



Royal College
of Nursing

Library and Archive Service

Review of the year 2020



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I thoroughly enjoyed this. I have long COVID and have slowly started to do learning activities again. This was just so uplifting.”

Event attendee

Introduction

Whilst 2020 was not a year anyone expected, the RCN Library and Archive Team rose to the challenge to achieve a range of fantastic events and projects in order to support our members and visitors, in the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated change within the team as we moved quickly to provide a near seamless service to members from our homes. We streamlined our services and swiftly launched an improved webchat to make it easier to contact us.

Our members responded by using our digital collections more than ever. At our peak we had double the usual number of eBook downloads. We continued to add to our eBook and eJournal collections to meet demand, as well as accelerating the number of records available in the digital archive. Work was undertaken to improve online access to our collections, including making RCN publications easier to find on the library catalogue.

We underwent an internal audit of our service, which focused on whether we deliver value for money for RCN members across the UK. The outcomes were positive, and we demonstrated to the auditors that we are an efficient and member-focused service.

The public events and member training moved entirely online within days of the pandemic restrictions in March. We launched *Time to*, a new events series which offered members space to engage in wellbeing-related activities. In September, we introduced *Know Hows*, group training sessions on critical appraisal and database searching.

Our new permanent exhibition *Who Cares? A History of Emotions in Nursing* was opened in January 2020 and we launched our first exclusively digital exhibition 'The Many-Faced Myths of Nursing'. We were nominated for a Museums+Heritage award for our Wandering Womb exhibition and made the shortlist for the Digital Preservation Coalition's *Most Outstanding Digital Preservation Initiative in Commerce, Industry and the Third sector* for a sector first in making the RCN Congress archive digitally available to our members.



Facts and figures

Enquiries and social media

4,700 Twitter followers
710 Instagram followers
460 Facebook followers



1,121 telephone enquiries



1,336 email enquiries



Collections



books added to the collection



223,187 full-text journal
articles downloaded



40,422 items transferred
to digital archive

4,677 archive items made
available to the public

7,281 digital items made
available to members



2,609
attendees
at events

433
attendees at
online Know Hows



literature searches
undertaken

Events and exhibitions

 Follow 4,188 followers



Events

**11,952 visitors to
online exhibitions**




**600+ UK towns
represented at
online events**




**51 different countries
represented at
online events**



 This has been very useful, and I would highly recommend it to my friends who are struggling with databases. Very comprehensive yet easy to understand explanations.”

Know how to search British Nursing Index attendee

 This was excellent. I have learnt so much and realised that I can write creatively! This can now be used in how I plan my writing more effectively and creatively.”

Royal Literary Fund workshop attendee

2020 Highlights



Growing team

We welcomed Lee Kattenhorn back from sabbatical and Cathryn Peppard began in post as the information manager.

Our successful graduate trainee scheme continued, and we welcomed Stella Swain, Jamie Yu and Kavell Dennis to the team.

Emma Taylor joined us from RCN Scotland for a secondment as the information manager, as Cathryn currently acts up as the joint head of the Library and Archive Service.



Awards

We were nominated for two high profile industry awards: Museums+Heritage Awards and Digital Preservation Coalition Awards. Our temporary exhibition *Wandering Womb* was shortlisted for Temporary or Touring Exhibition of the Year and the launch of a sector leading member-only digital archive was a finalist for Most Outstanding Digital Preservation Initiative in Commerce, Industry and the Third sector, respectively.

We successfully reaccredited as an Accredited Archive Service.



Media and publications

Nursing Times featured our *Wake Up Slackers!* exhibition. Our archive team's forward thinking and creative collecting techniques for COVID-19 was highlighted in several heritage sector articles.

Mandy Watson and Julie Key each had articles published on literature searching in the *British Journal of Nursing*. Frances Reed wrote about the service scrapbooks for the Women's History Network Journal.

Teresa Doherty curated and wrote the introduction for a collection of 30 nurses' biographies, for which Sarah Chaney contributed two nurse-biographies, in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Sarah also authored an article for the *BMJ Medical Humanities journal*.



Professional conferences

With activity moving online, we kept a high profile in our sector. We hosted our first Nursing Librarians conference, which drew an international audience. Phil Segall and Dawn Williams presented posters at the M25 Library Conference. Fiona Bourne and Katherine Chorley spoke at several archive events on collecting during the pandemic.

