

coalition

June 2019 The GMCDP Archive Edition



Our history: disabled people's campaigns

Coalition, the official magazine of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People, aims to act as a forum for debate, analysis, and expression of opinion on all issues relating to disabled people.

Coalition does not knowingly publish any material which is offensive or demeaning to other oppressed groups of people. All material published is subject to the approval of the GMCDP Magazine Working Group.

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The Editor

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Did you know ... there are 166 saved versions of GMCDP’s website saved from 2005 to 2019 on the Internet Archive – www.archive.org	

Acknowledgements

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Editorial Comment

This Coalition is not like our usual magazine. It is being produced to coincide with the launch of GMCDP's Archive – which has been more than 15 years in the making since its conception in 2003.

So that you do not feel Coalition has metamorphosed into a totally different being, our favourite satirical commentator is back with a reflection on the past 30 years of Scorpio, and the redoubtable Crippen has also created a cartoon for us again.

Beth Astridge from National Archives brings an overview of the current state of archives in the UK in terms of disabled people's representation. This will, hopefully, encourage us to 'get archiving' to make sure that the evidence of our lives, campaigning and hard work are preserved for current and future generations to discover.

Archivist, Larysa Bolton, gives us very useful and helpful practical information about how to start creating an archive.

Bringing a personal perspective, Tony Baldwinson shares with us his experience of being an 'amateur' archivist – although the word 'amateur' only refers to the fact that Tony is not paid for the archives he has collated / catalogued, not the quality of his work!

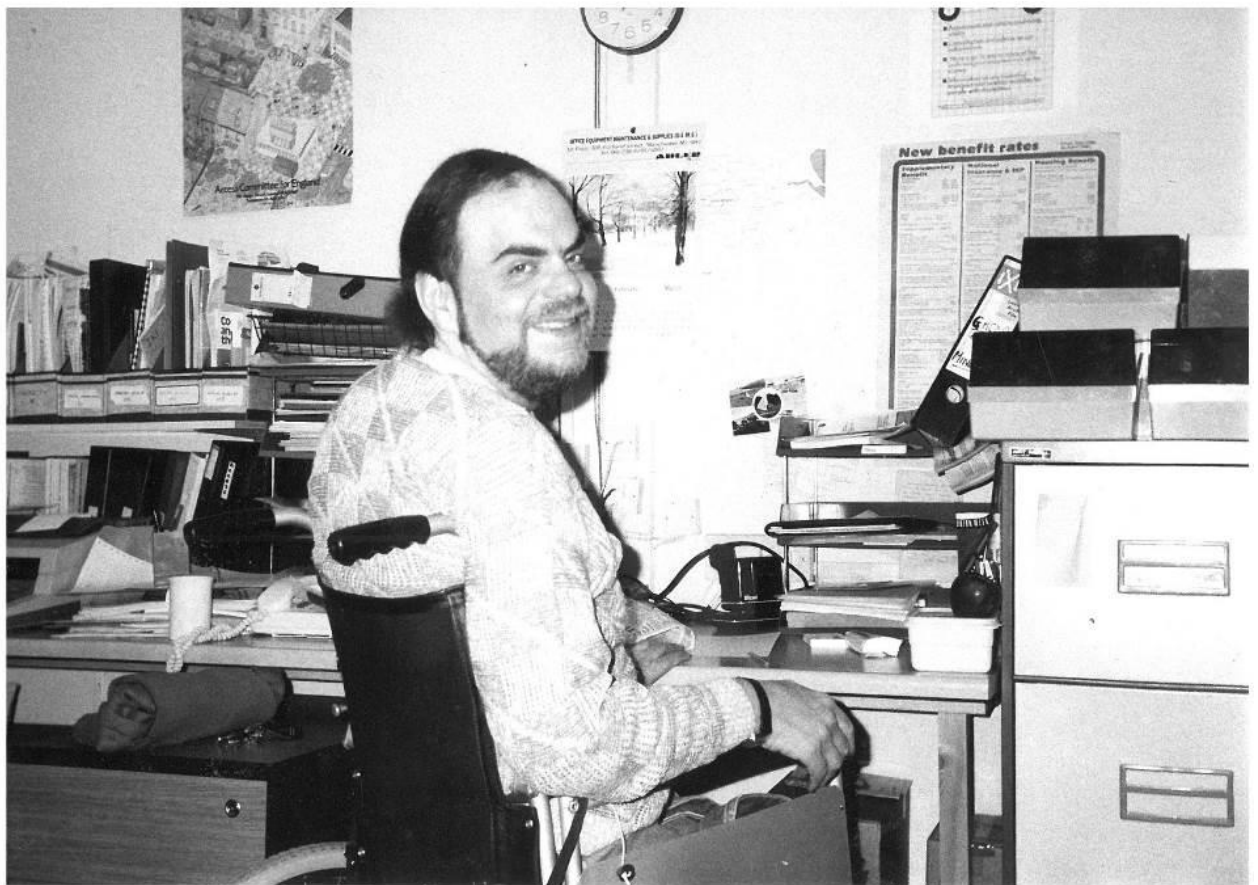
In a second contribution by Larysa Bolton, she considers how the focus of archives could shift from paper to people, reaching out to communities so that potential

archives are not lost. This is followed by a response from me, this magazine's editor and Archive Worker at GMCDP.

Finally, we have an article about the GMCDP Archive, in which we share with you just a tiny fraction of items we hold. We cannot, here, give justice to the exciting and fascinating material in this collection. This is only a flavor, which we hope will whet your appetite.

So ... read on and enjoy!

Linda Marsh, Guest Editor.



Ian Stanton, Information Worker

The Sting



Scorpio – 30 years on

In this thought-provoking article, Scorpio reflects on themes covered in these commentaries over the last 30 years.

Scorpio first appeared in Coalition Magazine in 1988 and has been a regular feature ever since. The original author had recently started working for Manchester City Council and gained access to a whole host of information that had previously been denied to both the Coalition and disabled people in general.

It's hard to imagine today just how sparse information relevant to disabled people was; no internet, very few disabled people's publications and almost no coverage in the mainstream media. What became available, via the Council, was access to various professional journals and publications that very much focused on disabled people as clients or users of services, as well as internal documents and reports.

To protect the author from the possibility of disciplinary action the pseudonym Scorpio was adopted. There have been three Scorpions over the last 30 years; Mark and Ian for five years each and yours truly for the rest.

Scorpio has covered an eclectic mix of topics over the years but certain themes have regularly featured: government (national and local) policy concerning disabled people, charities, access barriers, the Disabled People's Movement and humorous stories.

The Disabled People's Archive at Manchester's Central Library includes the complete collection of Coalition magazines and Scorpio articles. What follows is my overview of the last 30 years.



Government Failure

From Thatcher to May (via Major, Blair, Brown and Cameron's ConDem Coalition) very little has changed for many disabled people. We are still the poorest, worst educated and least employed group of people in society; with the added bonus of having the lowest life-expectancy.

This is despite the Disability Discrimination Act, Equality and Human Rights Act, various Commissions and Committees, initiatives and gimmicks (2-ticks, disability confident etc.), assessments, consultations, studies and reports.

No government chose to harness the knowledge and expertise that we were able to offer via the Disabled People's Movement that emerged in the 1980s. At best government simply side-lined disabled people's organisations, whilst at worst they created a deliberate

“hostile environment” and forced the closure of the overwhelming majority of our groups by removing grants and contracts.

Unlike central government, some local authorities did actively engage with, and support the development of, disabled people's organisations. Innovative, creative initiatives and partnerships were developed that delivered major gains in employment and improving access to the built environment, for example.

But it wasn't long before even the “progressive councils” stopped working with disabled people's organisations and either sought control-through-contract, or just cut funding completely. There was also a view that “we’ve done disability” and it was time to move on to the next big issue.

Many of the gains that were made in the 1980s/90s have been reversed in the last decade.

Who would believe that in 1988 the Department of Health and Social Security actively sought to ensure that disabled people received the benefits that government deemed them entitled to?

