



Tales from The Leeds Library

season 2

S2:E8: Niimi and Anna, Archives Assistant and Assistant Librarian at The Leeds Library.

Transcript

00:00:14 Molly

Hello and welcome to tales from the Leeds Library. The Leeds Library's podcast series in which we talked to members of our extended community about their lives, their work and their relationship to books, libraries and literature. Founded in 1768, the Leeds Library is the oldest surviving subscription library of its kind in the UK and throughout this series we will also be diving periodically into the library's rich history to find out what makes us and our members one of the most interesting and unique cultural institutions in Leeds and the UK. I'm Molly Magrath, the projects assistant at the Leeds Library and today my guests are Niimi, the archives assistant and Anna, the assistant librarian.

Niimi joined the library in February to assist with the archives and collections she has since gotten her hands deep into its papers and records, which span the entirety of the library's history. She spends most of her days listing in cataloguing boxes. Anna has been working at the Leeds Library for over 20 years, so she knows the collections and the archives inside out. But aside from her expert knowledge of libraries and books, Anna is also an expert in the paranormal and you may remember her from our previous episode about the Ghost.

00:01:26 Hello welcome Anna and Niimi. So, this is a kind of a slightly different podcast because we're going to be having a chat about the archives at the library and Anna you've already featured on one episode before talking about the Ghost.

00:01:29 Niimi

Hello hello.

00:01:43 Anna

I have indeed yes.

00:01:44 Molly

So, this is a slightly different hat for you, but you have done a lot of work with the archives before and Niimi you've been cataloguing, not cataloguing *archiving*, going through the archives recently so I think the first thing to kind of say is what are the archives? Uh, what's their background? Why do we keep them? Why do we have all of these bits of ephemera from the library's history?

00:02:15 Anna

It's a record of the institution and its operations, so you know, it's actually quite important in terms of library history, and certainly subscription library history 'cause we're the oldest surviving, that we've still got it. So, it's a good job somebody kept something.

00:02:32 Molly

Yeah, or many things.

00:02:33 Anna

Or many things. But yeah, really it's that record of how you operated, what things were borrowed, what people were requesting, and you've got all your correspondence and things like that. So your day-to-day operations, but it really sort of just building up that picture of an institution, and the sorts of things that people are interested in. You know other places will throw them away, businesses throw them away, and then you've got people coming to do research and there's no trace So having this information, it gives you another understanding of where you've come from and where you are now and that sort of sense of context as well.

00:03:07 Niimi

And also and I also think they have a lot of value, not just kind of for library history, but also just the general history of like the UK I think. And Leeds. Especially because the library has been here for so long. It's been a kind of institution, as it were, it has watched Leeds grow up really and I think that's reflected in, you know, a lot of letters that maybe the library didn't think about a lot at the time, but looking back on now I'm like, oh, this kind of indicates when electric lights were becoming more ubiquitous in the country, and like when they were becoming more used.

00:03:47 Molly

And actually I think it's interesting that you talk about the history of libraries because in many ways the history of libraries is the history of reading and it's the history of education and it's the history of social mobility and all of these things tie into that. And yeah, like you were saying as the oldest proprietary subscription library of its kind - such long sentence - it's that stuff is really useful.

00:04:15 Niimi

Yeah, especially as you know, you've also kind of got the correspondence of between like the Leeds Library and the Leeds Central Public Library, because you know, we predate the Central Library and so it's very interesting to kind of note when you start to see correspondence between the two, but also kind of correspondence from the library being like look, I'm sorry that we haven't got your thing, it might have been sent to the Central Library. It's the post people. They do it all the time. I haven't found the first one yet, but I'm looking.

00:04:49 Molly

Yeah, well like you were saying Anna, things don't change.

00:04:51 Anna

No, they really don't. They really don't. I mean and the other thing I'll sort of say, like in terms of, you know, the archive knowing who your members were. So that little interest of mine that I have with the education section. Knowing who the membership were and who the lady members were and their activities in education and working class education, at some point when I have time that

enables you to go and actually have a look and see what they were doing. But again, that sort of reflects that wider interest in Leeds and you know, education and things so.

