

# Report on review of Finna portal from a user perspective

## Contents

Introduction	2
Summary of review of Finna	3
Summary of review of Trove and Black Country History portals	5
Conclusion and recommendations	7
<b>Appendices</b>	
1. Review of Finna portal	2
2. Review of Trove portal	8
3. Review of Black Country History portal	16
4. Interview questions	20
5. Summary of Interview 1	21
6. Summary of Interview 2	23
7. Project outline	25

Report prepared by:  
Alison Spence  
Cornwall Record Office, Cornwall Council  
Truro, UK  
[aspence@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:aspence@cornwall.gov.uk)

14th October 2014

## **Introduction**

### **Project aims**

The aim of this project was to examine the users' experience of the Finna cultural heritage portal, with a particular focus on how archival material is presented and accessed.

The project looked at the search process and also the way in which information about the context of the material and how to access it is communicated to those using the portal.

### **Procedure**

To assess the users' experience of Finna, I carried out a series of searches using the portal and documented the process. In addition, two users of the National Archives of Finland were asked to carry out searches using Finna and I interviewed them about the process and their experience of the portal.

To provide some comparison, I also reviewed two other cultural heritage portals: *Trove*, the portal managed by the National Library of Australia, and *Black Country History*, a portal bringing together material from a group of archive and museum services in the West Midlands in England. I reviewed these two sites in the same way as Finna, by carrying out a series of searches and documenting the process.

For all three portals, I also examined how digital material is delivered online and explored what options there were to browse the portal content.

### **Methodology**

In looking at each portal, I have taken the approach which perhaps the majority of general users take. I carried out my searches by using the simple search box and refined it through the facets. I did not use the advanced search options and did not read the help files.

## Summary of the user experience of Finna

This summary combines my own results and observations with those of the interviewees.

### Searching and managing the search results

Overall, I found Finna carried out searches well. I do not have the language skills to test its flexibility properly but interviewee 1 did try more complex search terms successfully.

- When the search results for archival material are returned, they are not grouped by collection, so it is hard to assess whether the material belongs to a few or many collections or record creators. The **Part of facet** does list collections within the search results but it also shows series records and items. It does not appear to list all of the collections. For example, my search brought up two archives for the *Mannerheimin Lastensuojelulitto ry*, but only one was included in the facet list. As the contents of the facet are listed by number of hits, this makes it easy to miss specific entries. Interviewee 1 observed that the two current National Archives databases, Astia and Vakka, display the names of the collections in a list after a search, allowing the user to see the number of collections represented by the search results and to go straight to a specific collection, if they want to do so.
- For sorting the results, the Date option is useful. Unfortunately, other ways of sorting lists of archival material are limited. Author is not applicable (it does not work on records creator, I think) and Title does not really work with material from the National Archives because the title often starts with the cataloguing structure identifier.
- There are instances when it would be useful to refine search results by removing a subset of records, for example, all entries for an author whose name is the same as the place name the user is searching on. I understand that this is possible with the next version of the software Finna runs on and so this feature will become available when Finna is upgraded.
- When a user views the metadata for an archival series record in Finna and then opens the archive structure to see the items within the series, they can click on an item record to view the metadata. However, when the item record is displayed, the archive structure is presented as closed, so the user has to re-open the structure to view and select another item. If they wish to view several items, this could be frustrating. For National Archives material, the structure should be displayed in alphabetical order.

### Layout and labels

- Some of the labels within Finna could be clearer. For archival material, **Show archive structure** may not be helpful for a new user of archives who does not know that archives have a structure. Similarly, **Records creator** in Vakka database may raise questions for those unfamiliar with the names of the National Archives databases. For archival items held by the National Archives, a location field is included. In the metadata, **original context (Vakka?)**, this indicates the archive where the records are located. However, it is abbreviated, so the Kansallisarkisto is given simply as KA. As the location is given in Finna under **Material provided by** perhaps this field could be hidden.
- With reference to the facets, **Year of manufacture** does not suit archival material very well, nor perhaps library material. This seems a more museum-orientated term.
- Interviewee 1 thought that the layout was cluttered and could be confusing. In particular, he observed that the large place markers for digital thumbnails take up a lot of space and seem unnecessary when they are all empty.

## Moving between Finna and partner websites

When users view the metadata for archival items in Finna which are not available online as digital content, they need to know how to access the physical material.

- In the case of material held by the National Archives Service, users are offered options to help them learn more about the records and access the records. Entries for archival items contain links to order the documents and to submit an access request if access to the material is restricted because of privacy or other legislation. However, both these links take the user to a log-in page for the National ArchivesqAstia website, which does not contain any contextual information about the website or explain why the user has to log in. Likewise, the user can follow the link to the National ArchivesqVakka database to find out more about the records creator, but again, the user does not receive any explanation about where they have been taken to and whose data they are viewing.
- For material held by other partner organisations, there are generally no links within the item record to lead the user to a website or explanation of how they can access the material.
- Finna does not contain any background information about the partner organisations nor links to their home websites, either from the list of partner organisations accessed through the menu at the top of each page, or within the pages on which users view the metadata for the material listed in their search results. As a result, if users want to go to a partner's home website to look for information about access to their material, or background information about the organisation and its aims and collecting policy, they have to go to the internet and carry out a general search to find the home website.
- Looking at some of the partner websites, I was surprised to note the absence of links to Finna. The National Archives has one among its list of databases; the National Library's is prominent but it goes to their own version of Finna and I did not see a link to the full version of Finna. I also looked at the Finnish language websites for the Labour Archives and Forestry Museum of Lapland but could find no link to Finna, although they contained links to other catalogues.

## Digital content

Access to digital content on or via Finna varied. Some articles are only accessible online to particular groups of users but lots of content is freely available and easy to access.

- The quality of some of the digital photographs available on Finna was disappointing. Some were heavily watermarked. Others did not have watermarks but were quite small and it was not possible to zoom in. In particular, the Finnish Defence Forces photographs are quite small and it was hard to see the detail in some images. Some photographs were clearly at a low resolution and were not very sharp, making the detail indistinct. I recognise that the quality of the images submitted is the decision of each partner and they may have reasons for not including good quality images.
- By contrast, some digital content was excellent. Photographs of many of the physical objects were sharp and a good size for viewing the detail. The quality of the maps I viewed through the Helsinki University Library website was superb.

## **Trove portal: main observations**

Trove provides access to a wide range of material from many partners. The search options were generally useful but navigating the site was not always straightforward. The aspects of Trove which I found less successful were similar to the issues with Finna. I have summarised the main points here; they are discussed in detail in the full review of the portal, found in the appendices.

- Facets: generally, these are useful. However, the Date facet only allows the user to narrow down by decade (and then by specific year). If a user wants to search a twenty year period, this is not possible, nor to search from the middle of a decade to the middle of another eg. 1835-1845.
- The terminology and labels are library-orientated, which does not always fit other types of material. For example, material is described as *editions* so an archival item is headed *Edition details* and the button to find out access to the records says *Get this edition* (even for a whole archive collection). Under *Get this edition* [what I would describe as *access details* in archival terminology], the tab label is *Borrow* which is misleading and potentially confusing for people who have never accessed an archive or special collections library and may think they can borrow records as they would from a lending library. In the record entry, the field giving the date span of the collection is labelled *Published*.
- There is a lack of information about how to access original records or obtain copies and the link between Trove and the partner organisation varies. In one instance, I was taken to the item entry in the partner organisation's online catalogue. In a second, I was taken to the institution's homepage on their website. In a third, I was taken to a directory listing for the archive which did not include any web address.
- Digital content is not viewed within the portal. The user is taken to the digital object within the home website of the owner of the content. Each partner has their own way of presenting the content. The quality of the content (resolution, size), tools to view it and information about ordering copies or visiting in person, etc varied considerably. Once the user is taken out of the Trove portal, there was no quick link back to Trove and the search results.

## **Black Country History portal: main observations**

The Black Country History portal is a much smaller scale project. It has only eight partners and much less content. However, as it covers archival and museum material and includes digital content, it offers an interesting comparison.

- The options to refine the results of searches, at least for archival material, were limited. The facets were not very useful and did not appear to operate on all of the content within the search results. It was therefore very difficult to refine the search results sufficiently to focus the search and reduce the number of items to a manageable amount.
- The digital content was viewed within the website and was mostly at a good resolution and displayed at a useful size.
- The ability to browse content through highlighted collections and themes offered an interesting and useful way into the collections and showed the range of the content.
- The portal contains information about the contributing partners and there is a link on each record in the database to the contact page on the Black Country History portal for the partner organisation who holds that material. This is helpful, but a direct link to a collections-related page on the partner website would have been more efficient for the user.

## **Alternatives ways of accessing and exploring archival material**

Not all users want to carry out a search for a specific item. They wish to explore the portal, browse the contents and get an overview of the type of information and content which is available. Searching using words can be difficult for some people, particularly if they are not sure what words they need to enter to find what they want. Therefore, it is useful if cultural heritage organisations can offer users the option to browse their collections or explore them through visual tools.

I therefore looked at the browsing options within Finna, Trove and Black Country History.