Or that Manchester City Council publicly declared its ambition to become the Access Capital of Europe?

Parasite Charities - What's in a name?

The Cripple's Help Society (formerly the Donkey Rescue Society) became Disabled Living, the



Spastic Society (finally worked out how to protect its legacy funding) and became Scope and Leonard Cheshire gave up its Homes. Just three of the many disability charities that have changed their names over the last 30 years. What hasn't changed, in the vast majority of cases, is that they are still run by non-disabled people.

Many of the disability charities have also taken the opportunity to divest themselves of the residential homes, schools and other institutions that had become increasingly associated with allegations of abuse and scandals. No apologies, or professing "lessons learned", merely a new name and, undoubtedly a very expensive, new logo.

Income derived from the segregated services has been replaced by contracts to advise government, business, academia, etc. on disability issues.

The charities have once again stolen our voice, but this time they have also stolen our income. Whilst disabled people's organisations have been closing, the charities have been flourishing – despite the enormous losses some of them suffered in the financial crash of 2008 as a result of having millions invested in the Stock Market.



Access – still denied

Trains, trams, taxis, buses and planes have regularly featured over the years. Despite legal victories and seemingly endless "attitude-changing" campaigns it's

still a lottery for many disabled people seeking to travel.

Designs have improved and some barriers have been removed but ignorance and selfishness have worsened.

It may have been cold and uncomfortable in the old guards carriage but at least cases and prams were moved out of the way to make space for wheelchair users.

Access to pavements and the wider public realm also saw major changes for the better: dropped kerbs, removal of street clutter/obstacles, ramps, controlled-crossings and tactile paving for example. No sooner had we started to enjoy our independence than new, vibrant, exciting, sexy make-overs were called for. "Shared-use" was the new kid on the block – "shared" between pedestrians and cyclists but totally exclusionary for many disabled people; not unlike the early cycle ways that ran through the middle of pavements in Manchester.



It's a funny old world

Pre hostile-environment and scroungers it was actually possible to find humorous stories relating to disabled people. My favourite played out over 20 years.

A blind man sued his State claiming that his constitutional right to bear arms was denied by the refusal to issue him with a gun permit. The case wound its way through the legal system finally reaching the

Supreme Court. The case was upheld and a permit was duly issued. Following a number of incidents involving accidental gunshot injuries the permit was revoked. The State were keen to stress that the revocation was not due to visual impairment but as a result of alcoholism.



Controversy

Over the years Scorpio has received a number of complaints and three threatened writs.

The first was from Trinity Mirror and concerned an article published in the Dear Marje agony-aunt column. Marje had suggested that it was ok for a man to have an affair as his "overweight wife" was "too disabled to lead a normal, contented married life." She continued, "don't forget that poor disabled creature at home, clearly unable to control her need to gorge – as much a cripple as anyone you'll see in a wheelchair".

Scorpio merely pointed out that this was clearly in breach of the NUJ guidelines (ok with a few choice remarks of our own) and should be withdrawn.

Bob Monkhouse was also a tad irked by Scorpio's criticism of his attempts to prevent his learning impaired son from getting married.

Finally Leonard Cheshire Foundation took umbrage at comments made about the eponymous flyer and the charity. Despite a lot of bluster, no writs were actually served.

The future?

The only thing that hasn't changed over the last 30 years is the need for us to act collectively. Our greatest achievements came from discussion, debate and a determination to be as inclusive as possible.

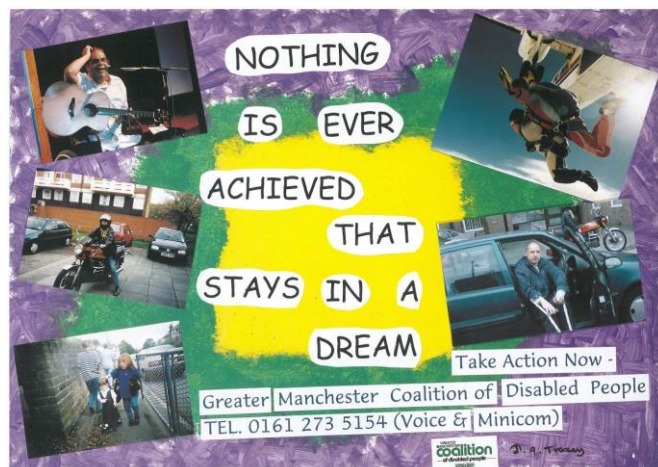
"We" and "our" are far more important than "I" or "me". Elitism and ego-tripping shouldn't be tolerated.

We mustn't allow hierarchies to develop or allow people to pit impairment against impairment.

Above all we should learn from our history and avoid re-inventing the wheel. That's not to say we shouldn't also acknowledge that mistakes were made.

Ten years ago Scorpio wrote,
"As long as there is inequality, injustice and people prepared to exploit disabled people there will be a need for Scorpio."

Til next time, "watch yer boots."



Disability Archives in the UK

In this article Beth Astridge, of The National Archives, gives an overview of how disabled people are currently represented in archives from a national perspective.

Within the UK there are many archives that aid research into the history of disability. This includes government records relating to policy on the treatment of disabled people, the records of charities and voluntary organisations that support disabled people, and medical archives relating to specific medical conditions.

The National Archives has produced a useful guide to researching disability archives which indicates some of the main types of record held both at the National Archives and elsewhere at the following web address:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/disability-history/>

These archives contain a great deal of useful information about the history of disability, but it has been noted that it is much more unusual to find archives that reflect the lived experience of disabled people living in the UK. Historically, the archive record has been created by government, doctors, schools, charities and committees, rather than by disabled people themselves.

Many archive services are working to rectify this imbalance with many actively seeking collections from the disability community and working more closely with disabled people to ensure collections adequately

represent all people in local communities. There is also ongoing activity to ensure that archives themselves are open and accessible to disabled people for research and engagement.

Recent projects

While I cannot hope to comprehensively cover all projects using archives about disability in this article, I can highlight a few to pique your interest!

Change Minds – Norfolk: Change Minds is a transformative archival adventure for people from North Norfolk who live with mental health conditions. The project engages local people with two digitised case books from the 19th century Norfolk County Asylum revealing stories about local heritage, mental health and identity. Participants in the project create oral histories and a web archive that remain online for all to see and use. <http://changeminds.org.uk/>

History of Place – Accentuate UK: The History of Place project was an HLF funded project that visited eight locations across the country to rediscover the lives, pictures and stories of disabled people.

Deaf and disabled people and others volunteered and participated in the project using the archives at each location to create blogs and turn the discoveries into digital stories. The archives were also used in displays and exhibitions at major museums including MShed in Bristol, the Museum of Liverpool and the V&A in London.

Games and digital resources were created and the project wrote toolkits on digital exhibitions and engaging

young deaf and disabled people with heritage.

<http://historyof.place/>

Disabled Britain on Film – BFI: The British Film Institute has recently launched a new collection of films from the BFI film archive and other regional collections that span a century of how disability has affected the lives of people across the UK, as represented on screen.

The ‘Disabled Britain on Film’ collection includes around 190 films showing how social attitudes to disability have changed over time, and show how we can learn from the past to inform the future.

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/collection/disabled-britain-on-film>

Recent acquisitions to archives in the UK relating to disability

The National Archives carries out an annual ‘Accessions to Repositories’ survey that collects information from over 300 archives in the UK about new collections coming into archives.

These collections are searchable on ‘Discovery’ – the National Archives catalogue which contains records of archives both within The National Archives and those held at archives across the UK.

The Accessions to Repositories information can also be searched by year and by theme - see

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/accessions/>.

In 2013 a new theme of 'Disability' was introduced – to summarise those archives relating to disability.