00:05:24 Molly

It's interesting, I think, to think about because the archive in many ways explains a lot of the collection, it explains why we have certain books on certain things where they came from and which is really useful and interesting, and it really enriches the collection. But also in a lot of ways I think it can actually raise more questions than it answers.

00:05:46 Niimi

Oh, definitely.

00:05:47 Molly

And you were talking about, yeah, these bits of correspondence you'll just never know, you'll never know the context.

00:05:54 Niimi

The one that like kind of bugs up me the most - I know I'll never get an answer for it - but it was, I can't remember what library it was, but it was with another circulating library. When was it like the 1920s? I want to say maybe or maybe earlier than that, but it was just kind of a, you know, bog standard like business letter and then at the end at the end the writer says I got the rumour RE: JYWM from a prominent member of the Library Association it may be true or not, but would you be very surprised? Remember his abnormal 'Chuck'? And that's in quotation marks. Kind regards, and I was just sitting there like what does that mean? What's the rumour? And I'll never know. And all of these people are dead.

00:06:39 Anna

Is that McAllister they're talking about?

00:06:41 Molly

Yeah, JWM

00:06:42 Anna

Yeah, and just when you told me about it before, I didn't twig but like just yeah, the initials could be McAllister.

00:06:47 Niimi

Maybe, I guess we'll never know if you, dear listener, do know please email me.

00:06:53 Molly

This has turned into a mystery solving podcast.

00:06:57 Niimi

Just that mystery. It's probably really boring, but I just need to know.

00:07:00 Anna

It's where you find we know we've got the letter books, haven't we? So, we've got the correspondence that we you know we've received, but there's letter books, the letters that we've sent out, but they're not complete. Cause' I had said to you Niimi about I had this idea to go check and see what we'd sent out and the you know the response and of course the letter wasn't in there. I mean again, the records aren't complete, but we had it for those years and yet somebody sent a letter out and it's not recorded in the letter book. That's really frustrating.

00:07:26 Niimi

Yeah, that's always the way, though, I think with the with the archive it's like we've got so much like really interesting, really valuable stuff. But whenever you actually want to find one specific thing out they'll never have it.

00:07:43 Molly

So, you've been me, you've been kind of going through the archive recently. I wonder what are the the interesting things that you've come across? And also, I guess for both of you, what actually do the archives contain? So, we talked a bit about letters but there's so many other things as well. We've got like catalogues and meetings from minutes. What other stuff is in there?

00:08:11 Niimi

A lot for stuff.

00:08:13 Anna

That's the best way to describe it isn't it.

00:08:14 Molly

End of sentence. Next question.

00:08:18 Niimi

But yeah, we've got kind of membership records from the entire library history. I was going through some like membership payment book from the start of the library's history in like the late 1700s and I found what recently actually Benjamin Gott who was an industrialist, like a big industrial figure in in Leeds history. Quite a controversial one actually, he owned Army Mill from think about 1820 or 1812. Something like that. He had another mill where the workers were so dissatisfied with him apparently there was a rumour that he kept his gun under his pillow so I'm not sure how much of that leaked into his correspondence with the library, but you know, it's we're always finding out new stuff. But yeah, there's like letters and receipts and all kinds.

00:09:05 Anna

Trustees, which is a document. It's a large document originally dated from 1825, but there's a later amendment in the 1840s that sets out the way in which the library operated, so it sets the number of shares it sets the way it's going to govern and I find that fascinating. 'cause it has all the signatures in and it's you know things like that, newspapers clippings. Good old Frank Beckwith.

00:09:29 Niimi

oh Frank, he was the librarian from, when was it is like, 1940s 1950s.

00:09:38 Anna

The tail end, I think it will be before the war so late 30s mid to late 30s, wasn't it? And then right up until well it was after 1968. So probably 1969 ish.

00:09:49 Niimi

Yeah, so he was librarian here for a long time and he was a bit of an archivist. Or a hoarder. And probably both.

00:09:57 Anna

I have a theory.

00:09:59 Molly

Ohhh

00:10:01 Anna

Well, he knew what he was doing, so I think some of the things that he kept was him saying this is me and how I want to be reflected in the archive when you think about it because there's letters. We've got parts of the archive here. They've got bits up at the university that his family donated to them, so we've got correspondence with people from doing his own personal research. They've got correspondence between him and what we know to be library members. And it's just some of the things that he's kept like the the dear Frank letters as I call them, which are the ones to be son. They contain memories of library life and descriptions. Do we have a full set of those? I don't know, but he's obviously kept them because they contain that, so that's somebody who knows what they're doing, yeah?