### **Finna**

- There is a specific browse feature but the link is not very visible on the website.
- The lists of access words are mostly presented by the number of references to them in Finna, not alphabetically, even for authors' names, which makes it awkward to use.
- Variant terms for the same entity appear in the list with a different number of hits. For example,  *Venice*(504 hits) and  *Venice (Italy)*(306 hits).
- The browse choices (topic, region, etc) were useful and it was a helpful way to browse the content. It highlights the wide range of material and subject areas covered and suggested possibilities which I would not have considered searching for in Finna. This could be particularly useful for a student or researcher starting a new project.
- The collection highlights showcase some collections in detail and provide the new user with insight into the type and range of material on offer within the portal.
- The histogram for data searches in Finna is a useful tool and offers another way of browsing the collections on the website.

### **Trove**

The Trove portal does not appear to offer any option to browse the content. There were no online exhibitions and just one highlighted collection, the Australian Women's Weekly magazine.

### **Black Country History**

- This portal offers options to browse records relating to people, places, eras and subjects. The browse zones are displayed prominently on the home page.
- Within each zone, collections are highlighted and a link generates a search of the portal and returns a list of relevant search results. An introduction in each section outlines how users can also carry out their own search for similar material.
- A map interface for browsing and searching selected content on the portal is accessible on the home page, within the browse zones and on the initial search results page. As well as contained archive and museum material listed on the portal, it also provides access to historic environment records (information on listed buildings, ancient monuments, etc).

Both Finna and Black Country History offer helpful ways for users to browse the content of their sites. It is a pity that Trove does not offer this facility as well.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Finna is an excellent resource and brings together a wide range of material from many different partners. Both interviewees commented that they discovered new material in Finna. One discovered archival material which had not come to light in her searches using the National Archives own databases; the other found audio-visual material which he might not otherwise have come across.

Finna compares well to the other two portals which I reviewed. The facets work more effectively and offer useful ways of reducing and focusing search results. It handles digital material well.

Both interviewees were very experienced in using archives, although new to Finna. It would be interesting to seek feedback from some users who have little or no experience in using archives to see how they manage.

## Areas for development

- For archival material, some way of listing or otherwise identifying the collections included in the search results might assist some users to navigate the results more effectively and quickly.
- The browse feature is useful but could be improved. First of all, it could be made more visible. Also, some of the list of terms could be found more easily and quickly if they were arranged alphabetically, rather than by number of hits, as a user may have a search term in mind.
- All three portals did not manage the transition from the portal to the partner organisations well. Information about how to access original records or obtain copies is limited or non-existent. Some kind of link or explanation to cover this would be helpful.
- The transition between entries in Finna for material from the National Archives and the National ArchivesqAstia and Vakka databases could be improved. Is it possible to display information explaining where the user is being taken to and why?
- Within Finna, it would be helpful if there were links to the websites of the partner organisations, both on the page where they are all listed and also in each record. For the item records, the organisation is named under Material supplied by and there is a link to e-mail the organisation. Perhaps a link to the website could be inserted here. Under the organisation information, an indication of the percentage of the institution's collections included in Finna would help users understand the results of their search and see when they need to visit the home website of the institution to access more material.
- While I only checked a few websites, there appears to be limited promotion of Finna on the websites of the partner organisations. Better signposting from the partner organisations would help to promote the use of the portal and make users more aware that it exists; however, I recognise that this may be beyond the control of the Finna project team.

## **Appendices**

1. Review of Finna portal
2. Review of Trove portal
3. Review of Black Country History portal
4. Interview questions
5. Summary of interview 1
6. Summary of interview 2
7. Project outline

## Appendix 1 Review of Finna portal

I carried out a series of searches related to the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare [*Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto ry*] in order to try different aspects of Finna. I also used the browse feature to browse for records relating to the British Isles.

### Searches

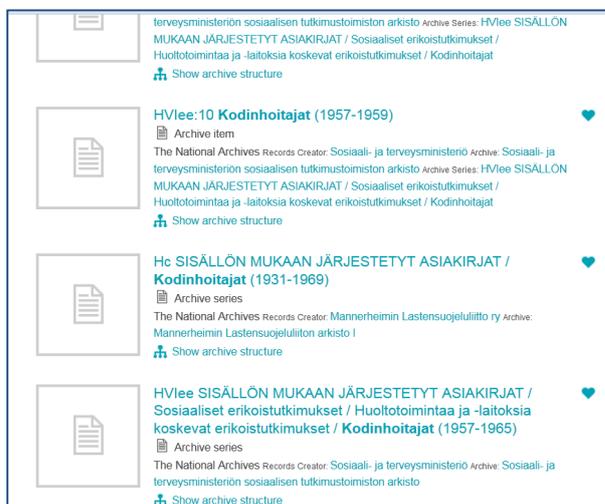
- Find out what records are held in the National Archives in Helsinki relating to home nurses [kodinhoitajat] within the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare.
- Find a book or article in English about the League.
- Look at photographs and articles available online which relate to the League.

**Background:** the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare was founded by Gustaf Mannerheim (1867-1951), the Finnish military leader and statesman. When it started, the League provided advice and training on public health, child welfare and maternal health and wellbeing, trained public health nurses, assisted families in the community and made policy recommendations to government. The League still operates today and defines its current aims as %the League] promotes the wellbeing of children and of families with children, increases respect for childhood and seeks to make it more visible, and sees that children's views are taken into account in public decision-making.+ (from organisation's website <http://www.mll.fi/en/> ).

- Search task: find out what records are held in the National Archives in Helsinki relating to the role of home nurses [kodinhoitajat] in the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare.**

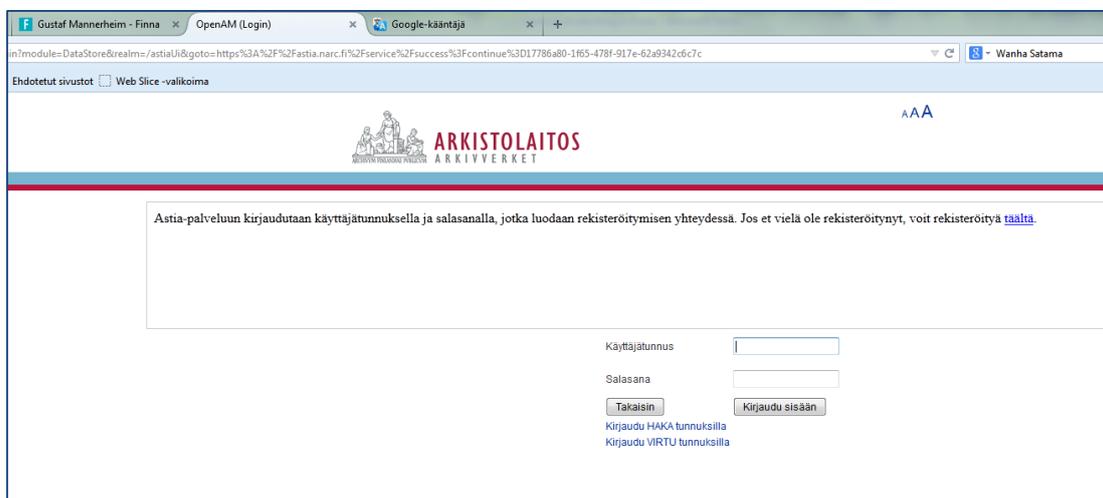
### Search process

- I went to the homepage of Finna and typed ~~u~~kodinhoitajatqin the simple search box.
- This returned 3,413 results from a range of content types.
- Next, I clicked on the facet for Document under content type, which narrowed the list down to 237 results.
- Next, I clicked on the down arrow on the Organisation facet and selected The National Archives from the list displayed. This reduced my list to 54 results.
- As I have a user account, I saved my search so that I could return to it easily.
- Each archive entry in the results overview gives the title assigned to that archival material and its date(s). Then it gives its level in the hierarchical structure (series, item), where it is held, the name of the records creator and the headings for the levels above this material, so name of archive, series heading, etc. Each component has a label. The information from the archival tree is all links, so I could go directly to any of these elements if I wanted to. Lastly, there is a link ~~u~~show archive structureqwith a symbol which looks a little like an octopus.