Highlights from the last few years include:

- In 2015 the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies received a collection of papers of the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation which includes various papers relating to the Paralympic Games and the International Paralympic Committee. (In 2018 this collection received a Scoping Grant from The National Archives and Pilgrim Trust funded Archives Revealed program to look at the collection in more detail and help plan for its future development.)
- In 2016, Manchester Archives and Local Studies received the Ian Stanton collection, who was a disabled activist, writer and musician (1980-1999).
- In 2017, Mosaic: Shaping Disability Services, Leicester (1900-2010) deposited their archives at the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office.

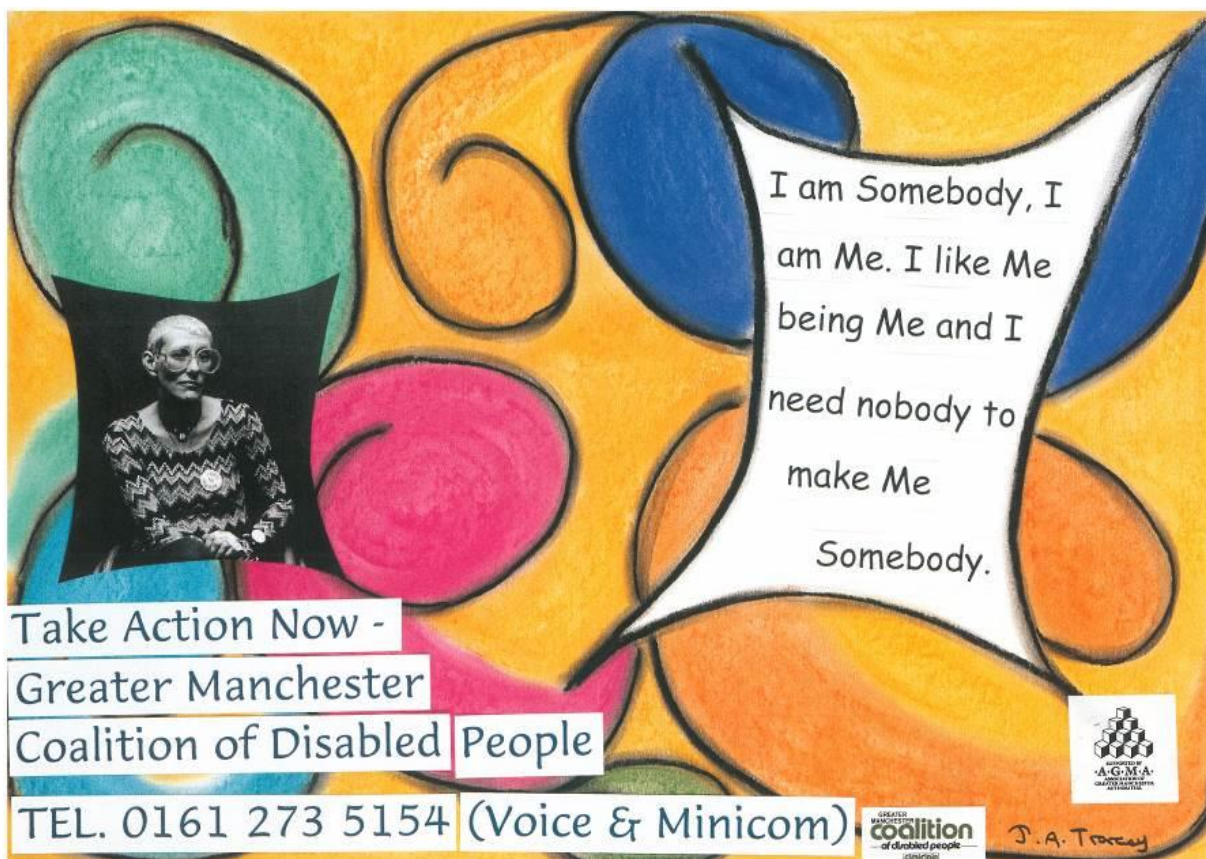
Summary

I hope I have given a snapshot of some of the fantastic variety and great potential in archives relating to disability in the UK. More archives are being revealed and explored following active collection by archive repositories, and greater engagement in the history of disability. I hope to see more from these fascinating collections in the future, especially those providing evidence of the lived experience of disabled people – as

part of a growing research area that will increase understanding of how perspectives on disability have changed and developed through time.

Beth Astridge,
Archive Sector Development,
The National Archives

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The National League of the Blind – Justice not Charity 1920

Making history, or how to get your archives into an archive

In this article Larysa Bolton explains what to do if you find yourself in possession of an archive.

People acquire archives in all sorts of ways. An archive can be a set of items you've collected and created yourself, the papers of a friend or relative, or the records of an organisation you were involved with. Archives can sometimes sit in the corner of a room, taking up space which could be better used, often because people aren't sure whether they are important or what they should do with them.

In this article, I'm going to describe what happens when archives come in to the collections held at Manchester Central Library. This will be broadly similar to other archive services but some variation does occur. I'll use some of the terminology archivists use when talking about archive collections, but you should never be afraid to ask what is meant by a particular term as it's really important to understand the process.

The first thing to think about is whether what you have is an archive. An archive is something which documents a person, place, organisation, activity or event. It can be made up of all sorts of items – minutes, reports, books, photographs, sound recordings, videos and film, leaflets, posters, t-shirts, merchandise, newsletters, publications like magazines and newspapers, banners.

A good question to ask is whether the items you have tell a story. Do they record things that where it was happening, decisions that were made, and relationships that were formed? Are the items unique or rare? If so, it's likely to be an archive.

Identifying where to deposit an archive can be tricky. The National Archives have a useful directory of archive services on their website at <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/find-an-archive>

However, it's not as simple as this, as archive services all have collecting policies which are usually defined by geography and subject matter and this dictates what they can and can't take.

At Manchester Central Library, we collect under several guises. Manchester City Council's archive service collects both archives relating to the City of Manchester and also to the Greater Manchester area, but only when an archive relates to two or more districts (for example, a business which operated in Manchester, Oldham and Trafford).

Also housed at Manchester Central Library as part of the Archives+ partnership are the North West Film Archive, who collect moving image material for the whole region, and the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre, who collect black and minority ethnic archives.

All the Archives+ partners work together to ensure that our collecting is coordinated. For example, if a collection is given to Manchester City Council's archive and contains film, we will transfer the film to the North West Film Archive so it can be better looked after.

So having thought about subject and geography, the next thing to do is to contact the archive. Don't worry about the fact that this might

seem speculative. Archivists are used to being offered collections and will be interested to hear about what you have. They will also be able to make suggestions about where the archive should go if it's not quite the right fit for their collecting policy.

It's useful to provide a few bits of key information in this early conversation so that the archivist can start to understand your archive and consider the practicalities of getting it in to the building. This should include the size of archive, which can be a hard thing to describe. The best way to do this is to talk about the archive just as it is. It might be a book-case full of files and folders; it could be three plastic carrier bags and two large boxes.

Also useful is who created it or looked after it (often referred to as the provenance of the archive), the dates of the material and the kinds of things in the archive and where it is currently stored.

It's also a good idea to mention anything that might be worrying you or that you think is important about the archive. This could include concerns about the content of the archive such as sensitive material, the physical condition of it or where it is stored or the fact that it tells an important story which isn't told anywhere else. Once you have located a new home for your archive, you will need to make an important decision about ownership of the archive. This is a very personal decision and can be influenced by various factors.

Two options

We offer two options. The first is donation, where ownership of the archive and its copyright transfers to Manchester City Council.

The second is deposit, which is a long-term loan, usually for a minimum of 25 years, and where the depositor keeps ownership and copyright of the archive.

Both options carry the same weight and we are as happy to take items as deposits as we are to take donations. It is simply a case of personal preference. Some people like the fact that donation means the archive service takes on responsibility for the archive.

Others would much rather deposit, either because they are happy to continue to have a long-term relationship, both with the archive and the archive service or because they are not quite ready to cut the tie to the archive. Deciding which option to take is very often an emotional choice as well as a practical one.

We are always happy to discuss this decision with potential donors and depositors, as it's such an important part of building a good relationship with them.

