



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

US
University of Sussex
Sussex Humanities Lab

BBC Monitoring Collection AHRC Research Network
BBC Monitoring and Digital Research

Wednesday 20 January 2016

Sussex Humanities Lab, University of Sussex

Workshop Leaders: Bill Thompson and Alban Webb

Programme

10:30am Registration
Tea and coffee will be served on arrival

11:00am Introduction

11:15am Session 1: Making it Digital

A creative engagement with the BBC Monitoring Collection: exploring and making digital content from a selection of the archival holding. Curated by Bill Thompson.

1:00pm Lunch

2:00pm Session 2: Digital Futures

Reflections on the academic value of the archive

- Professor Hilary Footitt (University of Reading): Translation and Open Source Intelligence
- Professor Jean Seaton (University of Westminster): BBC Monitoring as an Institution
- Dr Alban Webb (University of Sussex): BBC Monitoring and the Cold War
- Suzanne Bardgett (Imperial War Museum): BBC Monitoring and the Second World War

3:00pm Roundtable Discussion

Shaping the Future of the Archive: digital challenges and opportunities

4:30pm Close

BBC/BBC Monitoring documents are copyright of the BBC or of third parties and may not be copied without permission.

BBC Monitoring and Digital Research

This one-day international workshop will focus on the digital potential of the BBC Monitoring Collection. Building on the work of the previous workshops in this series, it will examine the claims made for the academic and public value of the archive in a digital context. In doing so, it is intended to map some of

the critical challenges and opportunities attending the future of the archive as an accessible resource. The workshop will involve a mixture of activities where participants will “make” digital content – using a corpus of archival material – alongside discussions directed at mapping the contours of future academic interest in the BBC Monitoring Collection.

Key Questions

- How might academic communities, from a diverse range of disciplines, benefit from using the archive in a digital public space: what are the intellectual and technical challenges of digitisation and how might digital tools augment and enhance the archive?
- In what ways do computational techniques and cultures inform and frame our understanding of the archive as an academic resource?
- How should digital curatorial practices be deployed to enhance, sustain and preserve the archive over the long term?
- How might we articulate the need for further research on the Collection and what funding opportunities might enable this?

Background note

IWM (Imperial War Museums) has been granted funding by the Arts and Humanities Research Council to address the potential value to academics of the BBC Monitoring Service Transcript Collection. The Research Network project, led by Suzanne Bardgett (Head of Research and Academic Partnerships, IWM) and Professor Jean Seaton (University of Westminster), is hosting a series of workshops from June 2015 to January 2016 to bring together experts in translation studies, twentieth century history, media and propaganda history, war studies and digital humanities. The network is the first major initiative to explore this publicly-funded asset.

The BBC Monitoring Service was established in 1939 and was initially accommodated near Evesham, Worcestershire. While it was initially intended to simply feed information to the BBC’s own news desks, the Ministry of Information quickly realised the benefits of monitoring foreign broadcasts, and began using BBC Monitoring’s output as a continuous supply of ‘open-source intelligence’.

BBC Monitoring expanded rapidly, and saw thousands of international radio programmes, in over 30 different languages, monitored, translated and transcribed around the clock.

The collection consists of some 15 million pages of typed transcripts, documenting international radio outputs during the Second World War and the Cold War. It comprises the raw, unedited documents transcribed from live radio broadcasts, as well as the working index, ‘Monitoring Reports’ and ‘Daily Digests of World Broadcasts’ – the summaries that were circulated to government departments and media outlets.

The first workshop – on Translation and Intelligence – brought several dozen former Monitors – highly trained linguists – back to BBC Monitoring’s headquarters at Caversham, bringing a ‘witness testimony’ dimension to the project. The second addressed BBC Monitoring as an Institution and was attended by a number of users of the service, including former diplomats, government specialists, and journalists as well as academics. The third and fourth workshops focused on 20th-century history, foreign policy and international relations, by reflecting on how the open-source intelligence gathered by the BBC was distributed and used at the time of its collection. The third workshop considered how the BBC Monitoring Transcript Collection could potentially enrich and develop existing historical narratives, and offer new analyses around key events and themes during the Cold War, and the fourth workshop looked at the collection in relation to the Second World War.