Our previous graduate trainees and Anna Semmens presented at a CPD25 library event discussing the experience of running a graduate trainee scheme. Several of the team spoke at history of nursing events, including Teresa Doherty at the international Florence Nightingale Conference, and Sarah Chaney at the University of Chester.

Service development

The first UX project in 2020 gathered user feedback on the Library and Heritage Centre prompting improvements early in the year. We installed group study tables in the journals area, increasing the study space available to members. After March, we carried out user testing of our online RCN Digital Archive and of our archive catalogue, CalmView; we will be implementing our next improvement plan in 2021.

In March, we closed the Library and Heritage Centre in line with government restrictions. Our extensive online offer enabled us to deliver an almost seamless member service, with staff keeping our existing opening hours for online enquiries. Anticipating demand, we made improvements to our postal loan processes. In the summer, we began postal loans again and introduced a click and collect service, which, with the help of our HQ Reception colleagues, enabled members to pick up books they had requested.

Our document delivery service request form has been simplified to ensure members make the most of this service whilst our physical collections are inaccessible. The British Library helped by removing password restrictions on documents whilst COVID-19 measures are in place.

We upgraded our webchat software at the start of 2020. There is now a link to webchat on relevant library and archive webpages, making it easier for users to contact us. This contributed to a 79% year-on-year increase in the number of webchats received. The new software allowed us to introduce screensharing, greatly improving our ability to support members. We collaborated with partners at other libraries to test and improve our practices.

To improve our service to members, we held peer observation sessions, giving each other constructive feedback on real-time enquiries. Each session focused on a different area, including email and webchat; the feedback informing our in-house discussions and training. Both webchat and email enquiry responses received improved feedback in our annual user survey.

Our bid for the CILIP Marketing and Communications Group Research bursary was successful. This funded an external facilitator to run two marketing workshops for us. We are implementing the actions coming out of these workshops to improve our marketing during 2021 and help us to reach out to even more members.





Home Contact Log in [BECOME A MEMBER](#)

College of x +
n.org.uk/library

Search



Library

Europe's largest nursing-specific collection

Books Journals and Databases

Subject Guides

Exhibitions and Events

Support

Archives

About us

I'm looking for

Search for books, journals and e-resources

You are here: Library

30,000

1,100

54

MacBook Air



Really lovely to spend time with members. Great that it was an intergenerational group."

Inclusion café event attendee

Learning and teaching

Whilst our 1-2-1 literature search training offer has been available online and in person since 2018, in 2020 the increased awareness of the service has seen attendance up 23%. To meet demand and maintain our service standards, we moved to Zoom as our preferred platform, which offered increased functionality for members. This allowed us to introduce a digital drop-in and maintain this service throughout the year.

We launched a series of online member training webinars *Know Hows*, which show members how to carry out literature searches with a range of our online tools. These proved popular with 395 attendees in our first 12 sessions. Member feedback was resoundingly positive, and we are exploring new topics to offer in 2021.

The implementation of Zotero as a referencing management tool continued, with training offered to our RCN colleagues. We began to develop member training sessions on Zotero, which we will deliver in 2021. The literature search service now uses Zotero, saving time and producing clearer search results for members and staff.

“The RCN library is such a valuable resource and one which will be a very good friend to me as a student nurse for the next few years.”

