

Case Study: Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives



In June 2018, Archivist Phil Astley first expressed an interest in measuring the economic value of activity through the use of the (Archives, Libraries and Museums Alliance (ALMA-UK) Economic impact toolkit at Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives. The Archives themselves are based in Aberdeen across two sites, with the purpose of collecting, preserving and making publicly accessible the records of the two local authorities as well as privately deposited records of historical importance to the north east of Scotland.

For the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives, Phil stated that his initial motivation was to get an idea of the economic impact they offer to local areas. He continued,

'Local authorities are under a lot of pressure to generate income and services continually have to justify their existence. We need to be able to demonstrate that the service has a financial as well as a cultural impact.'

Prior to using the toolkit, the archive service had not used any other tools to measure economic impact. For them, any previous measurements have been of a more qualitative nature as **they perceived measuring the economic impact as something which would be quite difficult and challenging**. The extent of their measuring of impact, Phil suggested, was the measuring of particular local authority KPIs, recording visitor numbers each year, the budget for productions and the social media audience. The economic toolkit has superseded the data the archives were previously able to obtain as it *'did the calculations automatically.'* It has also proved not be difficult or challenging, with the toolkit.

When asked whether he had any reservations about using the toolkit, Phil said that he did not, but had been slightly concerned with the level of detail that may be required, in particular whether he would have to disclose staff salaries in a way that would reveal the salaries of individual members of staff. This concern, Phil said, was alleviated however as soon as he saw the toolkit.

When he had first sight of the toolkit, **Phil stated that he felt 'very confident' using it as it appeared straight forward and easy to use**. The only concern was how he would be able to attribute different elements of funding and impact through the toolkit. The toolkit, though, enabled him to see how easily he could include all the data he needed and how it could be interpreted.

For Phil, the most useful element of the toolkit was the final 'Overall impact' tab, and within this, the figure calculated for gross value added. With these calculations, **he has been able to provide greater concrete evidence both within the Archives' cluster of museums, galleries and archives as well as within funding applications for future endeavours**. Overall, Phil was very positive about his experience using the economic toolkit, and he intends to continue using it for the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives as well as encouraging other archives, galleries and museums to use it too so that the sector as a whole can create a more concrete evidence base.