

Company Annual Report Digitisation Project

In partnership with [Mergent Online](#) the University of Manchester Library has recently digitised its unique collection of over 80,000 historical company annual reports. Dating from the 1960s this collection offers researchers unique primary research material and has been converted from microfiche and print to be fully integrated into the digital Mergent Annual Reports collection. In addition we hold our own copy of the digital archive as back-up

Background on the collection

One of the most important collections of UK company annual reports has been made available by the University of Manchester Library. With more than 80,000 annual reports and including unique sets from companies central to the UK business and finance landscape for more than 30 years, the collection is also as fascinating for the glimpses it gives us into cultural, political, marketing and design development as it is important for business historians and researchers.

Highlights of the collection include complete runs of reports from companies such as British Airways and Coca Cola, extending from the 1960s through to the 1990s, as well as those of international giants BP, GlaxoSmithKline and General Motors. For political historians, former nationalised companies British Airways, British Gas and British Steel are also present. Those interested in the development of financial markets can search important historic information, while those interested in marketing, social history or the development of commercial art can examine in detail the changing ways in which companies have presented this information.

Until now available only in print or as microfilmed copies, the complete collection has been digitised on behalf of the Library by Mergent, a world-leader in the provision of business and financial information. Digitised in full colour, the result allows researchers to examine pages in closer detail than ever before.

The reports themselves have been incorporated into Mergent's Historical Annual Reports Archive, making the information available to users around the world as well as to researchers and students at Manchester. For the first time, the reports can be searched by keyword, allowing researchers more efficient access to a wealth of information. Comparisons between companies over a range of years and companies within similar industrial sectors can now be made quickly and efficiently thereby aiding retrieval and analysis with detailed research projects. The collection is an invaluable resource for all students (from undergraduate through to doctoral level) in addition to more established academic researchers working on large scale research projects.

Benefits to researchers and students

- The unlocking of access to a significant primary research collection, the majority of which was previously only available in an unwieldy microfiche format, which had to be consulted on campus in Manchester
- The provision of digital access directly to researchers with enhanced search and retrieval functions
- The integrating our collection with other global annual reports collections providing researchers with an expanded resource
- Significant potential for use in teaching to research company histories, case studies and related projects
- Enhanced opportunities for dissertation and larger project research across a range of disciplines

Quotes

"Just tested this out on a retailer I am working on – what a fantastic service! Saves so much time"

Senior Lecturer in Retailing | Manchester Business School | The University of Manchester

"I'm interested in this dataset. I do historical research on corporate finances"

Lecturer in Comparative Organisational Analysis – The University of Manchester

Benefits to the University of Manchester Library

- Showcases our partnership with external companies to digitise our collections and the significant financial benefits to the Library arising from these partnerships
- Maximising the usage and potential of one of our primary research collections by bringing it into the 21st Century using latest technology
- Highlighting the work of the library in increasing and widening exposure to our collections and our digitisation strategy
- Enabling conversion of library space, formerly housing the physical collection, to student study space in tandem with current and future student space needs
- Digital preservation of this rapidly deteriorating physical collection secured its long term sustainable future

For further information:

To discuss any aspects of this project please contact Dominic Broadhurst
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