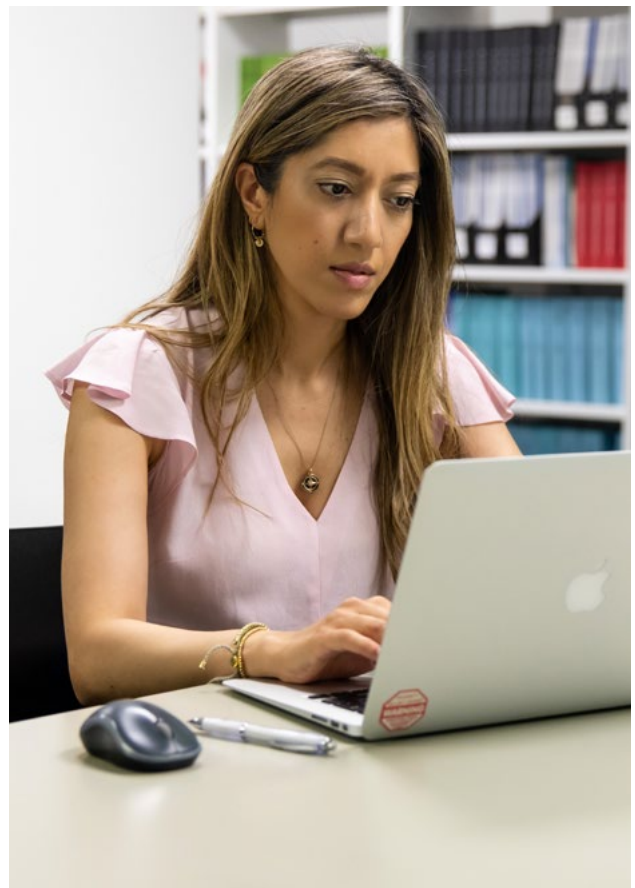
Get online, get ahead attendee

“Super helpful and simple, clear explanation. This will be helpful for my course and for my professional development. Thank you very much!”

Know how to search CINAHL attendee

Our internal and external partners created exciting and challenging work for us. We collaborated with the RCN Prince of Wales cadets project to enable it to run as an online course. We contributed to the RCN Education, Learning and Development strategy workstreams and continued to implement online reading lists to support courses and other activities such as #RCN2020. We began a new partnership with the Royal Literary Fund, enabling us to offer a range of writing workshops and training to members, complementing our existing programme of literature search workshops.

The independent learning offer increased with the launch of our interactive *How to undertake a literature search* tool, which takes members step-by-step through literature searching. We updated six videos, and with the support of our professional leads and forums completed our annual review of the 61 subject guides.



Outreach

We supported eight student recruitment face-to-face events before activity moved online. We contributed to the UK-wide online recruitment events in the Autumn, as well as hosting library specific webinars *Get online, get ahead* to highlight the RCN Library offer for new and prospective members.

We supported eight face-to-face RCN conferences, continuing professional development events, and regional activities. We then proactively attended online events and through our regional contacts work provided updates and support across the country.

We are involved in two ongoing RCN workstreams; the first on RCN representative recruitment and the second on the developing student ambassador role. We contributed to an *Activate* newsletter for reps as well as other RCN member publications.

At the start of 2020, we launched our Archive's Super Users project, which now has 20 RCN staff from 15 different RCN departments, regions, and country offices onboard. The super users work with the archive team to ensure that records from across the organisation are safely deposited in the RCN Archive and ensure we can preserve the RCN's corporate memory.

We hosted our first Nursing Librarians Conference as a webinar. It was on the theme of *Healthy Libraries: How we can support wellbeing* and enabled us to reach over 50 librarians working with students and registered professionals from across the nursing profession. The webinar enabled librarians to share experiences and learn from best practice so they can implement ideas in their own workplaces to support nursing staff.



I am a first-year nursing student and work as an HCA so gained some experience in caring for COVID-19 patients although not in ICU which is an area of interest. Just listening to experts in their fields of nursing was motivational for me and highlighted the need for teamwork and respect during these difficult times. Thank you!"

Nursing a pandemic event attendee



Marketing and social media

2020 was another successful year for our social media channels with follower numbers continuing to grow. Our new social media group is responsible for publishing and managing content and allows us to plan our social media activity more strategically than in previous years.

Social media has provided important opportunities to support the museums sector. We ran caption competitions and a *Who's that Nurse?* game with vouchers for the Florence Nightingale Museum's shop on offer for the winners. We also hosted an Instagram takeover by the Migration Museum, helping them to promote their new exhibition *The Heart of the Nation* on migration and the making of the NHS.

Twitter continues to be our most active social media channel. We gained over 500 new Twitter followers in 2020 and sent 1,097 tweets in total, which received 1,744,700 impressions overall. Popular tweets included those highlighting black nurses through history, including one about Mary Seacole's statue which was our most popular tweet ever, with over 200 likes and more than 28,000 impressions. At a time when the Black Lives Matters movement has been very prominent, we highlighted the work of black nurses through history and these were well received – including a thread on black nurses who moved to the UK to work.