00:10:51 Niimi

But at the same time, he does some kind of baffling archivist choices as well. Like I recently finished going through a - it's just a finance logbook from 1942 up to 1944 I think it was. Beckwith had pasted, like UN movably pasted 10s and 10s of letters from the kind of 1820s, which is a period we don't have a lot of letters from because, well there's this theory that they were damaged in a flood in the basement in the late 1800s.

00:11:27 Anna

It's the late Victorian period. I've not come across the evidence for it, but you can see it in the damage of the earlier stuff, yeah. But yeah, he made some interesting choices.

00:11:37 Molly

It's really interesting that. I mean you don't think of archive work as something that's particularly ego driven but actually, I suppose it is in a way, I don't know. It's I really like there's a whole genre of art to do with archives and personal archives and things like that, I think. One of my favourite kind of pieces that Andy Warhol made are these quote unquote archives. He basically just put all this trash from his office, he was a bit hoarder into boxes and stored them away. They were kind of time capsules and then they have a museum. I think it's an Andy Warhol Museum in America and they have recently been opening the boxes and cataloguing everything that's in there and it is just, you know, some of is bits of trash and some of it is really amazing kind of tickets to exhibitions and things.

00:12:29 Anna

'cause often with archives and certainly personal archives the way it's left, that is sort of the final context, so the context and how it's arranged is important. So if he's knowing that he's just going 'here's this pile of stuff' like.

00:12:41 Molly

He would know, yeah. Where was I hearing about this? Maybe it was another podcast, but I think there was, uh, someone in the Tate Museum had access to the archives. He was a donor and he went into the archives and edited them and added bits and pieces in to kind of increase the value of these fake artworks that he had. I think he was collaborating with some, I think a teacher or something. He was painting these fakes and then he was kind of adding the documentation to the archives and selling them for loads of money so archives can be, they're not always truthful or accurate, which I think is really interesting.

00:13:24 Niimi

Yeah, they're very mutable. I mean, I think honestly archives, like diaries and any other kind of form of story are just a way of telling human stories and, you know, sometimes those stories may not be particularly interesting, but they're always stories of lives and, you know, what we've done and what the people who've walked the library halls before us have done. And I think, just like with any other story, there can be unreliable narrators.

00:14:01 Molly

Well I suppose that's why you need training really, to be able to actually, you know, archive in the most accurate way that you can say that information isn't distorted, or personalities aren't kind of...

00:14:16 Anna

Because in the archive, as it is at the moment, various people have done their own arrangements of things. So sometimes you get a list of correspondence that's just in date order and it can be about any subject and then sometimes you will get it while somebody's extracted all the correspondence relating to a particular subject. Whether that's building work, for example.

00:14:36 Niimi

Yeah, we've got a lot, we've got one box that's essentially exclusively letters between the Leeds Library and the Harrods Circulatory Lending Library.

00:14:46 Anna

And so it's sort of, there's not been a consistent, you know way in which it's been arranged. I think various people over the years have had had a go at it.

00:14:56 Molly

I mean, anyone who's ever tried to reorganise their computer files knows how difficult it is to, and how time consuming.

00:15:04 Niimi

Imagine all of those were like tiny pieces of paper. Some of them were falling apart and were like over 100 years old and that's basically our job.

00:15:10 Anna

But then you've got other things, and this is going back to Beckwith again, so when he wrote the book on the history of the library in 1968 there's a little brown box, and in that brown box there's lots of bits and pieces and why are they all there? And you look at it and you think that's when he was writing the book because there was the the original tickets for the library which feature in the book, which again this is a problem with our archive if you didn't know. That box, I found that box in a cupboard in the basement along with a whole load of other stuff. You could have got someone whose gone what's all this rubbish?

00:15:50 Molly

It's a really interesting issue. Next week we're gonna talk to Errin from the Henry Moore Archive, but Errin works with the sculptors archives, and they're often donated and there is, she was talking about how you order them, because often the the original order will show how an artist works. And that order is like important to preserve, whereas sometimes it's not necessarily as important. And it's better to you know list things by alphabetical order or date, so yeah.