You will be asked to complete a donor or depositor form. We offer a copy of this to the potential depositor or donor as early as possible in the process, as it's very helpful to read all the terms and conditions about deposit and donation. This can also help to make a decision about which method of deposit to choose.

The form will ask for your contact details and key information about the archive which will be similar to the information you provided when you first contacted the archive. You will also have an opportunity to indicate if there are any issues around access to certain parts of the archive.

This can include material of a sensitive nature or which includes personal information about individuals. Archivists will give advice on what to do in these scenarios and suggest access restrictions where this is appropriate.

We also ask donors and depositors, where possible, to provide information about the contents of the archive. This is because we recognise that donors and depositors are usually the experts about the archive and we want to share their knowledge as this will help us better care for the collection. We usually ask for a simple list of the contents of the collection, and we can provide advice about how to do this.

The next stage is to arrange delivery of the archive. Some depositors are able to do this themselves if they have access to a car or van and the archive is small and portable and can be easily dropped off at the Central Library. When this is not an option, we can arrange to collect the items. We always discuss delivery with depositors and donors so that we can come up with the right solution in each case.

So what happens once your archive is in the building? The first thing we do is accession the archive into the

collection. We add it to our accession register, which is actually an electronic database that manages all our collections information.

We give the archive a unique accession number and record all the information which was provided on the donor and depositor form. We also create a record for you as the depositor or donor. It's really important to let us know about any changes in address or contact details, even if you have donated the archive, so we can keep in touch with you.

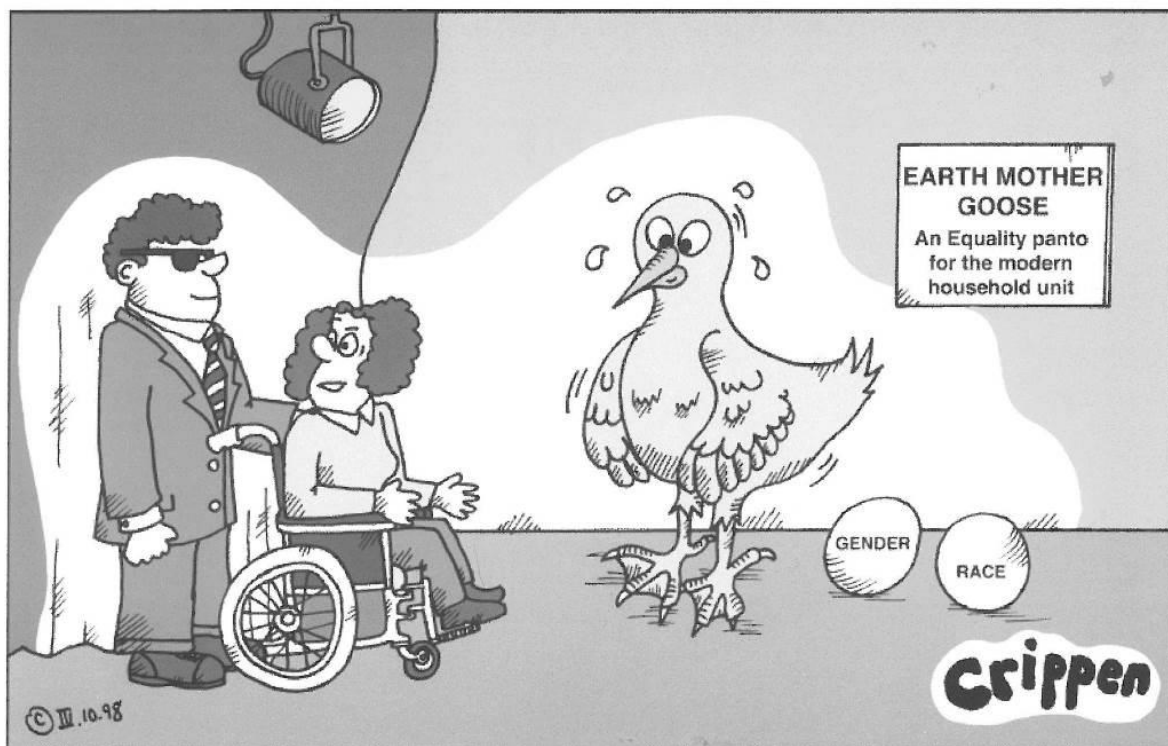
The next stage is for our conservator to have a look at the archive to assess whether the material needs to be cleaned or repaired. The conservator also checks for any evidence of pests such as bookworm or instances of mold and treats items as necessary. The archive can then be transferred into the strong room for storage.

We use the list of contents supplied by the depositor to create a finding aid or catalogue to the archive. The archive will be re-packaged into archive quality boxes as required. Once this is complete, the archive can be used by the public.

Archives are usually viewed in the search room so that they can be used safely and securely. However, the

users of archives are very varied. They can include family historians, local historians, academics, teachers and educators, school groups, TV and media companies, journalists, artists, writers and musicians.

The archive itself takes on a new life at this point. It can be the evidence required, the creative inspiration required, the link to a person much missed. It could appear on the television, be quoted in a book, become digitised and shared all around the world. The possibilities are endless, and it's all thanks to the donor or depositor.



"She was fine until she tried to lay the golden egg of Disabled people's Civil Rights !"

Time to get off the fence: other ways to collect archives

Larysa Bolton from Archives+ at Manchester Central Library argues that archivists need to engage more positively with communities before ‘missing’ stories are forever lost or confined to the skip.

In my other article in this magazine, I gave advice to depositors on finding an archive. Although everything I wrote stands true, it's a very traditional and passive way of acquiring archives. It doesn't sit comfortably with me as the only way things find their way into the strong-room. It's too risky for a start. It relies on the hope that someone will spot there's some archive gold before the skip wagon drives off into the sunset. It also relies too much on privilege. You need to have a sense of self-worth and belief in the importance of yourself and the archive in your possession before you can even think about picking up the phone to convince someone else of its value.

There has to be a better way. And there is, although it takes more work. It also changes the emphasis of an archive. Archives aren't really about bits of paper or parchment; they are about people. People create archives, they keep them, they feel the need to share them. Archivists need to be speaking to people and creating relationships and being the ones who say “this archive you've created is amazing – we'd love to work with you to make sure as many people as possible can see how incredible it is” rather than waiting for offers to drop into our inboxes. It also needs archivists to look at their collecting policies and in their strong-rooms to work

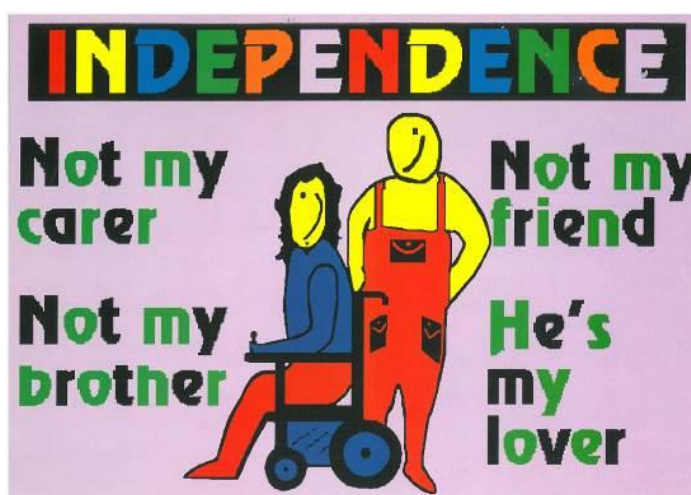
out what's not in there. Are we actually collecting the stories of what's missing? Have we got a story about everyone?

An active, people-centred approach to collecting archives needs to be based in communities. It needs archives and libraries to be places where people want to visit and where they feel they belong. It needs archivists to do outreach

work and engage with people, to say yes to projects with groups they've never worked with before, to look at the ways artists, writers, musicians and makers respond to archives and use this as a new lens to view collections.