Our Facebook page gained 160 new page likes during the year, taking our total to over 460 likes. We promoted some of our exhibitions and events through Facebook ads campaigns, including our *Many-Faced Myths of Nursing* exhibition. Two of our most popular posts came from the *Who's that Nurse?* competition, including one featuring Sarah Swift which was shared by the RCN Northern Ireland Facebook account and five other accounts, resulting in a reach of more than 3,800 people.

We reached 710 Instagram followers by the end of 2020, up 273 for the year. In total our posts received over 56,557 impressions. Our most popular Instagram post was an RCN protest poster produced in 1989 to oppose NHS reforms. The post which reached the most people – 591 in total – featured famous nurses used in Top Trump style cards as part of our online *Many-Faced Myths of Nursing* exhibition. We also posted 'behind-the-scenes' pictures of staff working from home, along with their pets.

On YouTube, we published five new video tutorials in 2020 which have received over 1,300 views. Our *Quick look at Library Search* video was the most streamed with over 400 views, followed by our video on how to access and download eBooks. We also posted recordings from thirteen history of nursing and wellbeing events. The most popular of these was the *Total Pain: Cicely Saunders and the History of the Emotions* event with over 550 views and *Hidden Lives, Untold Stories* with over 450.

Customer Services Information Assistants Janan Nuri and Phil Segall worked with the RCN Digital Communications Team as temporary social media assistants in May-June. This was a great opportunity, which developed knowledge within the team and has helped improve how we approach connecting with members and the public on social media.



It's set to be hot hot hot today ☀️ Stay hydrated and wear sun cream if you're heading out!

We're ready (with our water bottles) to answer your calls 📞, emails ✉️ and webchats 💬

We're available 9am-7pm on weekdays and 9am-5pm on Saturdays. Contact info: bit.ly/2YtRe2F
#WFH



We had lots of fun as a team here @theRCN testing out our new @Useum #walkingtour, which explores the links between #histnursing and #suffragette movement.

Useum is free to download in app stores + our tour can be read anywhere. Discover some brilliant
#medhistory #HERstory



Janan Nun and Useum

4:45 PM · Feb 20, 2020 · Twitter Web App



Even though our libraries remain closed to visitors for the moment, **postal loans are available** 📬 📖

If there's a book or article you need that's not available online, drop us a line and we'll send you a copy 📧

Find out more: rcn.org.uk/library/librar...



1:30 PM · Oct 23, 2020 · Twitter Web App



What a night! Big thank you to everyone who came to our exhibition launch @theRCN last month. These great snaps by @justinodesmondo perfectly capture the vibe!

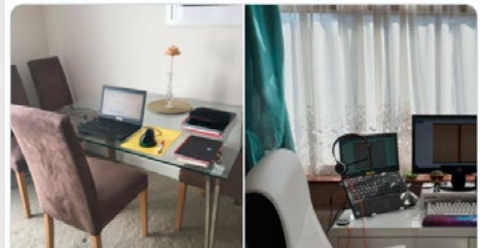
And so the ribbon is cut, we've raised a toast, and now it's open to all: rcn.org.uk/news-and-event...
#WhoCares



Hello Twitter! 🙌
Tonight Caroline and Janan are here to answer your calls, webchats, emails and tweets until 7pm 📞 📧 📧 📧

Take a sneaky peek at our desks (from a safe social distance of course)

#WorkFromHome #WFH #librarylife



Talks under way @theRCN tonight for our #Valentines event. Thanks everyone for coming!



6:40 PM · Feb 12, 2020 from Royal College of Nursing · Twitter for iPhone



Very professional handling of some complex questions in a short period of time.
Great speakers and a vibrant chat from participants – great buzz!”

Florence Nightingale at Home event attendee

Congress digitisation

For the first time in its history Congress was unable to take place though a series of online events was developed in its place.

Another digital first was achieved with the online launch of the Congress archive of speeches, debates, press coverage and publications.

The archive recordings, previously on cassette and video tapes, were digitised and transcribed so that members can now experience every recorded meeting back to 1982. The Congress publications have been digitised with the help of RCN member-volunteers from the History of Nursing Forum.