00:16:27 Niimi

Yeah yeah, yeah. I mean I, I tend to because a lot of the library archive is not listed or catalogued at the moment, so we've got a lot of boxes and we're just not sure really what's in there. So that's what I'm doing a lot at the moment and I'm kind of mostly listing them in chronological order which has a lot of merits, especially when you're looking for something specifically as a researcher. But also it has its down sides as well a lot of the time where I'm kind of referencing there'll be a story with a through line between different letters from different years, and these are sometimes in different boxes. Sometimes they're you know just far away from each other in the actual box, because there are different years. And you know, a different archivist might have filed those together, and that would be extremely valid.

00:17:16 Molly

Umm, I suppose with institutional archives it's slightly different because you do sort of need things to be chronological.

00:17:24 Niimi

Yeah, and that in a way is kind of also how they would have received them.

00:17:27 Molly

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

00:17:30 Anna

Think the way hopefully that we can overcome that is when we finally get to putting it on heritage or whatever cataloguing, that can then link these things together that way. Yeah, and you know, in the in the way that you do cataloguing. Because cataloguing has a different set of standards but it's the way when you're cataloguing a book, and you've got your subject entries and your keywords we can put that and pull it all together.

00:17:54 Molly

Yeah, it's interesting to think how you know different kinds of archives need to reflect the different kinds of functions that they serve. So, I know that there are a couple of stories about the archives or not about the archives, but stories that can be told through the archives that we found out and the first one of those is the Firewatch during the war time, that's the kind of the favourite one, I think.

00:18:22 Niimi

Yeah, there's such incredible stuff in it.

00:18:25 Anna

It has, and I mean when I first discovered it, I was like wow blitz on Leeds, let's see what they've got to say. But I mean a little bit later on it does mention you know another incident where incendiary bombs fall either side of the library so we know we got, you know, completely missed and including one in what is the new building that we've just purchased.

00:18:55 Niimi

So, for a bit of context, the fire watch, we've got about three boxes of documents and logs and things concerning commercial street. I think it doesn't cover Albion St as well, but certainly the commercial St branch of the Firewatch I don't know department/group uhm, organisation that was set up. I think it was about the Leeds council or something like that in the Second World War to essentially have like a rota of people who, well, mostly man who would watch for bombs.

00:19:31 Anna

Mostly men too old to go to war or too young to go.

00:19:37 Niimi

And so Frank Beckwith, there he is again good old Beckwith was the secretary for the Commercial St group something like that he was. He was important in in that committee. Yeah yeah he was running it, so we have a lot of documents from that time which are honestly fascinating, especially if you're interested in that period, but we've got logbooks that kind of trace through, no incident books that trace through all of the shifts for essentially the entire Second World War. You can kind of trace down when there were attacks, and when there were blitz attacks essentially every day for the entire war. Like I could see if there was a blitz attack on my birthday. Incidentally, there were none, so I don't know what that says about me. But you're welcome, question mark?

00:20:33 But yeah, and then we've got loads of application letters as well for men as Anna said, kind of too old or too young to be conscripted into the actual Army Service who were applying for paid fire watch positions as well. There's one that's my favourites where a gentleman, he was an older gentleman included a photograph of himself walking very heroically down the pier with this application letter. Didn't hire him, which I think is a mistake. Uhm, but there you go.

00:21:00 Anna

And then to offset that you've got little bits and pieces, so there's a little slip in there somewhere isn't there about when they decided to take the free tea for firewatchers away.

00:21:09 Niimi

Yeah, yeah, well, the the ration was taken away from them so they weren't able to provide anymore.

00:21:14 Anna

And then you've got other little snippets right? 'cause, uh, sick notes in there as well? Isn't there? So there's one chap who said oh please don't make me dust the books, but rest assured if bombs fall I will be there.

00:21:24 Niimi

Yeah, yeah, there's one guy who got caught fire watching while drunk in the library. I think he got fired. I think he got fired but it was towards the end of the war.

00:21:34 Anna

And then there's lots of newspaper clippings about naughty Firewatch workers and the things they have been getting up to. So obviously, after the incident, it's like, well, what else? And all of this has been kept, and so that's where it becomes, not just about the history of the library and Frank Beckwith, but wider.

