

An introduction to *Memory* exhibition by Jackie Kay

My name is Jackie Kay and I am the Chancellor of this University and the Writer in Residence.

I was thinking about memory and about all the varied ways we have of recording it. Archives are fascinating. Not only do they tell a certain story of their time, but also they hold up an interesting light to our own. The archives on display here, from the letters of Edith Sitwell, the Duke of Bridgewater's Ledger, to photographs of the staff outing to Hoylake and the boys trip to Kirkcudbright made me think of what was present in the past, but also of things that might be missing in our present. Staff outings anyone?

Our memory is perhaps already starting to function in a different way. We don't memorize in the way we used to, numbers, dates, and facts. People rarely write handwritten letters anymore, or keep them if they do. And in some ways our future records are more vulnerable than ever. I have selected a small sample of material from the University Library's Archive that I feel make us ask questions about record keepings, about work holidays, about authenticity. Can we deduce a true story from a ledger? Does having accurate records encourage us to make things up? What will happen to our memory in the future if we only keep digital records? Perhaps the future will see a return to photograph albums, to handwritten letters, to original documents?

I'm interested in how journeys and trips are memorable – how we can literally take a trip down memory lane, when we have been somewhere different from usual. I'm also interested in the sense of community we can glean from these archives, and in which places today best give us a sense of community. Where better than a library? The keeper of records; the key to the past is surely one to the future as well. It is only by being intimately in touch with our past that our future is in safe hands. A library is a safe pair of hands. There's much to cherish and love about our libraries. I thought I would start our year-long *Dear Library* Project by thinking about memory, about archives, about what records we hold dear and why.

I was fascinated to come across the Duke of Bridgewater's Ledger. It made me think about stories that are recorded and the ones that are not. It made me think of our potentially ledger-less future! The Archive photographs reminded me of an old family photograph taken in the island of Mull. In turn this inspired me to write a new poem about it.

When I ran the workshop based on our library's Archives, I asked people to think of a family photograph and what of what might have happened moments or years before the photograph was taken and what might have happened years after. Time is a loop stitch. We might be losing our handwriting, but hopefully we are not losing our minds.

In addition to materials from the Archive, I have chosen artworks from the University's Art Collection that reflects on themes of memory and journey. **Adrian Henri's** delicate lithograph prints – produced at the Manchester Print Workshop based in Salford in the 1980s' – describe times spent visiting and holidaying in Normandy, Northern France. Also well known as a poet, his poem *Souvenir* is reproduced here alongside the prints.

Playing with our sense of time and place, **Simon Faithfull's** black and white film *0°00 Degrees Navigation*, shows the artist travelling along the 'hypothetical construct' of the Greenwich Meridian Line as a physical route. He obsessively walks, climbs and swims the route across urban and rural landscapes in the UK.

Also exploring unusual geographies, **Darren Almond** describes his *Fullmoon* photographs as "intentionally concerned with memory and chance...light and time" as he travels the globe to capture ghostly images during full moon lunar phases.

Weegee (aka Arthur Fellig) captures a unique scene at Coney Island beach, New York, in the early 1940s. Better known as a real-life crime photographer, the light-hearted image shows thousands of beach-goers enjoying a hot summer, in the years following the Great Depression.

Do please contribute to our memory wall. Perhaps something has been triggered for you looking at this exhibition. Maybe you're taking your own trip down memory lane? Perhaps you remember a precious letter, or once keeping a ledger of your own, or even a staff trip? We'd be fascinated to read your stories.

Thank you. Enjoy.

Jackie Kay
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Memory is part of the *Dear Library* project. *Dear Library* is a collaboration between the University of Salford Libraries, Archive & Special Collections; University of Salford Art Collection and Salford Community Libraries. The project was inspired by a similar project which Jackie Kay was involved with at the Scottish Book Trust.

Dear Library

For more information about the Dear Library project, including upcoming events, Email: DearLibrary@salford.ac.uk | twitter: [@TheLibraryUoS](https://twitter.com/TheLibraryUoS)

Archives

Archive images are reproduced from originals in the University Archive & Special Collections, including images from the *Royal Technical College photographic album*. Email: i.johnston@salford.ac.uk | online: www.salford.ac.uk/library/archives

Art Collection

For more information about the exhibition, contact the Art Collection Team
Email: artcollection@salford.ac.uk | twitter: [@UoSArts](https://twitter.com/UoSArts)

Salford Community Libraries

For more information about local libraries, visit:
<http://www.salfordcommunityleisure.co.uk/libraries>