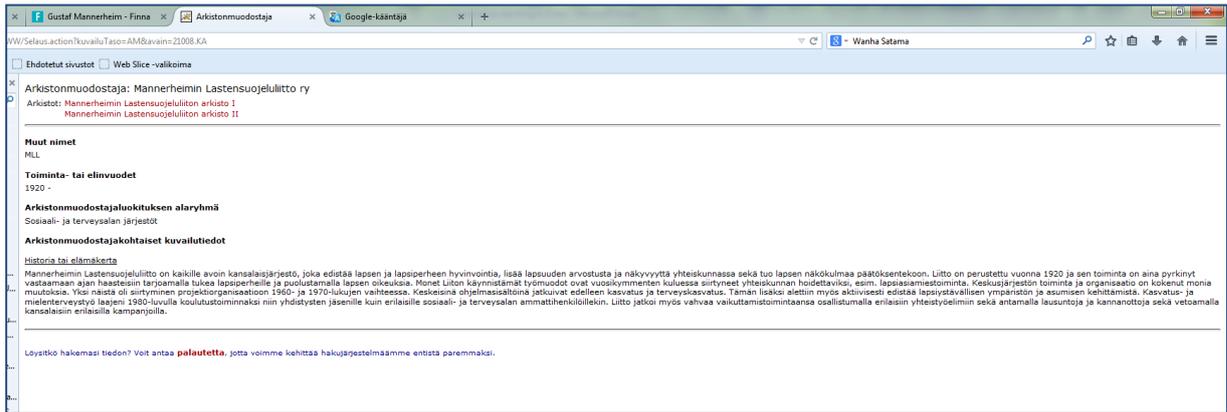
*Screenshot from Finna showing search results limited to material from the National Archives.*

7. I scanned down the list of results, looking at the titles, level of the material in the archive structure (whether it was a series or item) and the name of the records creator. The records were mainly from a couple of government ministries and from *Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto ry*, the league itself: these were divided between two archive collections. The items in the list were not grouped in any way and the sort options did not offer a useful way of ordering the list. Ideally, I wanted to drop the ministry records from the list. I clicked on the league's name as records creator in the top record as I thought this might narrow down the list. However, it then produced a new list of all the material under this records creator, 1822 documents. I used the back button to cancel this and return to my list of 54 search items.
8. I selected the third item on the list, an archive item *kodinhaitajatoiminta* nursing activities, which sounded promising. and clicked to view the full entry.
9. The description told me that this item consisted of correspondence, reports, etc relating to Viherlaakso college for home nurses.
10. I clicked on the tab at the bottom to view the archive structure. This displayed the hierarchy for Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliiton arkisto II, highlighting the series this item belongs to and the individual entry for the item itself.
11. The full entry tells me that I require the permission of the director general of the National Archives to access this item, which dates from 1968-1972.
12. There are three choices below this: document order, usage permission request and records creator in Vakka.
13. I selected document order. This took me to a page with the logo of the National Archives and a log-in box, but no information about what Astia is. There is a link to register for those who do not already have a user log-in. I clicked on the registration link and got a message saying *Welcome to Astia registration*, the registration steps are *õ q*. If I did not already know what Astia was, I think I would be unsure what I was registering for and why. As I do not have a Finnish bank account, I cannot register so I stopped here.



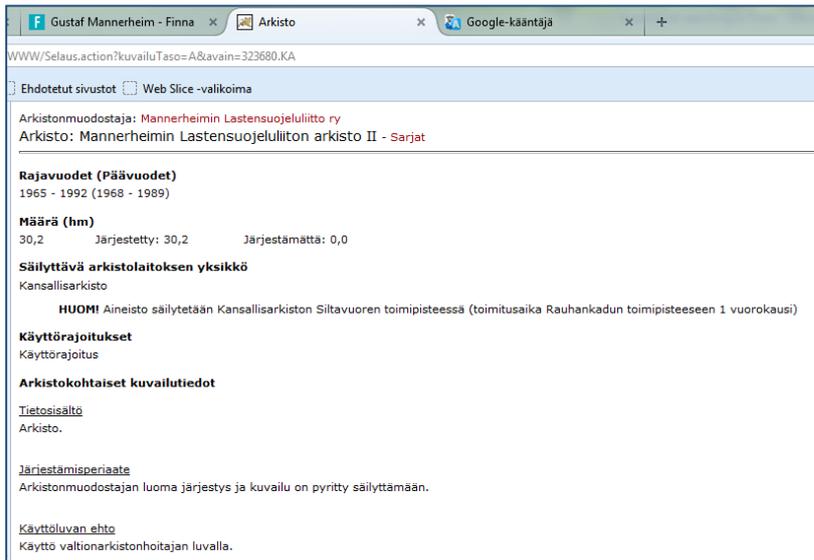
*Screenshot of Astia log-in page which user is taken to from document order and permission request links*

14. I returned to Finna and the second option, to submit a permission request. However, this took me to exactly the same log-in page.
15. Finally, I selected the third option. Again, if I did not already know, I would be wondering what the *akka* database was. Clicking on the link takes me to a plain text page. There is no header, logo or text to link this page with the National Archives and explain what the user is looking at. The link takes me to the entry in the Vakka database for the League as records creator, contains links to the two archive collections which relate to it and gives a brief history of the organisation.



Screenshot of page in Vakka database which user is taken to from Finna

16. I clicked on the red link for the second collection, which the item I had viewed comes from. This brought up the collection record. The location of the archive is the first clue that this set of pages comes from the National Archives. Again, it says about the access restriction but provides no further information about how to make an application. The only way to find the archive item which I viewed in Finna is by clicking on the word *Sarjatq*. archive structure . which is small and easily missed. There is no search box, to search this entry or anything else in Vakka, nor any link to go anywhere else, for example to the National Archives homepage.



Screenshot of collection record, showing link to structure

17. I clicked on the *Sarjatq* link and this brought up the archival structure for the collection, displaying the section headers and series. I found the series header displayed in Finna and then the item record, which told me the same as Finna. To locate the material within the Vakka entry, I had to return to Finna to check the exact details: which of the two collections it was in and then the series.
18. I was therefore left knowing that the archive item could be useful and that I needed permission to see it but I had no information about how to apply for access. As this information is not available on Finna, nor is there any direct link to the National Archives website within Finna, for example, through the list of partner organisations, in order to pursue this I would have to go to the internet to search for the homepage of the National Archives service. I did not pursue this.
19. There were several other items in the list of search results which could also have been relevant to my search but I did not examine them.

## Summary of outcome

My search established that there is a range of potentially useful material relating to the home nurses employed by the Mannerheim League, including annual reports and the items from the college. However, while I understood that access was restricted, I had no information about the extent of the restriction and how to submit an access request.

### **B) Search task: find a book or article in English which will provide background information on the work and history of the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare.**

#### Search process

1. I entered the phrase *Mannerheim league for child welfare* in the simple search box.
2. This produced 42 search results, all either theses or books.
3. I then opened the Language facet and selected English (15 items, all books).
4. I browsed down the list of results. Most of them were on child welfare policy and were published by the League but there were four about the league itself. Two of these are held by the National Library, so I looked at these two entries to find out more and see how I could access the books.
5. I clicked on the first item, *Child Welfare in Finland 1920-1940: a report on the activities of the Mannerheim League* by Erik Mandelin (1941). The entry told me that the book is held by the National Library-Fennica and one copy is available for reading room use. There did not appear to be a book reference code eg. Library of Congress number; presumably Fennica is some kind of collection. There is the option to reserve the item by using a library card but as I do not have a Finnish library card I did not explore this option.
6. As I have a user account with Finna, I clicked the heart symbol and saved this item to My favourites, so that I could find it again quickly.
7. I used the *back to search results* link to return to the list.
8. I clicked on the second item of interest, *The Finnish Red Cross and The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare* by H W Donner (1941). The entry told that there was a copy available in the National Repository Library and gave what looked like a reference number K19371398. There was a link *access conditions* so I clicked on this and was taken to the Services page on the National Repository Library's website. The page explained about universal borrowing and stated that *The NRL's objective is to provide any patron of an academic library with the ability to borrow books directly from NRL.* As I am not a member of a Finnish academic library, I could not take advantage of this service but as I can visit the library in person, this was not an issue for me.
9. I wanted to find out more about these collections, Fennica and the National Repository Library, check which building or section the books are in and establish whether I could just turn up and see them. There was no more information on the catalogue entries so I looked under partner organisations but it just lists the National Library.
10. Next, I went to Google and searched first on Fennica and National Library. The top link took me to the National Library website, where I discovered that Fennica is the name of a database. A link at the bottom of the page *use of the National Collection* took me to a page which informed me that I could look at the materials in the Fabiania reading rooms. Next, I clicked on the option on the left hand menu, *visiting the library* which gave the address and displayed a map of the location and viewed the *Opening hours* link to see when the library is open.
11. I then looked for information on the National Library Repository. There is no link in the menu under Collections using this name; the closest one is for the National Collection, where I had just been.
12. It seemed the best option was just to go to the library, especially as it is only two streets away, and see if I could locate and view one of the books. I therefore went to the library and explained at the customer service desk that I wanted to view the book by Erik Mandelin. The staff member found the book on his system and ordered it for me. He also issued me with a

library card for the reading room. The book was held within closed stacks so it would not be available until the following day. I returned the next day and was shown where to find my book. It contained an excellent overview of the initial aims and objectives of the League and its activities in the first twenty years. I was impressed that the book would be held on the shelf for a month for me to use if required.