00:21:46 Molly

Yeah, yeah.

00:21:49 Niimi

Yeah, and also it's like really detailed records of what the street looked like because we've got diagrams of the street.

00:21:49 Molly

Right?

00:21:55 Niimi

That they made to indicate where they were putting kind of fire watching supplies which is really fascinating.

00:22:00 Molly

Did they? Am I right in thinking, and maybe this is my overactive imagination, did they find an unexploded bomb next door, like quite recently?

00:22:08 Niimi

Yeah, yeah so I don't know if it was recently, but there was, as Anna said, there was one that wasn't recorded, but what we have evidence of being talked about in the archives is a fire watcher, maybe from a different group.

00:22:24 Anna

Well, they dealt with the one which was at LG&G, which is basically was an insurance company I think, which is now Starbucks building. So, they dealt with one later and then it, from memory and correct me if I'm wrong, it was like they'd realised another one had fallen at the other site. They went to deal with that.

00:22:40 Niimi

Yeah, that was in WH Smith at the time, which is now 15 commercial St which the library's just bought. It used to be Trespass UM. WH Smith was renting it at the time. Part of how we know is that they were tenants of the library because the library rents out a lot of the the shops underneath the building. And they were kind of sending letters to the library like hello, we've had a lot of damage because of this bomb falling on us. It didn't explode, thankfully. Like can you? Can you pay this please? Because you're our landlord and the library was like no, we don't own 15 commercial St XOXO

00:23:19 Molly

Yeah, it's funny. The kind of little kind of what's the word? something very unimportant and yeah actually they become quite relevant.

00:23:33 Niimi

Yeah, definitely. Even just from like a human-interest perspective, like I think one of my favourite things I found recently is I'm currently cataloguing Box 4, which is a lot of letters from 1908 up to 1917 I think. And I just found one from the beginning of 1908 where it was an author of a book, something to do with like Layman's Religion who said they'd sent round free copies to lots of different circulating libraries and Leeds for some reason had sent theirs back with a letter being like under no circumstances do we require this book. So, it was a letter from the author being like, well, 'Happy Leeds is to have such a Pope as you defending their like, religious, piety' and saying, 'well, actually if you look at the newspaper reviews of my book, *they* all say it's quite good, but who knows? The devil can be anywhere I suppose'. It was so funny. This guy was so angry.

00:24:34 Molly

So yeah, I mean, I guess any other interesting stories that you can think of or bits and pieces from the archive?

00:24:43 Anna

In a way, an antidote to what you've just said I remember coming across again, Beckwith, but you know, the Lady Chatterley's Lover and how there was a lot of you know and controversy. And I would have thought, given how the library was when I first started here and it sort of seemed quite stuffy I would have thought would be quite stuffy back then as well, but this is him writing in support of not banning it and actually having access to it. And I thought that was quite interesting. I haven't come across it since the first time I saw it, so if you find it do let me know.

00:25:10 Niimi

Oh, that's so interesting, yeah, I'll keep my eyes open.

00:25:19 Anna

Yeah, because I thought that was very interesting because that's not what I would have expected.

00:25:26 Niimi

Not from Frank either.

00:25:30 Molly

It's interesting as well because I know that there is a lot of that, especially in trustee minutes. So those are really interesting because again, it is the history of how the library organises itself, runs

itself. And because we date from 1768 you have this kind of tracked history of the novel becoming a popular form of fiction and something that was perceived to be kind of a lower form of writing and mostly for women, yeah, which is really interesting.

00:26:04 Anna

Well and don't forget the band books, so like the pupils of pleasure.

00:26:08 Molly

Yes, which was voted to be removed, but then they couldn't find it, is that right?

00:26:15 Anna

I can't remember. I know they nearly got rid of it, and then afterwards they didn't like the fact that it was sort of censoring it so decided not to. There were two and I can't remember the name of the other one. That one just sticks in mind 'cause from what I remember it's a little bit like Tristram Shandy. You know, that's sort of written by a vicar but a bit racy.