It needs archivists to rethink what kinds of items should become archives. It needs relationships built on trust and respect, and the recognition that archive creators and depositors are experts with key knowledge. It may require a long-term approach, building relationships over years, taking in archives bit by bit, maintaining, developing and enjoying relationships with depositors. It also needs thought about resources and consideration about funding streams, project planning and different ways of doing things.

So to conclude, to collect archives we need people, partnerships and positivity. Sounds a bit cheesy. But beats the tired trope of dust, cardigans and shushing.



In response to ‘To Get off the Fence’

Archive Worker Linda Marsh responds passionately and positively to Larysa Bolton’s article and explains why she gets excited about “an old parking permit.”

In her article, Larysa Bolton talked about ‘different’ ways archivists can reach out to communities and (hopefully) individuals to find new archives. Here I would like to say ‘brava’ and echo her comments from the perspective of someone newly working with Manchester’s Archives+.

I am very passionate about making sure that the history of ‘the ordinary person’ is recorded. This also includes the collective action and work of those ordinary people.

So much of recorded history is about ‘the great and the good’. Although from what I have observed, this has begun to change over the past 20 years, there still seems to be, from my perspective, so many people whose lives and contributions are not preserved, recognized or celebrated.

For disabled people, some of the new and most exciting experiences of our lives over the past 30 years would seem commonplace to others. Going out shopping for food, seeing and easily communicating with your doctor, having a choice of theatre performances, cinemas, football matches you can choose to go to and fully enjoy.

Yet ... are these changes, and the hard work it took to get to this point, recorded? Are people aware of this?

How about the first time you travel on a bus? What if it's not until you are in your 40s, 50s, 60s or even older that you get this chance? That is the experience of many disabled people in the UK.

What if you put your safety or health on the line to campaign for the experience of getting on a bus? Many campaigners have done so over the years. And not just wheelchair-users, other disabled and non-disabled people who could already get on that bus ... but who were there in support.

And being out there on the streets isn't the only activity that should be preserved and celebrated. What about all those who could not, for whatever reason, go and block the roads? All those who spent time in meetings, on the phone, and before computers ... yes remember ... there was a time when a stamp on an envelope was the only way! ...

Time and effort put into organizing and co-ordinating campaigns. Hand-written notes, plans, debates ... all so important to see where we came from to where we are today.

Archives contain items that most people would find interesting to look at – photographs, posters, postcards, t-shirts and badges. All these show creativity and imagination. But how about what many people would consider the more 'boring' aspects? The meetings to debate the best way to get our message across? The meetings to meticulously plan a successful rally?

The archive boxes full of typed and hand-written notes may seem tedious, but they show the hard work which

goes into gaining our right to be considered as 'equal' and valued members of society.

It may seem very sad, but some of the things I got most excited about when I found them were the hand-written notes planning a rally in Manchester in 1990 ... and I'm afraid to say ... the parking permit for the van which was to bring the stage to the rally. Photographs of campaigns and rallies are fine, they have the 'wow!' factor, but the parking permit, list of stewards for the day and the hand-written notes from planning meetings ... well, they just did it for me!

Without the enthusiasm and dedication of archivists at Manchester's Archives+ there would be no correctly preserved GMCDP Archive on its way, which would have led to the loss of much historical material relating to the Disabled People's Movement.

And let's face it ... we are creating history now! So people keep saving records of what you are doing. Save your meeting notes, save your jottings, save your t-shirts, placards, badges ... everything! We can learn from the past – the good and the mistakes – but we are also now creating what may be useful for those to come after us! ...

I think it is wonderful that Archives+ are opening up to flexibility and reaching out to find archives and records ... may it long continue!

The GMCDP Archive

Linda Marsh

The GMCDP Archive is a varied collection of items stored in the Strongroom under Manchester Central Library. It has been deposited with Archives+, an archive centre based in the library.

The following may seem a long list, but it's worth wading your way through it to find out what the Archive contains.

There are:

- Documents (meeting notes, letters, planning notes, programmes and timetables).
- Newspaper cuttings and articles.
- Reports and books.
- Newsletters and magazines.
- Posters and flyers.
- Photographs and postcards.
- Booklets and leaflets.
- Videos and DVDs.
- Audio cassettes and CDs.

And more...

We even have an ADAPT 'Free Our People' wind-sock and Spastic Society collecting doll!

It has all been donated to the archive by individuals and disabled people's organisations, including GMCDP, Manchester Disability Forum and the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP).

How it all started

The collection began in 2005, when GMCDP carried out a feasibility study into setting up a national Disabled People's Movement Archive. Disabled people and organisations spontaneously sent material to GMCDP rather than risk it being lost in lofts, house-moves and group closures. This was stored with Greater Manchester County Records Office for safe keeping. Since then even more archives have accumulated.

In 2016 GMCDP approached Archives+ to see how this superb resource could be made available to disabled people, researchers and the public.

In 2018 GMCDP employed a part-time worker for one year to begin cataloguing the collection with the support of Archives+. This is only a beginning. Archivists have estimated that a full catalogue will take 18 months with a full time worker.

Why the GMCDP Archive is important

Disabled people's self-organisation and activism is a key part of 20th and 21st century history. Our contribution to the progress of equality and human rights has been, and continues to be, significant.

It is important to preserve material relating to disabled people's understanding of our experience. For example, how the Social Model of Disability and ideas relating to independent living were developed.

Items linked to disabled people's fight for equality, civil rights and independent living such as campaign planning

documents, photographs, T-shirts and banners also bring vitality to the story.

A collection of publically distributed items including books and magazines are enriched by organisations' correspondence, briefing papers and meeting notes. All bring a depth that disabled people as well as researchers will find fascinating.

The development of a disabled people's archive can only enhance the wealth of material available relating to equality through existing archives such as: the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre (housed at Archives+ and part of the University of Manchester), Feminist Archive, Hall-Carpenter Archive and Women's Archive (Glasgow Women's Library).

The GMCDP Archive will continue to expand. Other collections will also be deposited with Archives+, for example, the archive from the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation, and the Lorraine Gradwell Campaign Clothing Collection have both recently been deposited thanks to the hard work of Tony Baldwinson.

So, what's in the Archive?

So far we only have a detailed list of a fraction of the Archive, but we have already found some very exciting items.

The Archive holds a number of posters including one from the Deaf Society of South Africa promoting their interpreting service, the set of David Hevey's 'Liberty, Equality, Disability' posters, and the history posters created by Birmingham Coalition of Disabled People. We

also have some 'mystery' posters which don't say on them the name of the organization which produced them, so we are seeking people's knowledge to fill in the gaps.

We have many books, just some examples are: 'A Life Raft In A Stormy Sea' by Lorraine Gradwell, 'Disability And Development' by Emma Stone and 'Independent Lives' by Jenny Morris.

We also have meeting notes, newsletters and other paperwork from organisations which no longer exist, for example Manchester Disability Forum.

There are boxes of letters, briefing papers, internal reports and discussion papers between individuals and disabled people's groups which I am sure, when itemised in the future, will bring to light some fascinating debates.