**C) Task: locate and view online photographs and an article relating to the Mannerheim League and/or home nurses**

**Digital photographs**

1. I returned to the Finna homepage and entered *kodinhoitajat* in the simple search box.
2. Once I had the basic search results, I clicked the box *available online* which reduced my list to 449 items, covering material from several types of content, including books, articles, images and physical objects.
3. I used the Image facet to limit the search results to images only (101 hits). As I was interested in earlier photographs, I sorted the results by Date ascending. A group photograph of women wearing the same uniform, taken in 1930, caught my eye as it suggested a training school class photograph.
4. I clicked on the thumbnail to view the photograph. Unfortunately, the image had a watermark right across the middle obscuring the view of about half of the girls and women pictured. The quality was not very sharp and it was not possible to zoom in. I followed the link to view the full record, which gave me an ID number (TA30830) and told me that the image was from the collections of the Labour Archive.
5. The metadata about the photograph did not mention the League. However, it was still of interest and I decided to see how I could order a copy or see the original.
6. I went to the internet to find the Labour Archive website. A link to photos on their home page <http://www.tyark.fi/uk/index.html> took me to a page describing their collection, said it was possible to order copies and contained a link to their own catalogue. I clicked on the link and searched the catalogue using the ID number from Finna. This brought up the photograph (still watermarked) and accompanying metadata but there was no link to order a copy. However, this part of the site was in Finnish, so it is possible that I missed something. I returned to the photo page and clicked on the link *price list*. This gave prices for copies but no information about how to order them. Nor was there any information on the research service page, so it appears that I have to e-mail the archive to find out what the process is.

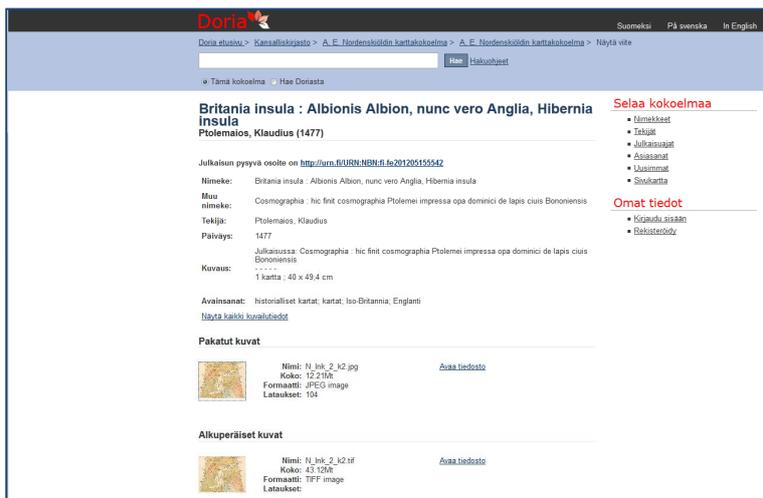
**Online article**

1. I returned to the Finna home page to look for an article which I could access online. I decided to search on the League's name *Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto* in Finnish. There was one article and a link to the organisation's own journal. I clicked on the link to the article, *Avustusten leikkaukset vaarantavat perheiden lastenhoitoavun* by Pekka Lith (2006) and was presented immediately with the text, published on the Statistics Finland website.

## Browsing in Finna

Finally, I wanted to explore the option to browse Finna and see what is available within the site. Accessing this option is not very obvious: it can be accessed either by clicking on the small word [Search](#) above the Finna logo and among information about the content partners and other general information, or from the link in the footer which appears on all pages, with About Finna, logos etc, an area which I think users do not generally go to unless they are looking for a specific link, for example, contact information, which is often located in the footer.

1. I decided to browse by Region and see what records there are for the British Isles. I selected the region tab and then [in](#) alphabetical order [q](#) I selected B for Britannia first of all. Rather unhelpfully, the list of countries is displayed in order of number of hits, not alphabetically within the letter, so I had to scroll down through the list to find Britannia (214 items).
2. I decided to check under Iso-Britannia as well and found that there were considerably more hits under this term (16,136).
3. I clicked on this second term and then selected images from the facet list on the left (23 items). As the results were not all photographs, did not all have thumbnails and included some early material, I sorted them by Date ascending. The top twelve were all maps from the A. E. Nordenskiöld Collection in the Helsinki University Library collections and digital copies were available of all of them. I clicked on two to three of the links and each brought up a catalogue page with links to view either a jpg or tiff file of the image. The quality of each image, even just the jpg, was excellent.



Screenshot of catalogue entry in Doria database, Helsinki University collections

## Footnote

I do not usually bother to register as a user with websites and portals. I did decide to register with Finna as I recognised that I would want to repeat searches and return to the same items as part of my project. I found the functionality offered to registered users very useful, for example, being able to save searches or return to recent searches, as well as saving favourite items. As a result, I would now consider using this feature on other websites.

## Appendix 2 Review of Trove portal

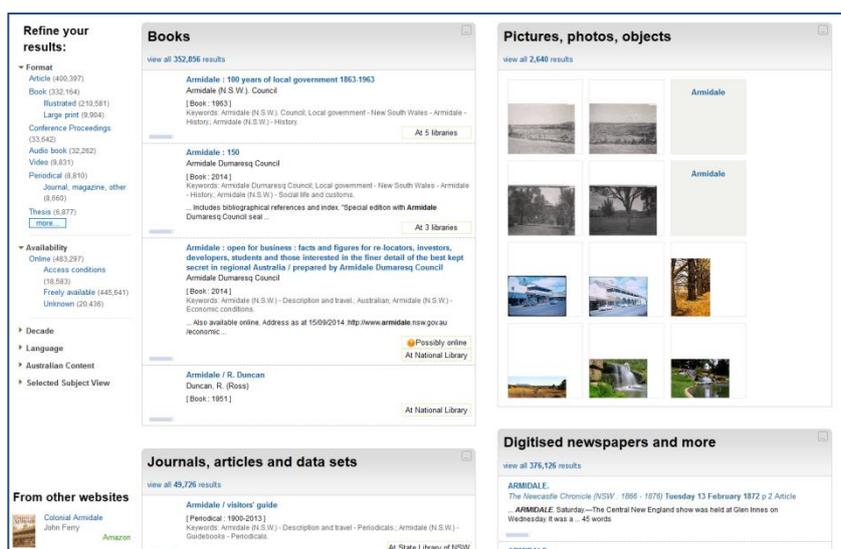
### Background information

Host/lead organisation: National Library of Australia  
Web address: Trove.nla.gov.au

Partners: To establish whose data is on the portal, I started by looking at the *Learn about Trove* section for a list of partner organisations. However, there was no information in this help area about who the partners are or about the scope of the material which each has made accessible through the site. Returning to the main page, I tried the About section, which was very uninformative and then the statistics section, where I discovered an extensive list of contributors and number of works or resources each has contributed [data updated daily]. The portal contains library, archive material and audio-visual material, works of art and museum objects.

### Arrangement of search results

The initial search results are grouped by format type, referred to as *zones* 3-4 entries per zone are displayed initially.



Screen shot of format zones displaying search results

If the user just searches without reference to format, there appears to be a default layout of the zones for the initial search results and Books appears in the top left, what I will call the priority zone. I tested this by carrying out three different one-word searches from the home page (swimming, badminton, Hobart).

Default layout of zones on initial page of search results (in two columns, see screen shot above)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| Books  | Pictures, photos, objects               |
| Journals, articles and datasets              | Digitised newspapers and more           |
| Music, sound and video                       | Maps                                    |
| Diaries, letters, archives                   | Archived websites                       |
| People and organisations [authority records] | Lists [web discussion lists and forums] |

Some items comprise of more than one format, for example, a book with a map in it and are therefore included in more than one zone. A user can move a zone to the priority area by clicking on the zone heading or the zone tabs along the top of the screen.

Unfortunately from an archivist's point of view, the zone with the archival material appears well out of sight towards the bottom of the zones.

Facets for refining the search results are displayed on the left. The facets available vary for each zone; the options displayed at any one time relate to the zone which is in the priority area and change if a new zone is selected.

The facets which appear for most of the zones are

**Format** (the format types listed at any one time are specific to the zone selected)

**Availability** (material which is available online)

**Decade** (narrow down by date)

**Selected subject view** (the only option available is *Performing Arts* and the narrower term *Music* whenever this facet is displayed, so it is of limited use)

### **Search task to review workflow**

**Search term:** Armidale [city in New South Wales]

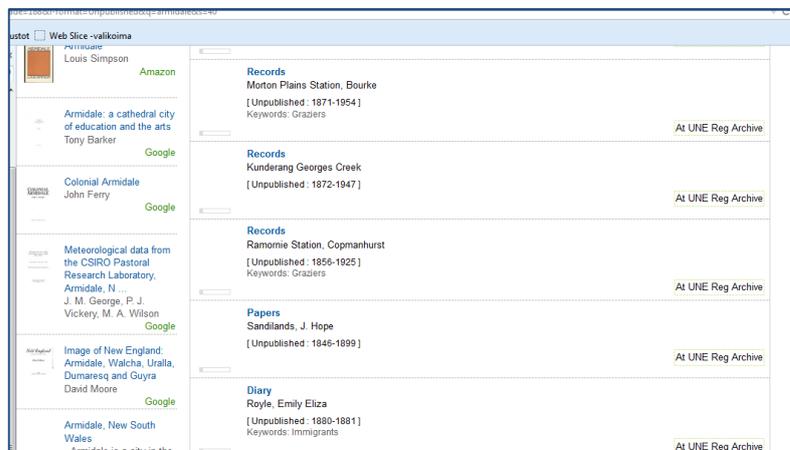
**Goal:** Find a diary dated between 1880 and 1900 written by a woman and with some connection to Armidale. A letter will be acceptable if there is no diary.