Congress has its origins in the RCN Representative Body meeting of 1968, so we ensured these documents are also discoverable online. This includes the daily press bulletins containing highlight headlines; resolutions and matters for discussion with associated debates and voting; the report of Council on progress towards previous resolutions. Members can investigate the history of resolution themes or discover key moments when prominent members and politicians delivered thundering speeches. The digitisation project took more than a year to complete, going live on the member-only digital archive website in June.

The screenshot displays the 'Royal College of Nursing Congress Archive' interface. At the top, it shows the reference number 'RCN25B', the title 'Royal College of Nursing Congr...', and the date range '1968-2019'. A search bar is present with the text 'Search within...' and a 'FOLDER' button. Below the search bar, a grid of document thumbnails is shown, each with a folder icon. The thumbnails are labeled with the year of the Congress: 1968, 1969, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, and 1981. On the left side, there is a dark blue box with the text 'ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING ARCHIVE' and a message: 'No refinements available for these results'. A 'Show more' button is located in the top right corner.

“It’s fantastic to be able to look back at previous Congress highlights. This is such a powerful resource for members to see how far we have come and the ways in which Congress has shaped the whole nursing profession from creating nurse prescribing to making nursing an all graduate profession. Congress is very much the beating heart of RCN activism and being able to relive some of the past debates can give us valuable tools for building the future of nursing”

Dave Dawes, RCN Chair of Council

Exhibition: Who cares?

In January 2020, we launched a new major exhibition *Who Cares? A History of Emotions in Nursing*. Developed collaboratively with researchers from the Centre for the History of the Emotions (Queen Mary, University of London) and RCN members, the exhibition explored the history of emotions in nursing through six main themes: Death, War, Faith, Love, Romance and Protest.

The centrepiece of the exhibition is a new stained-glass window exploring the emotions of care designed by artist Rachel Mulligan, with contributions from nurses

at three stained glass workshops held around England. Objects on display included Florence Nightingale's bible from the RCN Collection and loans from the University of Reading, Royal London Hospital, the Cuming Museum and Kings College London: some on display to the public for the very first time.

The exhibition proved popular, attracting a higher number of visitors to our space than in the two previous years: 9,153 people visited between January and March 2020, with our January exhibition visitor numbers up by 38% on 2019. The exhibition can be viewed online at: rcn.org.uk/whocares





I would recommend the RCN study workshops as I have really utilised the information from the events in my personal and professional life.”

Time to sketchbook event attendee

International Year of the Nurse and Midwife

The International Year of the Nurse and Midwife began with the launch of our *Who Cares?* exhibition by RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary Donna Kinnair in January.

We launched a walking tour *Cavendish Square Herstories* – on the Useem app, giving exhibition visitors another way to enhance their visit and learn more about the history of nursing through the local area.

Alongside this, our temporary exhibition and event series on the history of nursing registration continued, including a well-received talk by historian Steven Bourne on Black nurses in Britain before Windrush. We partnered with researchers in the Surgery and Emotions project at the University of Roehampton for a Valentine's Late, at which nearly 100 people enjoyed a range of talks and activities, including a Cherry Ames treasure hunt.

As part of the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth we supported the Nightingale Museums exhibition *Nightingale in 200 Objects, People and Places* by lending them several items chosen by RCN History of Nursing Forum members.

Our new exhibition was produced in collaboration with the RCN History of Nursing Forum. *The Many-Faced Myths of Nursing* was launched online on Nurses' Day in May. This exhibition explored the myths and stereotypes in nursing from Nightingale onwards. Our associated events programme included a virtual book club in partnership with The Women's Library at the LSE and an online talk by RCN President Anne Marie Rafferty on Florence Nightingale's Legacy, attended by 151 people.

Our online events proved extremely popular. In the period from April to December 2020, we increased the number of events held by 175%, while the number of attendees increased 209%. By the end of 2020, we had reached an enormous 2,609 people through events alone, with members joining from around the UK and public activities reaching an international audience. We used the success of our online events as an opportunity to develop new programmes. In April, we started weekly creative sessions for members to take some time out and focus on their wellbeing during the pandemic. Activities in the *Time to* series included drawing, poetry, yoga, meditation, baking and gardening.

