: "Knowledge Management in the 21st Century: Resilience, Creativity and Co-creation". The Forum will take place in St. Petersburg (Russia) on 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017 at the Graduate School of Management, St Petersburg University. The only problem is that funding does not exist to attend.



**Dion: What final message would you like to leave our readers with?**

One of the things we haven't talked about is CILIP's AGM at Leeds City Museum, which I attended for the award ceremony. It was very friendly, with pastries and bacon rolls at the pre-AGM breakfast, and everyone talked. My normal travelling is between Cardiff and London: it was great to see all the interesting things happening in the profession in Leeds and how dedicated people are, how many unsung heroes there are. A lot of the other awards were for work being done in the community, which really changes people's lives. As a career special librarian it's very easy to forget how broad the profession is, and so it was great to meet such interesting people.

As for the future: like every team in the civil service, we're having to do more with less. One way that will affect us is we will have to do more analysis for the top policy advisers. Where we used to be able to give them twenty articles, we'll need to be able to give them just five and explain why these are the important five to read to brief the minister. And the whole "fake news" thing (See UKeiG's [White Paper](#)) makes us as professionals more valuable than ever in doing the background research about where our information comes from, what the context is, and how reliable it is. So in government as in the rest of the profession, our skills are going to become more valuable and sophisticated as time goes on.