**Methodology:** Simply enter `Armidale` in the simple search box on the front page. My intention was to use the facets and other tools to narrow the search down by date and material.

### **Process**

1. I typed `Armidale` in simple search box on front page and the initial search results were displayed. I clicked on the Diaries, letters and archives zone header which brought this zone to the top left and displayed the facets specific to this zone: format, availability, occupation, decade and selected subject view. There were 868 results in the archives zone for my search.
2. I wanted to refine my results by date next. This presented a problem. I wanted to cover a twenty year period [1880-1900] but the facet operates by decade, presenting a list of decades to select from, and it is not possible to select two decades at once. Therefore, to search all of 1880 to 1900, I would have to carry out two separate searches, one on each decade, or go to the advanced search. I therefore selected decade 1880-1890 (183 items) and refined the search further by selecting unpublished material from Format (now 165 results).
3. I scanned the first sixty results in the archive zone. Twenty items are displayed per page and there is no option to change this. Each entry in the list of results gives the title, format and date of the material, keywords and some indication of where it is held, plus whether it is available online. The first forty items did not look worth exploring further. However, items 41-60 contained some more promising results.
4. I clicked on one item to view the full metadata. This turned out not to be of interest, so I clicked on the breadcrumb trail to return to the search results. However, this took me back to the first page of my filtered results (items 1-20), not to where I had just been in the list. I needed to use the back button to go back to this point.

- I carried on browsing the results and selected the entry for the diary of Emily Royle, 1880-1881. The item description summarises what the material covers, its date and format. However, Armidale was not mentioned anywhere.



Screen shot of search results in Archive zone

- I then looked to see how I could access this document. A *Get this edition* button in the top RH corner took me to the section with the same heading at the bottom of the page. This told me that the diary was held at the University of New England and Regional Archives. There was no other information about how to access this item. The institution name is a link so I clicked on this, assuming that it would take me to their website and information on how to access the diary. However, I was taken to their listing in the *Find a Library* directory. The directory entry did not contain the web address of the institution, only the street address of its premises, which is in Armidale, hence the reason why the diary appeared in my search results. To find out more about the archive, I would have to carry out a completely separate search on its name on the internet and find their home website.
- As this diary was not what I wanted, I continued looking at my list of search results for 1880-1889. However, I stopped when I reached the hundredth item and decided to modify my search and try the second decade, 1890-1899.
- I used the back button to return to the initial search results. I then used the red cross to cancel the refinement on the decade and selected the next decade from the list of options [once a decade has been selected, it is possible to refine this further and select a particular year, but again, only one at a time]. I retained the option to search only on unpublished material. This gave me a list of 194 items.
- Within the first twenty results there was an entry for travel diaries written by a lady called Adelaide White, dating from 1898-1899. The segment of the description displayed in the overview read *in them she describes a journey from Armidale to the coast and an excursion to the South Sea Islands ...q* which confirmed a proper link to Armidale. The location information showed that Adelaide White's diaries are also held by the University of New England and Regional Archives (call number A358).

Home > Search results > This edition

**1898-1899, English, Unpublished edition:**  
**Travel diaries [manuscript].** Get this edition

**Bookmark:** <http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/38902213>

2 Volumes.  
 Australia, 1898-1899.  
 English

**User activity**

- Tags (0)
- Lists (0)
- Comments (0)

Send to:

**Edition details**

[Check copyright status](#) [Cite this](#)

Title	Travel diaries
Other Creators	White, Adelaide (author)
Published	Australia, 1898-1899.
Medium	[manuscript]
Physical Description	2 Volumes.
Summary	The travel diaries of Adelaide White (2 vols.) 1898-1899. In them she describes a journey from Armidale to the coast and an excursion to the South Sea Islands, departing from Sydney on 3 Jul. 1899, aboard the S.S. Waikare.
Notes	Original RAAM-ID: 20357. Record derived from Register of Australian Archives and Manuscripts database. Upgrades pending for some institutions.
Language	English
Libraries Australia ID	44305523
Contributed by	Libraries Australia

Get this edition

Screen shot of full entry for Adelaide White's diary

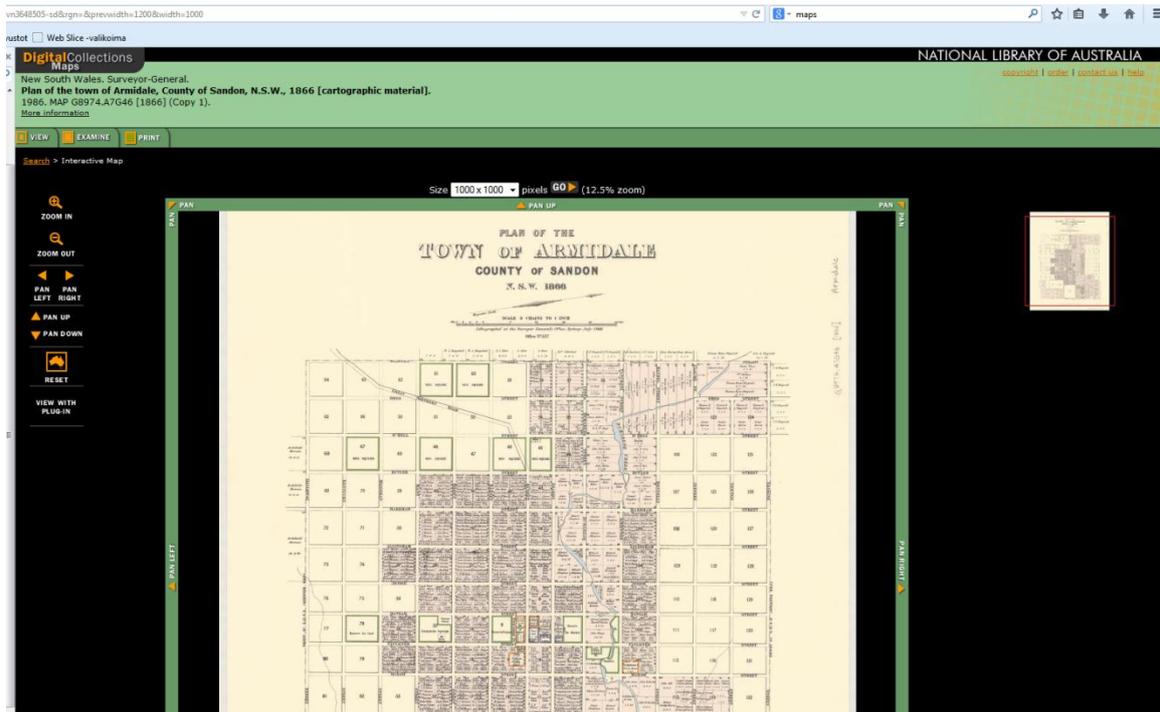
10. I viewed the item record but again, the Trove page did not provide any information on how to view this archival material or obtain a copy. I therefore left Trove and went to Google to search for the website of the University of New England and Regional Archives.
11. I found a link to the Collections and regional archives page on the UNE website <http://www.une.edu.au/info-for/for-visitors/collections> . This took me to a page within the university website which listed all the university's special collections, so I clicked on the link to the regional archives on that page, which took me to an introductory page for the archives. I then selected the link labelled collections.
12. This page listed the main archive groups (university, state and region) with alphabetical lists of collections within them. There is no option to search either these lists or any collections database for archival material. The only search box is a generic one for the university website . I did try using it and searched first on the call number then Adelaide White but without success. Looking at the other pages for the archives within the university website, nowhere does it say that the collections can be searched on Trove. The links page, which contains listings for local and state archives and local history sites/groups and includes several links for archive sites in the UK and Ireland, does not include an entry for Trove or the National Library of Australia.
13. Consequently, if I want to find out more about Adelaide White's diaries, the only way forward is to e-mail the archive.

## Accessing digital content online

I now wanted to examine how digital content is accessed through Trove. Restricting my diary search to material available online showed that nothing was available, so I decided to do two new searches and look first for a map of Armidale and then a photograph.

### Search for a map viewable online

1. I returned to the home page to start a fresh search. I used the simple search box again to search just on `armidale`. I then selected the map zone and refined my results by choosing only those items which are freely available online (290 items). Another facet offers the option to choose maps by scale, so I selected `street level` which covers scales of 1:25 000 and 1:50 000 (5 items in total).
2. From the now short list of results, I selected a plan of the town of Armidale, dated 1866 [Libraries Australia ID 10489413]. There was a direct link to the digital copy but I selected the item record first of all to view the details. There is a reasonable amount of detail and the entry showed that the map is part of a series of cadastral town maps of New South Wales [maps which show and define individual land holdings]. I followed the link for the series record which took me to the usual search results page and displayed a list of 1,547 maps in this series. The list could only be sorted by date. However, I did not see a series level record which would provide contextual information about the series of records.
3. I returned to my cadastral map of Armidale by using the back button and clicked the `view online` button. This took me to a `digital maps collection viewer`.



