Soutron Provides a Modern, Flexible & Secure Web-based Archive System for Oxford College

SOUTRON ARCHIVE SIMPLIFIES ARCHIVAL WORKFLOWS AT ST EDMUND HALL ARCHIVES, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

INTRODUCTION

The Archives of St Edmund Hall

1317	1682	1912	1957
FIRST DOCUMENTED REFERENCE TO ST EDMUND HALL	THE HALL ACQUIRES ITS CHAPEL	THE UNIVERSITY APPROVES A STATUTE CONFIRMING THE HALL'S INDEPENDENCE FROM QUEEN'S COLLEGE	THE HALL RECEIVES ITS ROYAL CHARTER AND IS INCORPORATED AS A COLLEGE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

St Edmund Hall has a claim to be the oldest surviving academic society to house and educate undergraduates in any university – and it continues to provide an inspiring home for their students today.

Affectionately known as 'Teddy Hall', the Hall takes its name from St Edmund of Abingdon, former Archbishop of Canterbury, who taught in a house on site in the 1190s. The archives of St Edmund Hall date from the 17th century onwards, covering all aspects of Hall life.

The College's old buildings are concentrated in the Front Quadrangle, which is one of the most attractive in Oxford. The Chapel and Old Library were built at the end of the seventeenth century. It was the first Oxford library to be built with shelves along the walls. Both historic and forward thinking, the College aims to become a greener, more diverse, and accessible home for world-leading research and teaching. It is known for a friendly atmosphere, along with sporting and creative traditions.

St Edmund Hall
University of Oxford

CHALLENGE

The St Edmund Hall Archive exists to collect, manage, and utilize the recorded heritage of both the administrative and social aspects of the College. The archives of St Edmund Hall consist mostly of administrative papers of the Hall, with some papers on individual Principals, Vice-Principals, and members of the Hall (Aularians).

Soutron Provides Straightforward Workflows

Soutron is instinctive to use," states Rob. "The field records are nicely ordered in a straightforward manner to fit the workload into one page. Having the fields show up straightaway lets you see what you've done and what's next, unlike some systems that use a tab structure, and you must click from tab to tab.

St Edmund Hall Archivist, Rob Petre

The archive has been catalogued by placing each item in a section that reflects the source of the material, or the activity that produced it. For example, official accounts are catalogued under the section BF, Bursary and Finance, whilst records of matriculation come under MEM, Membership records.

Archive documents held fall into several categories:

- Documents about the administration of the College, including statutes and minute books.
- Documents about the College's finances from 1692 onwards.
- Documents about the College's buildings.
- Records of the clubs and societies of the Hall including many photographs.
- Personal papers of former Principals, Fellows, staff, and students.

When faced with a data migration issue with AdLib that limited visibility into their archive digital collection, a new system needed to be put in place. Data is at the heart of every archive, and access to that data provides much needed visibility and value. A new solution was needed.

SOLUTION

Having recently seen a mention of Web-based Soutron, St Edmunds Hall Archivist Rob Petre investigated and subsequently selected Soutron Archive to house their archival collection. Web-based Soutron Archive was easily able to upload and make visible all the legacy archive data, eliminating the need to have to re-catalogue the items.

Modern, Web-based Archive System

Soutron Archive is a modern system that securely stores irreplaceable information, ensuring access and providing for its continued relevance for generations to come.

This long-term availability and discoverability ensures that researchers and scholars have access to invaluable resources that are not available anywhere else.

The modern, robust archiving features of Soutron makes cataloguing of materials easy, actively supporting research endeavors and helping to contribute to knowledge expansion at the University.

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Flexible Archive Database

Soutron Archive provides a flexible and customizable relational database, enabling users to categorize and classify archival items using custom fields, such as custom Victorian era dates.

The flexibility of the Soutron database was appreciated upon implementation of the system, and that flexibility has continued to provide value to the archive with regards to the inherited catalogues the archive acquires. "The data is easy to enter without having to change the original reference numbers, something other systems can't accommodate," states Rob. "With Soutron we can still use the old reference numbers." This eliminates downstream work such as re-labelling materials with new numbers, while continuing to provide easy access to the collection materials.

Flexibility is not just about managing information; it is about presenting it in a way that enhances the user experience. Keyword changes and additions made to the database are made live immediately, "I appreciate being able to add new live keywords as I'm cataloguing," states Rob.

Public Access, Copyright, and Data Privacy

Soutron's integrated search portal gives users the power to control the display and access of record results. The search portal provides both public access and restricted access to materials stored in the database with both a simple search with facets, along with an advanced search.

This control and search functionality is crucial for displaying special archive collections in a way that bolsters the reputation of the archive. "The public search portal is easy to use, and advanced search is most helpful," states Rob.

Copyright and control over who can see and download materials is also flexibly applied. Granular levels of security permissions are provided, enabling access to certain materials to be given or denied. For instance, many photos, especially event group photos, have copyright claims by their agency, and the archive limits access and does not provide those photos to the public.

These security permissions along with industry-leading security measures ensure that private archive materials and sensitive records remain protected.

These security measures protect the interests of the institution. Per Rob, "It's easy to create closed records that the public doesn't have access to due to copyright or personal privacy rights, such as access to a Dean discipline list."

RESULTS

Soutron Archive has helped to solidify the role of the archive at St. Edmunds Hall as a vital guardian of Oxford University information and knowledge, ensuring accessibility to information and continued relevance.

"I would recommend Soutron to other archives. Their help desk is quick to act, better than any other that I have had to deal with," states Rob. "Sometimes I've gotten a response within minutes. Soutron has been very good at tweaking their database system to accommodate our needs."

The public archive of St. Edmunds Hall at Oxford University, can be accessed here:
www.soutron.com/seh

To find out how you can migrate to a fast, secure, cloud-based archive management system to support your university archive. society or organization, start a conversation with Soutron Global today:
www.soutron.com

Client-Driven, Secure
Archive Management Solutions