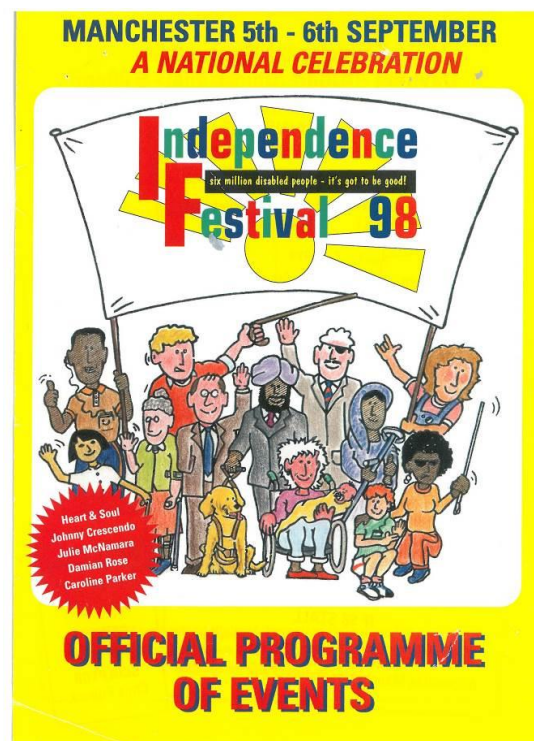
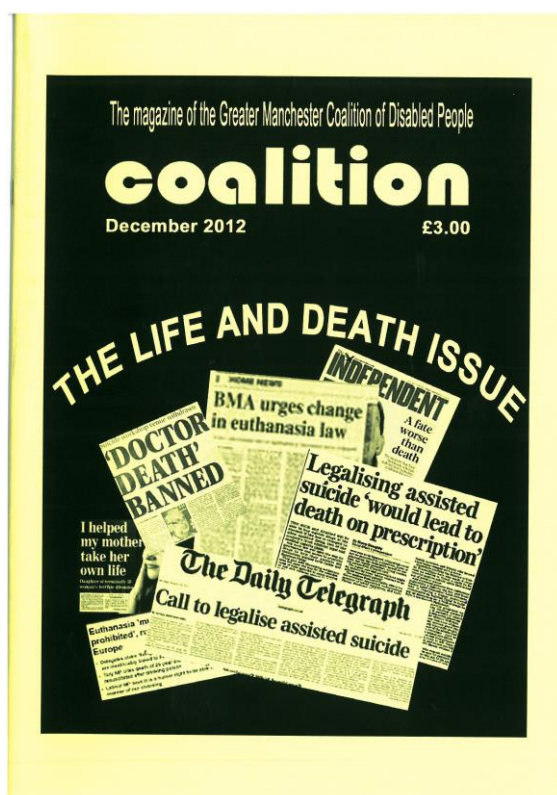
Some of the most exciting finds so far for me are hand-written notes planning rallies and campaigns; the original artwork which newsletters, magazines, leaflets and posters were created from in the days before computers; and lots of photographs of disabled people protesting, performing on stage, debating in meetings, and enjoying ourselves.

What next ...?

Basically, it is down to you what happens next with the GMCDP Archive.

An Archive is the sum of the parts people contribute to it.

So ... if you have a bag of papers, box of files, a hidden stash of leaflets, booklets, posters, meeting notes, photographs ... don't let them gather dust and mold ... contact GMCDP or Archives+ to see if they could be loaned or given to the GMCDP Archive!



Reflections on the experience of archiving a collection

In this fascinating account, Tony Baldwinson takes us through the process of preserving an archive.

Sometime in 2018 I was in contact with Judy Hunt, myself in Manchester, she in London, and the conversation turned to archives. Judy had a precious collection of papers from what had been possibly Britain's most radical organisation of disabled people ever. It was called UPIAS, the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation. Her late husband, Paul Hunt, had been a founding member and he was probably also the most well-known. Judy had papers from other influential members as well as those of her husband.

We both knew that just because a highly political organisation was now closed, it didn't mean that the politics had also ended. So it was important that the collection of unique papers would be properly looked after and appreciated, and not exploited in a way that would now undermine the hard struggles and campaigns that its members had previously endured and won.

A further issue was that most of the papers were still confidential for two main reasons. Firstly, promises had been made for lifetime personal secrecy in the Union's internal communications to allow for very candid and frank political exchanges in private. Secondly, the united front the Union's members had maintained in their public messages could be undermined even today by

hostile and revisionist political forces if care wasn't taken to protect the internal discussions.

So, it was both an immense honour and great worry when Judy Hunt invited me to take all these papers into safe custody. I returned to Manchester on the train with a very large wheeled suitcase chock full of lever arch files, card folders, carrier bags with loose papers and such. I don't think the case left my sight for a moment - these papers were the equivalent of gold bars to me.

From the outset Judy and I agreed that the UPIAS archive needed to be 'closed' for some years. This term describes when papers are held in an archive but are not to be made available to visitors. For example, the 10-year Census return which you complete is kept secret in a closed national archive for 100 years before any future visitor can see what you wrote.

We agreed on the date of 1 January 2030 for the UPIAS collection to become open, to honour the lifetime promise. We also agreed that Archives+ would be a safe home for the papers. This choice was based on the ethics of the archive's governance, the best standards nationally that I have found in years of amateur practice.

A bonus with Archives+ was the link that could be made with the GMCDP archive and all the associated collections of personal papers, videos, banners, t-shirts and badges that were being donated by radical disabled people and their families alongside the GMCDP 'official' papers.

One option with the UPIAS papers could have been to just empty them into various cardboard archive boxes and hand them over to be locked away. But I felt it was important to make a start on “sorting out” the collection.

The process of “sorting out” papers is not simple, as anyone knows who has had to move house or has helped a relative make sense of a loft, garage, shed or wardrobe of miscellaneous items. In archiving terms this is a key stage, and without doing this it is impossible to catalogue the collection.

Gentleness and patience are very important here otherwise information which puts the collection in context can easily be lost. Perhaps the biggest challenge was the type of paper used, especially in the early years. UPIAS, like disabled people in general, wasn't rich. A member or acquaintance of theirs worked at the Open University and took paper home which had been used for printing on one side. This paper was in large continuous sheets.

There were three main problems here:

1. The paper was not museum quality at all. It was only expected to be used for a few weeks before being scrapped. So, today, these sheets are very fragile and brittle, often stained brown by daylight, looking and feeling like delicate autumn leaves.

To deal with this fragility, I placed these paper sheets inside archive-quality protective clear plastic pockets.

2. Back in the day A4 size paper wasn't common in Britain. There were two other common sizes in the shops - foolscap and quarto. These were larger and smaller than A4 respectively. The continuous 'scrap' sheets used by UPIAS had been cut out by hand. Some were roughly foolscap in size, but some were even larger. These large, fragile sheets needed an unusual size of archive-quality plastic pocket, which took some time to source.

3. Although the UPIAS correspondence and other writings had been typed on the blank side of these sheets of paper, the original legible printing on the reverse side was personal data from the Open University's computerised pension system. These days we worry about data protection, so this data had to be flagged up as an issue.

One solution for all three problems was to photocopy the original sheets onto A3 acid-free paper. This preserved the typed text as it is seen today, and these A3 sheets were added to the archive alongside the originals. Where a scanned copy was needed, these scans were taken from the photocopy, not the original.

I could only do these basic forms of preservation, trying to hold things as they are now. What was beyond me was conservation, for example, chemically stabilising the original sheets to stop more deterioration in the years ahead.

So, with these preservation tasks finished for the time being, it was a matter of putting the papers into some

sort of sensible order. I decided date-order would probably be most helpful to future users.

A good half of the UPIAS papers were Circulars (about 80 in all), which were a form of private, internal newsletter. At their most intense, these circulars were being compiled and posted out every six weeks. The modern equivalent in style is probably a discussion thread on social media, with lots of short points being made - to and fro - by various members.

The other half of the papers were a range of minutes, letters and administration. There were a few disorganised membership lists, appearing roughly every two or three years. I gathered copies of these lists into one computer file for analysis within a password-encrypted Excel spreadsheet.

This sounds all very organised and methodical. Actually, it was messier than that! I used a large dining table, and it took a few weeks on and off, before a method of organising the papers started to emerge and make sense to me.

Like in a detective programme, the papers slowly started to tell a story of who was doing what. For example, you can see when a new secretary or chairperson takes over and the method changes. You can also start to see where the gaps are. For example, the numbering of the 80-odd circulars was a bit hit and miss, plus a new numbering system was started about two-thirds into the collection.

Placing the papers into new lever arch files and cataloguing where they now are for future reference was the next stage. Eventually there will be an online catalogue showing which file and box contains which document. At the moment the catalogue has entries at the file level such as: "File 6, 1978, correspondence, minutes." With more time each item, such as a letter, should be individually indexed, maybe even scanned. However, with limited volunteer time this has not been done yet. Currently it is a higher priority to save a new collection from a pile of papers kept in carrier bags in someone's loft or garage - still a reality across the Disabled People's Movement.