*Digital collections map viewer*

4. I clicked on the word zoom in the top left hand corner and it switched the page to a viewer which allows the user to pan and zoom. The default size for the image is the smallest 400x400 pixels: to zoom in and see the detail of the image, the user needs to select a bigger resolution from the drop down box immediately above the image; just using the zoom tool will not access this.

- Even at the highest resolution the detail was sharp and I could read the individual names written on the map. It was easy to pan either by using the pan buttons, by dragging the map or dragging the location square on the tool on the right.
- I used the print button to print a copy of the section of the map which I had on the screen. The quality of the image was good.
- I then wanted to return to Trove. However, there was no link on the page to take me back there. The [more information](#) button under the description of the record, which I thought might take me back to the entry in Trove, took me to an item entry within the digital map collection. The back button registered each action which I had done with the map (pan, zoom) so I could not just do a straightforward single click back. The choice was therefore to right-click on the Back button and hope Trove still appeared in the list or click the National Library of Australia logo which takes the user to the home page of the library website, not Trove.

### Search for photograph viewable online

- I returned to the Trove homepage to start a new search, again on Armidale, this time to look at how digital photographs are managed.
- Once again, I started with a simple search on [armidale](#). In the initial search results view, when the picture zone is not in the priority area, photographs are displayed only by the image. If there is no digital image, there is a plain box saying in this instance [Armidale](#). No other metadata is displayed.
- When I clicked on the picture zone, this brought it to the priority area and metadata was displayed about each item: title, format, date, keywords and location of material. In the facets, the user is now offered the options to narrow down the results to photograph, poster, object, art work and microform. I selected only art works and decided to follow up a drawing of Moor's Mill in Armidale by Edward Combes, one of the first items in the search results. I clicked the direct link to view online and this took me into the National Library's digital collections picture view, similar to the map viewer. However, there was no way to zoom in on the image, except by zooming in on the whole screen by using Ctrl and +.

Web Slice - valkoima

Digital Collections Pictures

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA  
About | Copyright | Contact us | Help

nia.pic-an5955738  
Combes, Edward, 1830-1895  
Armidale, Moor's Mill [picture]  
1870. 1 watercolour; 18.6 x 30.5 cm.

Search  GO

View Order

Full record

Creator	Combes, Edward, 1830-1895.	
Title	Armidale, Moor's Mill [picture] / E.C.	
Date	1870.	
Extent	1 watercolour; 18.6 x 30.5 cm.	
Notes	Title from inscription I.I.	
	Monogram I.I.	
	(ANL/R7655	
Subject	Factories -- New South Wales -- Armidale Armidale (N.S.W.) -- Buildings, structures, etc. Picture -- New South Wales -- 1851-1900.	
Other authors	Combes, Edward, 1830-1895.	
Identifier	nia.pic-an5955738	
Bib id	vn471227	
Call number(s)	PIC R7655 LOC3509-A *	

To cite this page: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an5955738>

View Order

*Digital collections picture viewer*

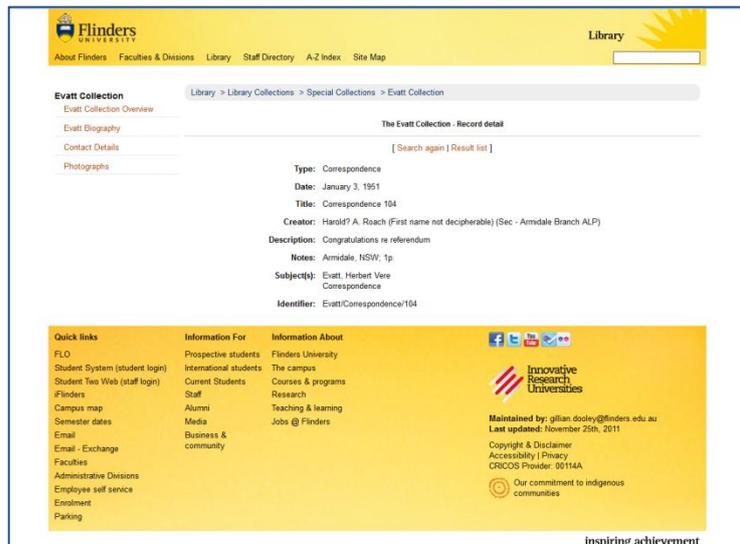
- Within the viewer, there is an option to order a copy of image, so I clicked on that. After confirming that I wanted the whole of the item and the format of the copy, I was taken to a declaration page where I needed to confirm whether I was planning to use the copy for research and private study or for public use. However, having ticked the first option, which was a statement saying that I will only use the copy for research or study, etc, I was still

required to type something in the data entry box underneath. As I was only interested in the item for private study and had nothing to add to the statement, I just typed private study in the box which seemed acceptable. I also had to tick statements confirming that I was the person whose name and address was going to appear on the order and to agree to the terms and conditions. I moved to the review order page but did not proceed to the payment page as I was not planning to pay \$45 AUD for the copy.

- It was easy to cancel the order. there was a button available at each step in the order process to do so or the order window could just be closed, but again, the digital photograph viewer took me out of Trove and there was no easy way back to my search results.

Screen shot of declarations page when ordering copies from the National Library

- I returned to the search results to see how other digital material is delivered within Trove, especially material which is not held by the National Library. I therefore selected an item from a couple of the other zones which had been returned during my Armidale search. In each case, I click the view online button directly from the results page.
- First of all, I selected another art work from the list (a wood engraving by Walter Mason, 1866, view of Armidale), held by the State Library of Victoria. I was taken to a page within their website, where the quality of the image was exceedingly poor: the image was fuzzy and the title printed underneath illegible.
- Next, I went to the article zone and chose the Southern New England Social and Community Plan. This took me to the item record page on the host institution website. There were two small links to two versions of the article, just the date of each version in the top left while the middle of the screen was dominated by a box with the question create persistent identifier for url? I clicked on one of the dates and it opened up the article.
- Finally, under archival material, I selected the view online button against correspondence 104 Harold A Roach. This took me to the catalogue entry for the item on the Flinders University website. Half of the page was dominated by the home menu for the university. I could not see any link to actually view the digital copy of the record.



Screen shot of catalogue entry on Flinders University website

10. I clicked on the link to the Evatt collection detail overview. This summarised the content and said that for digital material, I should go to the Image search page (linked). I followed the link, searched on correspondence and was told there were no returns. So this took me to a dead end and there did not appear to be a digital copy available so Trove was misleading.

In each case, the window for the home institution website did not open up in a new window so the only back to Trove was by using the back button.

## Browsing

Within Trove, there does not appear to be any way to browse the content of the website, see contextual information about the collections or access the records other than by searching using a search term or bringing up the entire list of material. There are the people/organisation authority records but if the user brings up the whole list, it cannot be sorted alphabetically, only by date. There are research guides on the main section of the National Library of Australia's website, but there is no link or reference to them within Trove.

### General observations

- Once in the Help zone, clicking on the main Trove icon or name does not take the user back to the main website, I had to click on the small Trove name link in the right hand corner.
- On the individual record entries, the labels and buttons are library orientated and some can be confusing in an archival context. For example, the metadata about the material is headed 'Edition details' the label for the Dates field is 'Published' and the section containing information about access to the material is headed 'Get this edition' Within this section, the information about the location of the material is on the tab 'Borrow' which could suggest to users unfamiliar with using archive material and special collections that it is possible to borrow the material from the archive, rather than just view it onsite.
- In the item record there is a 'Check copyright status' button in the top left hand corner, just above the title of the material. This is a clear and prominent way of bringing attention to any copyright issues.

## Appendix 3 Review of Black Country History portal

Web address: [blackcountryhistory.org/](http://blackcountryhistory.org/)

### Scope and content

The portal contains information relating to collections from eight archives and museum services in Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton in England. Although some of the partners hold library material, the content on the portal is limited to archival material, museum collections and works of art. Contact details and opening hours are provided for each service, along with a link to the home website and a Google map extract showing the location of the office. The About page outlines generally that the content on the portal does not include the entire holdings of each partner.

Software: the site runs on proprietary software supplied by a company called Orangeleaf, which is based in Shropshire, UK. It harvests data from the separate databases used by the partner organisations and brings it together for the portal.

### Context

The Black Country is a term used to describe a geographical area in the West Midlands in England. According to the portal, *“The Black Country is an area located just to the west of Birmingham right at the heart of the UK. It lies between the towns of Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton and is noted for its industrial past. It is so named because of the concentration of coal mining and metalworking in the area. It has no agreed borders.”* ([blackcountryhistory.org/places/](http://blackcountryhistory.org/places/)).

### Search task to review workflow

**Search terms:** brick AND tile

**Goal:** Find business records from companies making bricks and tiles in the Black Country area in the 19th century, preferably before 1850, so that I could research how they operate and learn something about their costs and processes.