In response to Black Lives Matter, we began an Inclusion Café Book Club, where members could read, learn and discuss material on black history and diversity. In September, we began a partnership with the Royal Literary Fund, to provide writing workshops and 1-2-1s to support members with their writing skills, from reports to publications. Finally, in November, we launched a series of public activities recording the impact of the pandemic, featuring live interviews with nursing staff on their experiences during 2020. These will be added to the RCN Archive as part of the record of the COVID-19 outbreak.



Image by Federica Ciotti

Collections

Members used our eBook and eJournals more than ever this year, and we looked for ways to enhance our offer.

One notable addition to our collection was adding UK-wide online member access to *Nursing Times* and from November we added the tenth edition of the *Royal Marsden Manual of Clinical and Cancer Nursing Procedures* online.

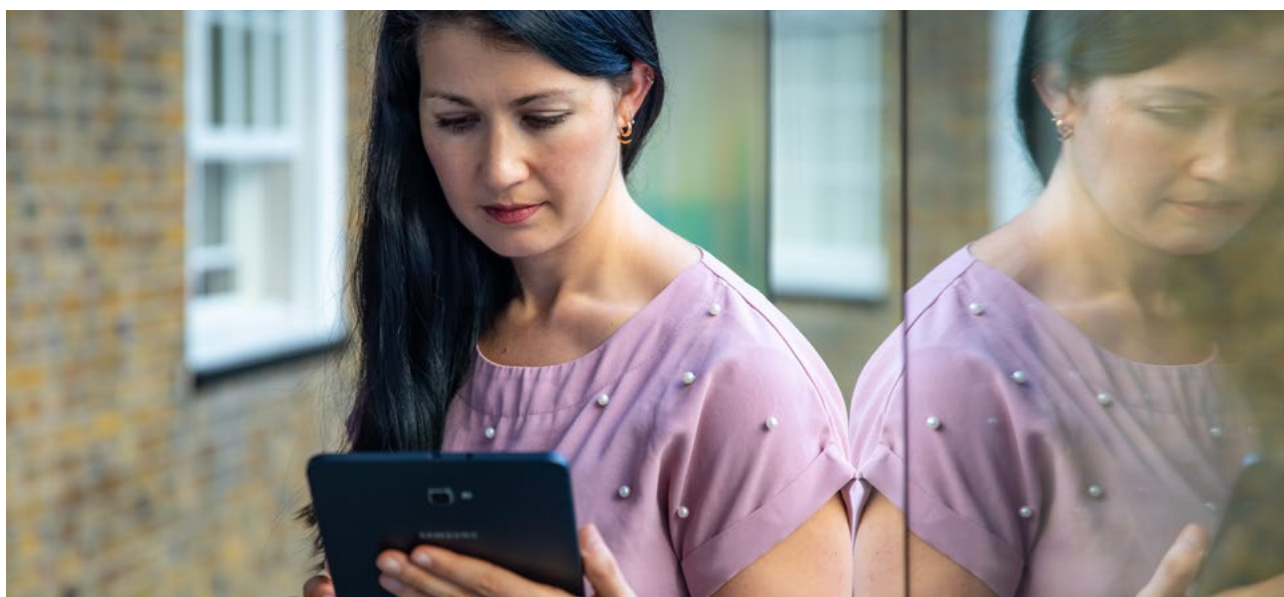
This latter resource supports the RCN's Education, Learning and Development Strategy, providing members with easy digital access to the established expert resource in the field. It combines; *Royal Marsden Manual of Clinical Nursing Procedures (Professional Edition and Student Edition)* and *Royal Marsden Manual of Cancer Nursing* into one resource and in two months it received over 2,000 content views.

With no access to our physical book collection during two lockdowns, our eBook collection came into its own. We saw our top title usage increase by 28% compared to 2019, with the eBook *Care Planning* used 842 times. Unique users of our eBook collection grew by almost 1,000 and this year saw us add over 500 more eBook titles to our collection. The removal of 20% VAT payable

on eBooks and online journals from the 1 May 2020 provided us with much needed financial support to provide additional digital content to our members. Our suppliers rose to the COVID-19 challenge by providing extensive free access to content. To capitalise on this, we added links to our library webpages to make this content easy to find.

Whilst our RCN publications digitisation programme was paused, work continued to make this unique collection searchable from our library catalogue. It is now possible to search everything published by the RCN on a specific topic by selecting 'RCN Collection' when searching our library catalogue. Later in the year, we added back issues of six RCN magazines, including *Bulletin*, to our digital archive.