00:26:33 Niimi

OK, there's lots of entertaining letters about the quality of like the books that the library has from patrons as well. Like I remember, there's kind of in a similar vein, one from a woman in 1898 or 89 or something like that where she she's writing to the library complaining about she calls it the book consumption. That's like not suitable for reading and should be taken off of the shelves and she's glad she got to it before her granddaughter did, or something like that. And we actually tried to track the book down to see what it was about, but we couldn't find it. That was another case of the archives having everything you need but the one thing you need.

00:27:16 Molly

Yeah, there's the last property notices as well. You were talking about them.

00:27:21 Anna

Yeah, they're fabulous and just the way that they're written as well. So people leaving their walking sticks, or I think a packet of meat or something and you know. They're just brilliant.

00:27:32 Niimi

I did find one letter that I quite liked, 'cause I'm interested in fashion history just kind of as a hobby and there was a letter from a woman, I think in the 1870s being like, oh, I've left my mother of Pearl inlaid bookmark and my parasol in the library like please if you find them, can you get them for me?

00:27:51 Molly

That definitely says something about the kinds of people who were members in that period.

00:27:54 Niimi

Yeah, definitely, but I remember just thinking like ohh I'd want that back as well.

00:27:59 Anna

That's just reminded me as well, the other interesting thing we've got is that little bit of material haven't we? cloth from the uniform

00:28:04 Niimi

Yeah, so this again was we've got a lot of boxes of letters from like the latter half of the 18th century, which is why a lot of these are kind of 1890s or 1880s. But I think this was like 1883 or something like that. It's a letter from a tailor, because I think the library used to have like maybe a member of the Army posted outside the library as a kind of guard or something.

00:28:26 Anna

Yeah they were ex-army servicemen. They were downstairs. Yes, to have a counter so you know where we've got the exhibition displays now there was a counter which is actually out at store. I've got the pictures in the archive that you'll see. It looks a lot grander than the current thing that's at store, but they were posted down there. There was little hoist so people could come in or send their servants in and not even have to come upstairs. The books would be sent up and down in the hoist, so that's why they were stationed down there.

00:28:59 Niimi

Yeah, but there's this letter is from a tailor. Obviously, the libraries written to them asking to get some kind of like specialised Leeds Library uniform for them. It's so sweet, they talk about having like the Leeds Library embroidered onto the pocket and they've included this gorgeous like really well-preserved piece of like really high-quality wool, like Navy Royal blue fabric In the middle of the letter that's still there, which was such an amazing find.

00:29:16 Anna

It's really nice, isn't it? And again, that sort of brings people to life. Instead of like 'we have this person who used to be stationed outside' there's a little glimpse into what they were wearing.

00:29:36 Niimi

It's not just a list of names, you know. It's what they did, what their days were like, what people thought of them.

00:29:40 Anna

Isn't something to. that you might not come across it yet. I'm sure there's a bit of a controversy with one of the commissioners that they employed. I'm sure I came across something.

00:29:51 Niimi

I'll keep my eyes open for that too. We love controversies in the archives.

00:29:55 Anna

Yes, I don't know if they've been up to no good. I can't remember 'cause a lot of the archive. It's a long time since I've looked at it, so have this memory of seeing lots of things, but I can't remember where or when.

00:30:06 Niimi

It's always the way though someone will bring something up and you'll be like 'I've seen *something* about that in the archive' which is why I try to write things down.

00:30:12 Molly

But it is interesting how they do these archives really do kind of put colour into the life of how the library was back then. I know the the Morab library, we talked to Lisa from the library a few weeks ago and she they have a Cornish collection there, so it's not necessarily the libraries archive but it's a collection of things that have been donated, so they've got scrapbooks with different types of seaweed that people have donated and I'm talking about like meteorological readings from some a farmer, so he's kind of recorded them and then donated that, and images from kind of the surrounding area or photographs. There's an amazing photographic archive. And it kind of tells the history of that area in a really lovely way, I think.

00:31:06 Niimi

Yeah, I think it's similar here. I mean, it's a lot more words and letters based in our archives, what we have is letters. But even that still, it's just the little glimpses into people's lives where you kind of draw the conclusion that people are and will always be people like.

00:31:26 Molly

Nothing changes. That is what we keep coming back to.