### Process

1. I started the search by using the simple search box on the home page. I entered *brick tile* assuming that the default search operator is AND. This produced 2753 results.
2. There are facets to refine by subjects, times, names, places, format and partner in a column on the left. A second set of options to limit the results to images, museum collections or archives only is positioned in the top right hand corner and could be overlooked.
3. I clicked on the archives only button (now 785 items).
4. The Times facet was no longer available and the only sort options are by title or relevance, so I had no way of narrowing down or viewing my results by date. I decided to try going back and narrow by time period first. I used the back button to get back to the initial, unfiltered results. I clicked on the Time facet, which brought up a list of somewhat ambiguous and overlapping options eg. Modern (203 items) and 20th century (12 items). I selected Victorian (41 items, which seemed rather low). As the results on the first page were mostly objects, I then used the Archives only facet. This returned the result *no records found* compared to my 785 items from before. It appears therefore that tags relating to the Time facet have only been applied selectively, perhaps just by the museums.

5. I had to use the back button to switch off the Archives only facet and then switch off the Time facet on the next page. I then re-selected the Archives only facet and got back my list of 785 items.
6. I looked at the other facets to see what would help refine my list. There were three place names listed under the Places facet, only covering 135 records in total, so again, this cannot apply to all of the content. The Subjects facet brought up a diverse selection of terms, include church records. Entries in the registers have been transcribed and the people's occupations were linked, which could be useful for researchers. As there were a number of results for church records, it would have been useful to have been able to remove these items from my list by using a remove filter, but there was no option to do so. Brickmaking appeared as a subject but only with nine results. The Format facet sounded more promising but again, with only 146 results in total, the metadata linked to this facet must only relate to a subset of the entire content. Lastly, I looked at the Names facet, which listed the names of the record creators by number of hits (largest to fewest), rather than alphabetically. However, two company names which appeared at the top of my list of 758 search results - *Halesowen Brick & Tile Co* and *George King Harrison Ltd* - did not appear on this list of Names; perhaps these archives are listed under another record creator.
7. As the records for the second firm, George King Harrison Ltd, brick and tile makers, Brierley Hill, date from 1797-1963, I decided to look at the record entry.

The screenshot shows a search results page with the following elements:

- Narrow your search:** A sidebar with facets for Subjects and Names. Under Names, several entries are listed with checkboxes, including 'D.F. Tayler & Co. Ltd., Printers, New Hall Works, Birmingham (60)', 'West Bromwich County Borough Council (32)', and 'Chance Brothers (12)'. The 'George King Harrison Ltd' entry is highlighted.
- Search Results:** The main content area shows 'Showing 1 to 15 of 785 for brick tile'. A pagination bar includes numbers 1-10, 'next >', and 'end >>'. The first three results are:
  - HALESOWEN BRICK AND TILE COMPANY, LTD.** WRI/2/8/2  
1935-1970  
Dudley Archives
  - Baggeridge Brick Works, Sedgley, Staffordshire** P/6351  
[Mid 20th cent]  
An aerial view of the works.  
Wolverhampton Archives
  - GEORGE KING HARRISON LTD, BRICK AND TILE MAKERS, BRIERLEY HILL** DBCM/1  
1797-1963  
Dudley Archives
- COOMBS WOOD COLLIERIES, LTD.; HALESOWEN BRICK AND TILE** (partially visible at the bottom)

Screen shot of search results narrowed to archive material only

8. The entry showed that this material is described as a sub-fonds, one of a number of archive collections transferred from the Black Country Museum to Dudley Archives. An archival tree was displayed showing the list of sub-fonds and highlighting the *George King Harrison Ltd* entry.
9. I clicked on the + sign by the name and this opened up a list of 114 items, showing the title and date of each item. I clicked on one of the item listings and it brought up the full entry for the item record.

## GEORGE KING HARRISON LTD, BRICK AND TILE MAKERS, BRIERLEY HILL

Ref No: DBCM/1

Date: 1797-1963

Level: Sub-Fonds

For more information contact: [Dudley Archives](#)

### Catalogue

- ▣ DBCM: RECORDS TRANSFERRED FROM THE BLACK COUNTRY MUSEUM (1797-1963)
  - ▣ DBCM/1: GEORGE KING HARRISON LTD, BRICK AND TILE MAKERS, BRIERLEY HILL (1797-1963)
    - ▣ DBCM/1/1: Articles of agreement (9 May 1797)
    - ▣ DBCM/1/2: General release (8 Jan 1800)
    - ▣ DBCM/1/3: Grant (21 Aug 1839)
    - ▣ DBCM/1/4: Conveyance (8 July 1904)
    - ▣ DBCM/1/5: Conveyance (8 July 1904)
    - ▣ DBCM/1/6: Notice (duplicate) (31 July 1907)
    - ▣ DBCM/1/7: Prior Abstract of Title (1838)

*Screen shot of archival tree showing item records under sub-fonds*

10. The item level entry did not contain specific information about how to access the original material but did include a link [For more information contact Dudley Archives](#). I clicked on the link but instead of going straight to the Dudley Archives website, I was taken to the contacts page within the Black Country website. I clicked on the visit website link but it did not work and came up with an error message.
11. I was not willing to look through all 785 results for suitable material to fulfil my search criteria. I therefore decided to see whether the advanced search would help me achieve my goal and find useful archival material more efficiently.
12. I clicked on the link to Advanced search at the top of the page. The options were virtually the same as the facets. I wondered if I could put dates in the Times/Periods field, so I clicked on the question mark beside it as this looked like a help feature. Nothing happened, so it appears not. I entered 1800-1850 in the field to see what would happen and [brick AND tile](#) in the Title/description field. No records were found, so presumably I can only enter the formulae for the specified time periods in this field (but I only know what they are if I go looking elsewhere to find out). The advanced search was of no more help than the simple search and facets.
13. I abandoned my search for the business records.

### Summary of outcome of search

The options to refine the initial list of search results are very limited, at least for archival material. The majority of archival material does not appear to contain the correct metadata to link it to the facets and enable them to operate on those records. If the user manages to find archival material which is relevant to their research, the metadata about the actual material is presented clearly and the website link to other partner organisations did function correctly. I did find some records which fulfilled my search criteria but the process was unsatisfactory and I may have missed other collections or items which would have been relevant and useful.

## Digital material available online

I decided to look at the digital material available on the portal.

1. I returned to the home page and searched again on brick tile
2. I then used the Images only facet to limit my search results to entries with an image attached (280 items).
3. There were digital copies of photographs, of documents, for example, pages of sales catalogues and advertisements, works of art and physical objects.
4. I viewed images of the four types of material presented. The digital copies of the works of art and objects were excellent quality and a good size. Some of the images of the archival material were slightly small but they were generally at a good resolution. However, the photographs were more variable in quality. Some were a useful size and good or reasonable resolution; a few were smaller and not so sharp. All were watermarked: some of the marks were more prominent and obtrusive than others.

## Browsing

On the homepage of the Black Country History portal, there are links to sections on people, places, times and subjects. Each of these options offers the user the ability to browse records. For example, under People, eight significant individuals and businesses are described and the user can click on the name to bring up a list of records in the catalogue relating to them. Likewise, the Subject section contains links to highlights from the collections. In one paragraph, it references the collection of British glass held by the Broadfield House Glass Museum. Clicking on the linked word glass retrieves all the records in the catalogue from this collection for the user to browse through.

The section on Places offers the user the option to search or browse the collections using a map interface. A notice states that this is a new service and that more data will be linked to the map over time. In addition to archive and museum content, the map presents historic environment records (information on listed buildings, historic and scheduled monuments, archaeological finds, etc). The user can pan to the desired geographical area, zoom in and then click on the coloured symbols to view the records. Images (photographs and works of art) linked to locations are displayed (they can be turned off if the user wants to concentrate on other records). The user can also search the site, view the results which are displayed on the map and also go to the full catalogue records.

## Other points

Labels for fields within the individual item records are different for archive and museum content. There is the option to vary how many records are displayed on one page.

While a series or item record is highlighted in the archival structure, the search term is not highlighted in the record. As some of the descriptions are long, for example the summary of an edition of a newspaper, it can then take time to find the relevant content.

I looked at the home websites of a few of the partners. Dudley Archives, Dudley Museums Service and Walsall Local History Centre all have obvious links to the Black Country History website. However, I did not see a link or reference on the Museums, galleries and archives of Wolverhampton website.

## Appendix 4 Questions for Finna interviews

Note: to prepare for the interview, the interviewees were asked to carry out a specific search of their choosing using Finna and make a note of the process and outcomes.

- 1) How much experience do you have in using archives? Are you confident using information websites like Finna?
- 2) When you want to look for information from archives, museums or libraries, how do you find out where to look?
- 3) In the search which you carried out in Finna for this interview, what information or records did you search for?
- 4) What were you hoping to find?
- 5) Can you take me through the search process and describe what you did? How did you start your search? Once you had the first search results, did you narrow down the results in some way?
- 6) What was the outcome of your search? Were you able to view digital copies of documents online or find out how you could see them in person? Did you look at information on another website?
- 7) Were you satisfied with the outcome? Did you achieve your goal?
- 8) As you used Finna, was there anything which you found unclear or difficult to use? Was there a feature which you found very useful?