The first day back at the Library and Heritage Centre in Cavendish Square in August was dampened by a flood in our store. The swift response of our building services and library team minimised damage to our historic stock. All 43 crates of books and journals will be restored and back on site in 2021. We will then continue our digitisation projects, COVID-19 permitting, to provide additional online access to our unique collection.



Archives

Going into 2020, we were extremely fortunate to have an established digital archive. When our physical collections became inaccessible, we swiftly moved our focus online - listing, sorting, uploading and cataloguing the extensive folders of RCN digital records.

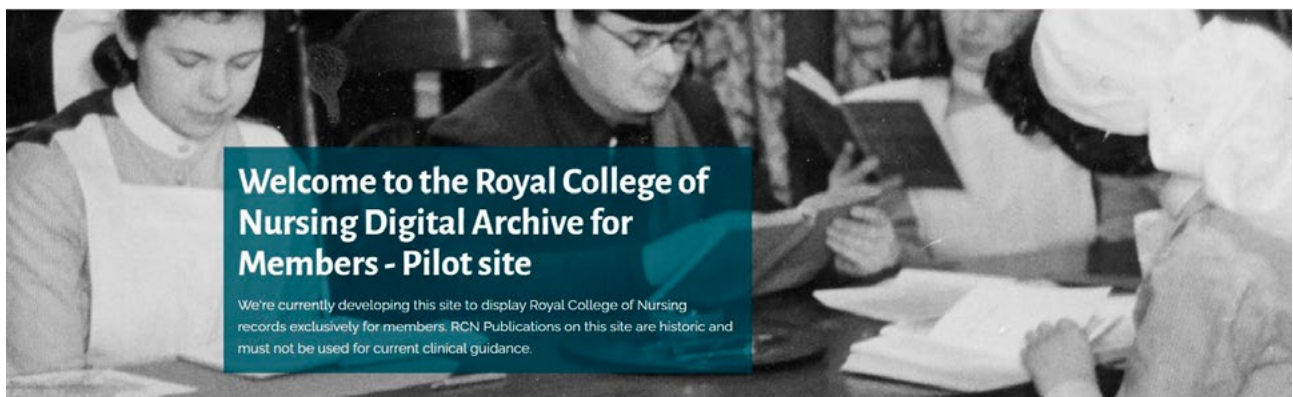
Unlike many archives, our team had a huge amount of material to work with, through the support of our IT team and our specialist providers. Our digital holdings also helped us answer enquiries throughout the year.

RCN History of Nursing Forum members continued to volunteer with the archive team all year, working at home transcribing and listing. We added hundreds of extra hours of work through their generosity. With the introduction of a groundbreaking member-only online digital archive website in March, we could share historic trade union records such as RCN Congress and the AGM records.

In July, we began the task of regularly archiving the RCN websites. We switched to using a remote environmental monitoring system for our storerooms in London and Edinburgh, ensuring that if we are locked out again in the future, we can safeguard the physical collections from a distance.

We continued to collect records of our *Staffing for Safe and Effective Care* campaign and activities from across the UK. Alongside planned work, a few unexpected collecting tasks became priorities, including COVID-19-related recordkeeping. Most of what the RCN does will be represented by the business records we currently collect, but a serious event creates a unique response. Our digital archive supplier Preservica is supporting our efforts to collect the RCN COVID-19 experience, by providing us with free server storage space in perpetuity.

We have developed a COVID-19 Collecting Plan which we will review in 2021 with our directors and key senior managers. The College stepped up to the challenge which we captured as it happened. This will be a legacy of the huge effort made by the College and its members, which we will ensure is preserved and remembered in the future.



The Royal College of Nursing Archive holds the most important collection of nursing history in Europe, dating from the 1870s to the present day which capture the evolution of the profession.

This site has been created exclusively for RCN members to explore these collections privately, including records of past events such as Congress and the Annual General Meetings. For current events see the [RCN website](#).





The archive holds extensive corporate records, personal papers and oral histories from nurses, as well as photographs, postcards and badges available for research. Browse online here or explore different collections using the [archive catalogue](#).

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**The RCN represents nurses and nursing,
promotes excellence in practice and
shapes health policies**

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