The final stage was to put the files into boxes, usually around three or four files in each one, to label the boxes and note in the catalogue which file was in which box.

A complication was the oversize sheets of paper, which stood proud of the top edges of the lever arch files. For now the solution was to lay the files flat with an air space around them, though there are probably other long-term options in boxing or protecting them.

While preserving the archive I started writing a booklet on the life-story of UPIAS. I found this also helped me in organising the structure of the files. As the writing started to take shape, I shared draft copies with some key people who had been extensively involved with UPIAS to check my items were both correct and appropriate. Once the facts and dates were established I deposited the boxes at Archives+ because it felt unsafe to me to

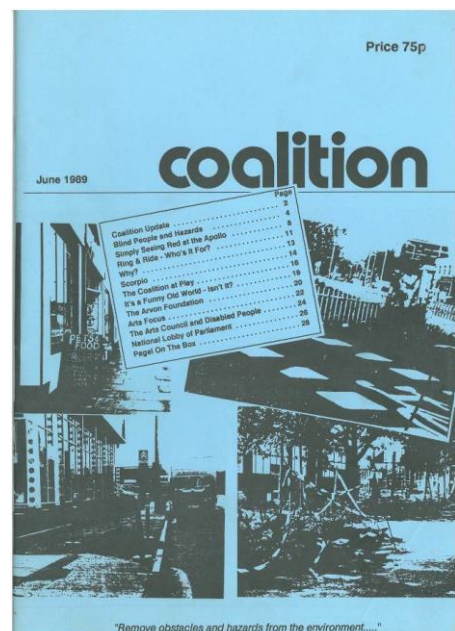
keep the papers at home for any time longer than the minimum necessary.

It was particularly rewarding to generate and share some new knowledge with key surviving members, such as the gender profile of the membership, which had only been known subjectively in the past.

While doing this task I recall reading a blog from a feminist academic (by 'debuk', in Language: a feminist guide, WordPress).

She expressed her frustration with academic writing 'rules'. She shared feedback from an editor that said, "you cannot cite a t-shirt".

Well, I agree with her, t-shirts are important, so yes you can, and this is how ... write a booklet or article with a photograph based on an archive which describes the t-shirt and then cite the booklet or article or photograph.



The first ever Coalition front page, 33 years ago ...

Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People
11 Anson Road, Manchester, M14 5BY
Tel: 061 225 4560

Introductory Newsletter – February 1986

The Coalition is an organisation controlled by disabled people, the primary objective being to establish a Resource Centre for the Greater Manchester area, to promote the integration of disabled people into society at all levels.

The Coalition is now based at 11 Anson Road, Manchester, with 3 salaried workers in post:-

1. Clerical/Administration Officer and
2. Information/Publicity Workers

There is still one position to be filled.

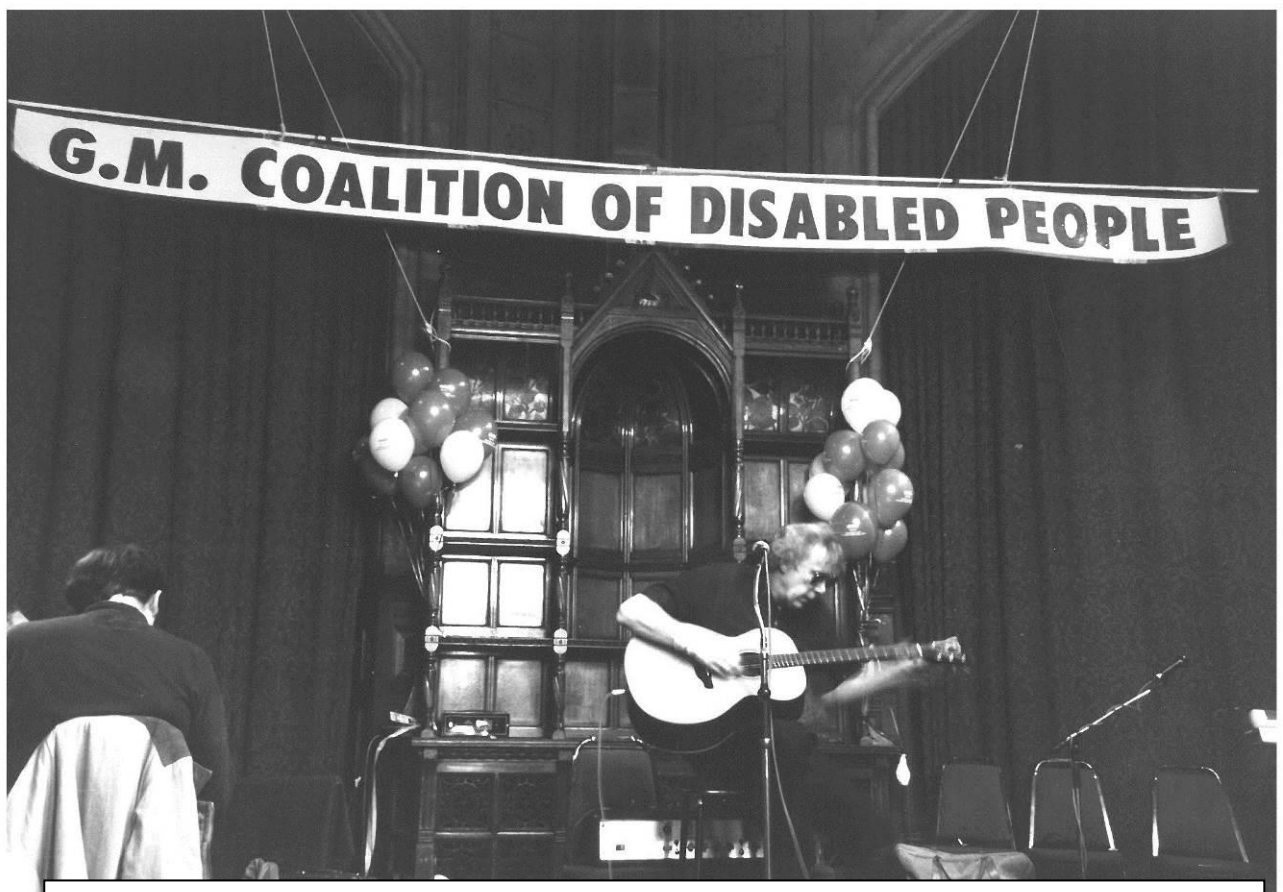
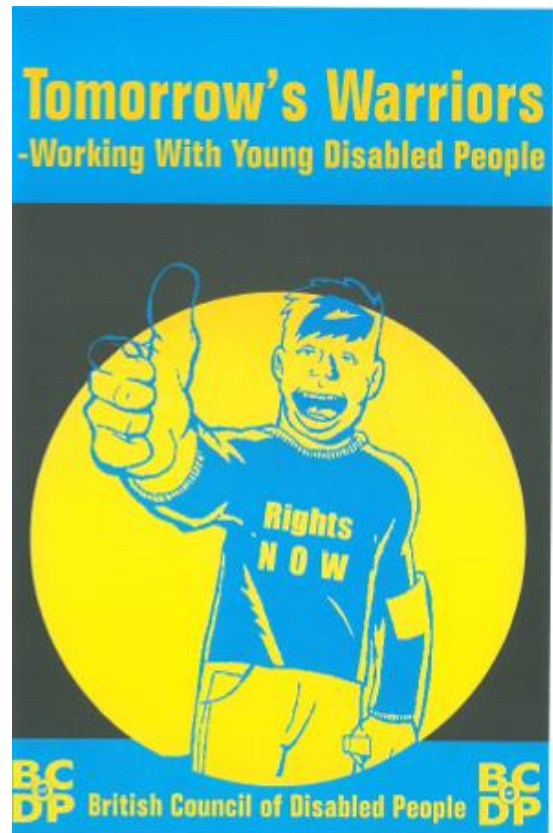
The inaugural meeting was held last summer at County Hall when an Executive Committee was elected.