## Appendix 5 Finna project interview 1

### Mr Olli Liikanen

- 1) Mr Liikanen has been carrying out family history research for about 20 years. Initially, he concentrated on the standard family history sources, such as church records, but for the past three years, he has started using a much wider range of records. He has looked at records held at a number of archives. He is confident using websites and online resources.
- 2) When starting to look for archival information and records, Mr Liikanen generally starts by using Astia, the Finnish National Archives Services database, or Helsinki City Archives online catalogue, when he wants material relating to Helsinki metropolitan area. During his research, he will follow links posted on websites pointing to other resources if they look useful and safe to use. He dislikes having to register in order to be allowed to search websites which make no charge for their services. Mr Liikanen had never used Finna before, so using it in preparation for the interview was his first experience of the portal.
- 3) Mr Liikanen searched for report books from the fourth district of Helsinki Police Department.
- 4) He was hoping to locate reports for 1913, which he could then order and view in the reading room.
- 5) First of all, Mr Liikanen entered a search string of four words in the simple search box [hels\* pol\* IV ilm\*]. He used partial words and asterisks, as he would do in the Astia system, to cover variations in the endings of the words, as they change depending on how they decline. The system did not like the way the search was constructed and it was unsuccessful. He therefore went to the advanced search option and entered his search terms, using full words, and this brought up a number of records [Note: he repeated the first search later with the asterisks, changing the syntax a little and this time it was successful]. The top records returned in the search came from a relevant collection, so Mr Liikanen clicked on the link at the bottom of one of the records in the collection *Helsingin poliisilaitos IV piiri (Kallio)* to view the archival structure. He is very familiar with the standard cataloguing structure used by the National Archives and knew exactly where to look for the report books, so he clicked down through the catalogue structure and found the relevant series, with its list of individual report books. One drawback of the tree is that it does not display the dates of the individual records. Mr Liikanen therefore clicked on one of the items to bring up the item record and see what dates it covered. As it was not the correct date, he then used the archive structure button underneath the record description to return to the tree and try another item. Again, this was not the right date but the report book with the correct date was displayed in the similar items box on the right and so he was able to select it from there.
- 6) Mr Liikanen was unaware that it is possible to go directly from Finna to the Astia website to order the report book to view it in the National Archives reading room. He therefore went separately to the National Archives website, found the police report book again in Astia and ordered it. He already has a user log-in for Astia. Viewing the entries for later police report books in Finna, he was concerned and surprised that there was no notice warning that access to the records is restricted. As they contain personal information about individuals who may still be alive, he presumes that they are not yet freely available if the data in them is less than 100 years old. He said that it can be embarrassing for customers to go to the reading room expecting to be able to see a document which they have found listed online, only to be told at the enquiry desk that there is an access restriction and the customer has to fill in an application form, which will take a number of days to process.

- 7) Mr Liikanen was satisfied that he had found what he had wanted but thought that it was easier and quicker to find the same material in Astia. He thought the search facility in Astia was more flexible and precise. In addition, the list of relevant collections displayed on the left helps the user to navigate quickly to the required records. This is also a useful feature in the National ArchivesqVakka database. However, Finna did flag up material in the Hämeenlinna provincial archives which he did not know about and where he would not thought to have looked.
- 8) Buttons or options which Mr Liikanen had noticed during one search were not evident on another, which was confusing. When viewing the overview of the search results, he thought that the layout was cluttered with lots of text and sections. In particular, the greyed-out boxes to the left of the record metadata [where the image thumbnail is displayed when there is one] took up space and contributed to the busy appearance of the screen. Without them, there would be more white space and it might be a little clearer. Also, when viewing an individual entry, depending on the size of screen being used, the button underneath the record linking to the archive structure may not be visible. Likewise, the instructionslink at the very top of the screen is small and again, could easily be out of sight if the user has scrolled down a little. He thought that the band at the top with the Finna logo and simple search box could be narrower and this would help bring the elements at the top and bottom of the screen into sight, rather than being on the periphery. He thought that someone who was not very experienced with using the internet, an older person perhaps, might struggle with the site.

Mr Liikanen does not usually look at the help options on websites as he prefers to just experiment and try things out, but he did look at the help section on this occasion to see what it said about using asterisks as wild cards. He thought the help section could be off-putting as it has quite a lot of text to read.

Mr Liikanen tried a second, more general search in Finna just using his surname as a search term to experiment with the website and see what it contained. He liked that fact that Finna includes a range of types of material and was interested to discover audio-visual material and references to the Viola database, which was new to him.

Mr Liikanen will continue to use Astia, etc for the majority of his archival research but may well use Finna when its greater range of content could be helpful.

## Appendix 6 Finna project interview 2

### Ms Ida Suolahti

- 1) Ms Suolahti has been involved with archives for many years, using them for personal research and also through her work in the archives sector. She has worked for the Information Services division of the National Archives, answering enquiries and assisting researchers, and currently works in Helsinki City Archives. She has therefore had a lot of experience in using information databases and cultural heritage portals, both in Finland and for overseas archives.
- 2) Having worked in local and central government, Ms Suolahti has built up a good knowledge of the typical administrative structures. With this knowledge and her experience of archival research, she has a good idea in which archive specific records are probably to be found. She therefore uses the internet to locate the appropriate website for that archive service and their records. If the records are not where she would expect them to be, she then searches more laterally or follows guidance and links to locate the correct location and website. Ms Suolahti is aware of the Finna project but had not used the Finna website prior to being asked to participate in this project.
- 3) Ms Suolahti searched on the term prisoners of war [sotavankeja or variant in Finnish]. Usually, she might use a number of search criteria to construct a tight search and limit the results returned but on this occasion she chose not to do this.
- 4) She was looking for records relating to prisoners of war in Finland between 1940 and 1945.
- 5) Ms Suolahti started by entering her search term in the simple search box. Once she had the initial results, she used the content type facet to narrow down the search to documents only and year of manufacture facet to limit the date to the period between 1940 and 1945. This reduced the results to a manageable 8 pages of results, which she then browsed through. Her knowledge of archive terminology and collection structure meant that she was able to understand the metadata displayed and evaluate the records to assess their potential relevance without having to open up the full record description for each item.
- 6) The interviewee found records which were relevant to her research. She viewed the individual item description in Finna and then used the link on the record to go to the National Archives Astia system and order these items to read in the reading room. She already has a user login for the Astia system. Despite only having located the items the morning of the interview, she had already been able to view one of the items; the other was held off-site and would be available the following day.
- 7) Ms Suolahti was satisfied with the results of her search. She found material which she did not know existed, despite having been researching the topic for some time. The papers were among records which dated from slightly later than 1945 and linked to a records creator which she would not have associated with prisoner of war records, so she had not found them previously when searching more specifically among collections which she knew contained papers relating to prisoners of war or records from government departments involved in managing them.

The link to Astia was useful. However, Ms Suolahti thought that the link to the Vakka database, which she also tried, was less helpful because it takes the user to the authority record for the records creator, not the item record in the collection which they have just be viewing. To an inexperienced user, this could be very confusing. She also thought that it was disappointing that only a selection of material from the National Archives is included in Finna and in particular that private archives have not been included. She felt that it is important to inform users that the portal does not contain information on all the records held by the

National Archives and that there are a large number of additional records which are catalogued in different systems. An outline of what is included and excluded would help clarify the situation. She felt that this was currently a problem generally with the various systems which the National Archives uses. No one system holds all the available metadata about the entire holdings and while there is some overlap, many records are only listed on one database. Some do not even appear on any system and are only described in paper-based finding aids at present. People who have limited knowledge about archives and archive service have no idea of the scope and extent of the material available so if just a few results are returned from their search they do not question it. Likewise, when looking at digital material, if just an index is available online, they can think that this is all the information available and do not appreciate that there is actually a whole file of data held in the archive.

Ms Suolahti recognised the challenge in presenting information about scope and content to users of the database systems and portals in a place and in a way that they will notice it and read it.

- 8) Ms Suolahti thought that the layout of Finna was clear and liked the facets to refine the results. However, she thought that the metadata displayed in the search results was not always easy to understand in that context. She also thought that some of the language for the labels was not clear, especially for new users, for example, ~~archive structure~~ is probably not very meaningful to someone who has never used an archive collection before.

## **Appendix 7 Outline of project with Finna**

### **Focus of project**

The project will focus on the user experience of Finna. It will examine how users engage with the website and the way in which archival material is presented to users. The project will also look at the way information is communicated to users about the context of the records and how to access the archival material.

### **Areas of study**

1. Users workflow within the Finna website and beyond it to the websites which interface with Finna.
2. The presentation of metadata about archival material in Finna.

### **Steps**

1. Review current situation in Finna, focusing on the effectiveness with which users can accomplish tasks.
2. Review two other cultural heritage portals to assess the user experience which they provide.
3. Discuss assessment of user-focused website design with usability experts.
4. Interview a couple of general archive users on their experience of using Finna.
5. Consider role of research guides, subject lists and similar tools in assisting users to access archival material.
6. Summarise findings from steps 1-5 and make recommendations for improving users experience of Finna website.

### **Outcome**

A report which covers the following points:

1. Summary of the user experience offered by Finna and other cultural heritage websites, identifying those aspects which work well and areas which present more of a challenge to users.
2. Recommendations for improving the way metadata about archival material is presented in Finna.
3. Recommendations for enhancing users experience of Finna and facilitating access to archival material.

Alison Spence  
Cornwall Record Office