00:31:29 Niimi

Yeah, exactly like some of my favourites that I've found from the letters in like the the 1880s are just a couple of letters from a reverends wife just being like 'Oh yes, sorry you're like we will return this book. I've been run off my feet with guests and like the the house has been, you know, kind of a complete mess.' She uses some kind of like lovely language for it. But yeah, it's just like that. Just sounds like my mum or something like that, you know? Maybe not in those words, but the sentiment's the same.

00:32:01 Molly

Yeah, it's nice. It's quite comforting.

00:32:04 Niimi

Yeah, yeah, exactly it. It really is

00:32:07 Anna

I Was gonna say one of the things that I also like are the testimonies that bring the people of the library to life. So again, I am going back to Beckwith, but he wrote out to people who used to work here in the past.

00:32:22 Niimi

Previous libraries.

00:32:24 Anna

To find out, you know, what do you remember. And there's some great fantastic descriptions within that that brings these people to life, and it makes you think what's the reflection of our time here. Yeah, you know if somebody looks back in 100 years who are we and how are we reflected? Will we be just these flat names on a sheet of paper?

00:32:45 Molly

No, we'll be podcasts!

00:32:46 Niimi

We'll be podcasters first and archivists second.

00:32:49 Anna

Some of us will, but not all of us.

00:32:50 Molly

We'll live on as podcasts.

00:32:51

But yeah, what were these people like? How did they interact? There's a little snippet about McAllister you know having to hide himself away from one of the members 'cause she kept bothering him and stuff like that and again nothing changes. Yeah, but it's, you know, those little details.

00:33:15 Niimi

I think that's why you go into archives, or you know any kind of thing. For me the like real shift in my thinking. I was like maybe 17 and like going round an old Abbey or something like that. Because that's what my family likes to do.

00:33:35 Anna

There's nothing wrong with that, I quite like an old abbey myself.

00:33:38 Niimi

Not at all, but I remember just kind of like walking around and thinking people just like me also did this hundreds of years ago. Like all of the people in history that you kind of think about in abstract like you know the Romans, or you know the mediaeval people. People from the Victorian, period are just people who lived in a different time. You probably would find some common ground or something to talk about with them, even if it's just the weather you know, I think it's really interesting.

00:34:05 Molly

And I think also that's part of the work that we do in terms of making the archive accessible and using it to tell stories, because often I think it is worth saying sometimes archival work and archives are really boring.

00:34:15 Niimi

Yeah, definitely.

00:34:22 Anna

I disagree I find them absolutely fascinating, but that might just be me

00:34:26 Molly

Yeah but I mean it's the information that you can glean from them and what context it provides and what it says in light of other historical kinds of context that's interesting.

00:34:40 Niimi

And it's worth it for the bits of personality that you find.

00:34:43 Molly

Exactly, I think what's interesting is doing the work and using it to tell stories I think, and that's always going to be really fascinating and important I think.

00:34:56 Anna

Yeah, we actually have somebody coming to use the archive tomorrow and they are doing PhD thesis and they're looking at women readers and their access to Dante Allegre? And so they're coming to look at our borrowing records, of course, which are not complete, but we've got enough for them to be looking at.

00:35:18 Molly

I suppose it is worth saying actually that the the library and archive is accessible to researchers for free, which we welcome.

00:35:28 Niimi

Go through the Leeds Library website if any of the stuff that we've talked about sounds interesting or relevant to you. I mean, even people just looking up family history. If you live in Leeds and you're looking up your family history. You can always feel free to drop me an email, I'll give it to Molly to pop in the description of the podcast or something like that.

00:35:49 Molly

Yeah, absolutely.

00:35:49 Niimi

Just drop me an email and I'll have a bit of a dig for you.

00:35:54 Molly

Wonderful, well thank you so much guys for chatting to me about the archive, I feel like I learned a lot of stuff that I didn't know before, I'm gonna have to get you to show me some of the the cloth. I'd love to see.

00:36:09 Molly

This has been a podcast from the Leeds Library. Links to more information about our guests and any works talked about can be found in the description. If you'd like to find out more about the Leeds Library and any of our upcoming events, please visit our website at www.theleedslibrary.org.uk or you can follow us on Twitter, Instagram or Facebook at the Leeds Library. Thank you for listening, and keep your eyes and ears peeled for more Tales from The Leeds Library in our future episodes released every Wednesday.