List of Executive Committee

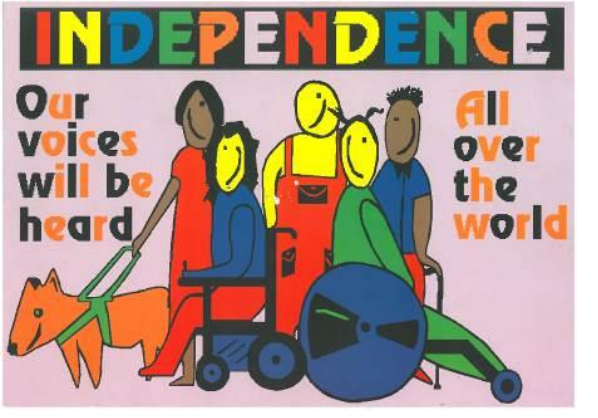
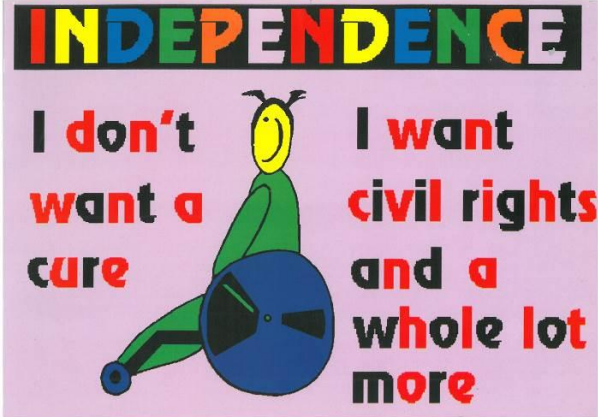
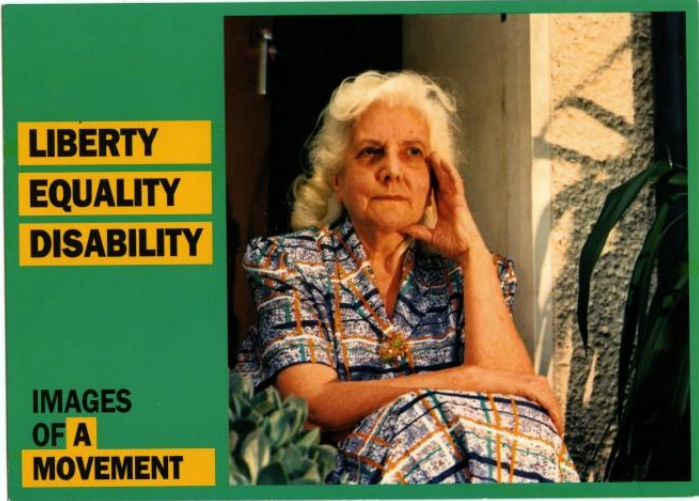
David Goddard – Oldham
Lorraine Gradwell – Flixton
Ken Lumb – Middleton
Bernard Leach – Chorlton
Annette Taylor – Stockport
Linda Caroll – Longsight

Martin Pagel – Manchester
Henry Harris – Salford
Audery Creighton – Oldham
Ian Stanton – Oldham
Neville Strowger – Tyldesley
Saeed Ahmet – Chorlton
Jeremy Wells – Falswort
Paul Mittler – Stockport
Brian Haines – Oldham
Mark Todd – Walkden
Keith Stevens – Moss Side
Reg Taylor – Denton
G E McIssac – Timperley

....ever onwards and
upwards!



Leigh Sterling, Singer-Songwriter



DISABLED PEOPLE!

JOBS UNDER ATTACK

**JOIN OUR PICKET
OF THE PACT OFFICES**

at 10am on 3rd December

(a GMCDP action on the United Nations
International Day of Disabled Persons)

WHY ARE WE PROTESTING?

The Employment Department is proposing to change the existing support schemes for disabled workers. From next April employers will be expected to contribute towards the costs of equipment and support services (including the Fares to Work Scheme), and an expenditure ceiling will be imposed on individual workers, limiting the amount of assistance which they can receive over a five year period.

Countless research projects and statistics have proved the existence of widespread discrimination against disabled people in employment. These new measures will make it even harder for disabled people to compete for jobs.

A Life Raft in a Stormy Sea

Everyday disability politics rooted in the social model

Lorraine Gradwell

Independence Festival 1997
 Saturday 20th September, Albert Square, Manchester

INDEPENDENCE
 Our voices will be heard All over the world

2.00pm - 10.00pm - FREE

Performers include
 Ian Stanton • Julie McNamara • Johnny Crescendo • Matt Frazer
 Get Off Our Backs Theatre Company and many more.
 • Speakers •

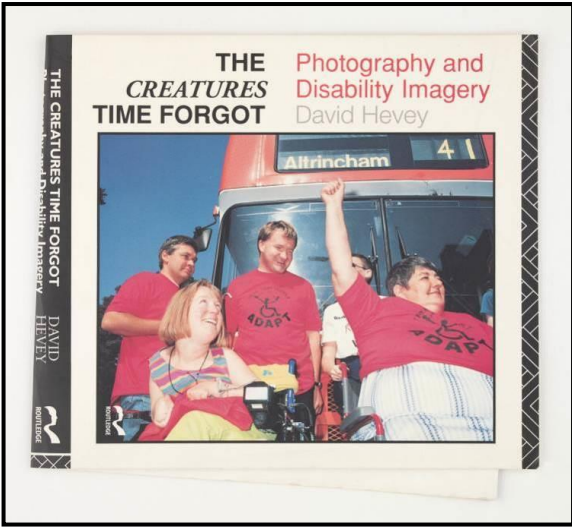
Compered by comedy duo Natalie Markham and Mandy Colleran.

Disability arts and Exhibitions • Disability Market • Cafe and Food stalls
 Children's activities.

Afternoon music and comedy performances in Albert Square.
 Evening cabaret and disco in the Town Hall • Licensed Bar.

For more information contact
 Tel / Minicom **0161 234 3684**

Manchester making it happen
 Manchester Airport Investing in the Arts
 UNISON
 GMB working together IN THE LANCASHIRE REGION
 T&G NORTH WEST
 1997 European Year of Disabled People



Disabled People Bite...

1
 2
 3

"Aah, are you being a good boy?"

The Hand That Patronises

Disability and Development

Learning from action and research on disability in the majority world

Edited by
Emma Stone

THE DISABILITY PRESS

**MAKING MONEY
OUT OF DISABILITY
The Disability Industry**

NAIDEX AT G-MEX



**GMCDP
Disabled People's
Refugees Project
(DPRP)**



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Ardwick, Manchester M12 4AN

**Would this man frighten
your children?**



PHOTO BY PHIL RIDER



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PEOPLE 3RD DECEMBER 1996

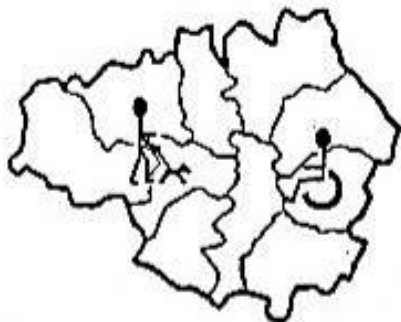


DISABLED PEOPLE AND MANCHESTER MAKING IT HAPPEN
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
TEL: 0161 234 3607 MINICOM: 0161 234 3391



Manchester
making it happen





GREATER MANCHESTER COALITION OF DISABLED PEOPLE

11, ANSON ROAD,
MANCHESTER, M14 5BY.

Tel. 061-225-4560.

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Lorraine Gradwell - Flixton.
Ken Lumb - Middleton.
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Bernard Leach - Chorlton.
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Martin Pagel - Manchester.
Henry Harris - Salford.
Audrey Creighton - Oldham.
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Saeed Ahmet - Manchester 16.
John Wells - Chorlton.
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