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Tina Staples is Group Archivist at HSBC Holdings plc. Tina completed her MA in Archives Administration at the University of Liverpool in 1999. She spent a year working at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London as the Archivist for the Arts Council of Great Britain. In 2000 she joined HSBC Group Archives and took a leading role in the HSBC History Wall project. Her article on this project was published in the BAC's 'Principles and Practices' journal in May 2004. In June 2007 she succeeded Edwin Green as HSBC Group Archivist.

Going global: managing archives at HSBC

Tina Staples

Abstract

From its very beginning HSBC was truly international in its customers, shareholders and staff. The founder was a Scot and the first manager was a Swiss national; the provisional committee in Hong Kong in 1865 included Brits, Indians, Americans, Germans and a Norwegian.

Since the acquisition of Midland Bank in 1992, HSBC has grown to become one of the largest banking and financial services organisation in the world. To reflect this global span the company launched an advertising campaign in 1995 with the slogan 'Your World of Financial Services'. Today HSBC is branded as 'The World's Local Bank' – an even more forthright statement of the firm's multinational outlook.

This paper will consider how archivists at HSBC are keeping pace with this level of growth and in particular, the global spread of the business. It will review the development of the various bank Archives within HSBC and the degree to which the collections have been integrated through mergers and acquisitions.

It will explain how HSBC's network of Archive functions operate in London, Hong Kong and Paris; and consider how effectively the archivists are working together, in spite of long distances and time differences. How does working in a head office function compare with life in the subsidiary-based functions?

However there are major businesses within HSBC, especially in the Americas, which do not have Archive functions. Here the archivists face considerable challenges capturing the

company history. The paper will ask whether there is a business case for employing archivists in these locations. Is it possible to quantify levels of supply and demand for archive services, in order to be able to justify such a business case?

There are some influences which the archivists have little or no control over, such as the rapidly changing nature of technology and the organisation's overall management strategy. This paper will consider the impact of these forces on the running of the Archive functions: do they offer help or hindrance?

Finally, the paper will highlight some of the highs and lows involved in managing the Archives of a multinational business and conclude with plans for future development within a global environment at HSBC.