



the national archives

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

A2A: access to the archives of England for family historians

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A2A: access to the archives of England for family historians

- The archives network context
- Tour of A2A (Access to Archives)
- Questions?

Access to Archives

- Primary research access traditionally through paper finding aids (calendars, indexes, lists or catalogues)
- More recently, electronic catalogue databases available locally or on the web
 - Eg SEAX at Essex Record Office; Durham Record Office database; Bodleian Library's On-line Catalogue of Western Manuscripts; British Library resources

Restricted access to archives?

- Until recently:
 - Researchers had to travel to repositories to view finding aids
 - Paper catalogues - not necessarily indexed
 - Electronic catalogues had to be searched one at a time

The National Archives Network

There can be no higher priority for archives than the creation of this collaborative electronic network, overcoming the limitations of geography, crossing the many archival sectors and creating a truly unified digital directory or encyclopaedia of British historical documents.

British Archives: the way forward (2000)

What does it do for researchers?

- Reduces or removes the need to travel – finding aids available online in the library, the internet café or at the desk at home
- Powerful search engines enable researchers to find sources in new ways
- Quickly puts researchers in contact with archives repositories

Strands of the Network

- UK wide (TNA):
 - ARCHON, NRA and other resources
 - The Catalogue and other resources
- HE/FE:
 - Archives Hub
 - AIM25
 - Other more specialised projects

Strands of the Network

- National:
 - SCAN – the Scottish Archives Network (with ScottishDocuments.com, etc)
 - Archives Network Wales
 - For England: **A2A (Access to Archives)**

A2A: the background

- First online presence in 2000 (launched 2001)
- A2A programme currently led by The National Archives and the British Library
- Funded by HM Treasury, Heritage Lottery Fund, partners, contributors and others
- 381 repositories involved so far
- Over 7 million catalogue entries so far (in c 86,000 catalogues)
- Popular with users: 5.5m searches and 12.8 million downloads

A2A: the catalogues

- 21 archive categories:
 - Institutional archives
 - Local government and the courts
 - The churches
 - Businesses
 - Central government: India Office
 - Family and estate archives
 - Personal papers, notably scientists and politicians

A2A: the catalogues

- A wide range of subjects including (for example):
 - References to individuals and families
 - Development of landholding and estates from the mediaeval period
 - The British in India and elsewhere
 - Science and politics, 19th-20th centuries
 - Local government and administration in London and the English counties, 16th-20th centuries

A2A: the catalogues

- Not a full description of all archives in England:
 - Limited or no coverage of repositories with existing Web catalogues, eg:
 - Essex Record Office
 - Durham County Record Office
 - TNA at Kew
 - Catalogue selection based on local and regional priorities
 - Some catalogues more detailed than others

A2A: the website

- Evaluated by users:
 - Two focus groups
 - Three rounds of evaluation so far
- URL: www.a2a.org.uk (for now)
 - Changing to www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a in March

Welcome to A2A

The A2A database contains catalogues describing archives held throughout England and dating from the 900s to the present day. Click the Search button to [search these catalogues](#).

A2A does not yet offer a full description of *all* the archives in England, but it is regularly updated, so **revisit often** for newly-included catalogues.

Did you watch [Who do you think you are?](#) on BBC2? - See [A2A Resources!](#)

Usage since launch: **5.4 million** searches / **12.7 million** catalogue downloads



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What's New?

[RSS](#)

The A2A database was last updated in **December 2004** and now contains **7.3 million** catalogue entries from [381 record offices](#) and other repositories.

For more details see the list of catalogues which are [New This Month](#) or see the [latest news](#) from the Central Team.

For information on what to look out for in the future, see [A2A Projects in Progress](#).

