

# Harness the past and present to help predict the future



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Introduction WAPOR's choice of **CHANGE** as the subject for this year's Annual conference allows me to write about the need many researchers have for longitudinal data and archives of attitude and behavioural data

Social and market researchers' expertise in predicting change in behaviour and/or attitudes has been very mixed. I shall argue that Predictions could be improved by taking a longer, historical view, and by proving to decision-makers and researchers that it is essential to harness the past and present to improve predictions.

Commercial researchers often have neither time nor inclination to refer to past data. Furthermore, to make matters worse, in the digital age, companies are increasingly destroying their historical data.

I hope that this paper will persuade you of the value of using historical data; to help those who are without archives to set one up; and to encourage owners of historical data to publicise that data and to overcome researchers' desire or inclination to "reinvent the wheel".

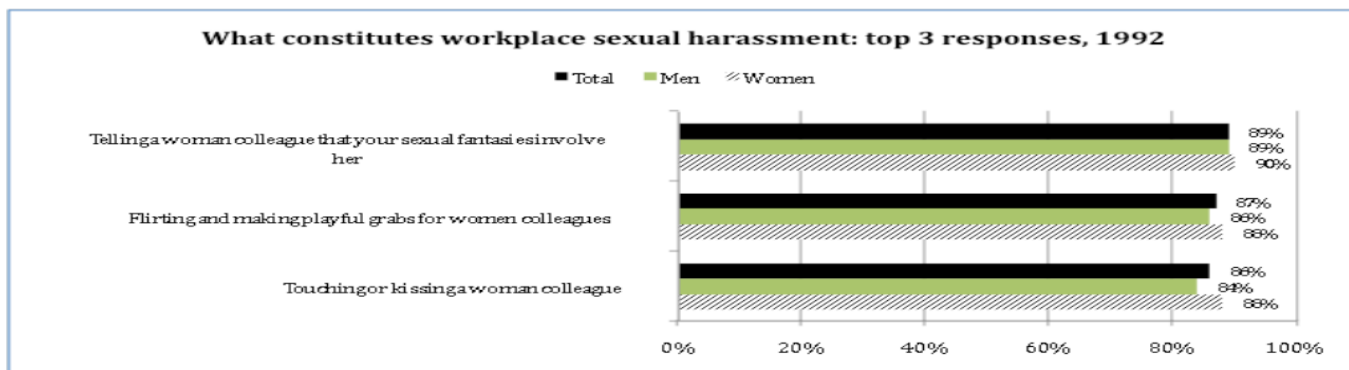
## The Background

Exploring Social Change became a major issue in the 1960's: The Monitor by Yankelovich in the States; the International Institute of Social Change, (RISC) followed in the 70's; then Eurobarometer and many others. The professional organisation in the UK, the Market Research Society, celebrated its 70th anniversary last year. There was, however, no national archive of either social or market research in the UK. It was obvious that if we were to set up an archive which would attract researchers and historians of all kinds to use past data, we would have to have firm evidence about the usefulness of these data. Extensive research among commercial organisations and academics, librarians and archivists confirmed the views of a well-respected marketing director. OK maybe few research practitioners have the time or inclination to consult archives or write papers; the exceptions are student and teachers of marketing and corporates such as Unilever who have carefully preserved their history over many decades and publicised the huge value to their decision makers

So in late 2016 we have begun an archive to ensure that as much research data, books, journals, newsletters, conference papers as we can locate is safely archived for commercial and social researchers; A BIG BUT.... we recognise that we are going to have to publicise the huge value that can be gained from past data. You might well ask why do we laud the huge attempts at creating trend data **unless we wish to use the past to enlighten the present and future.**

We are at an early stage but we had a gift land in our laps, viz Weinstein and sexual harassment: The archive held relevant past data and thanks to IPSOS MORI, we got a good deal of publicity. Far from being a new issue, sexual harassment is a very old one, clouded in the past by prevailing social norms – norms that are now changing dramatically.

## Sexual harassment. What was tolerated in 1992 is unacceptable now.



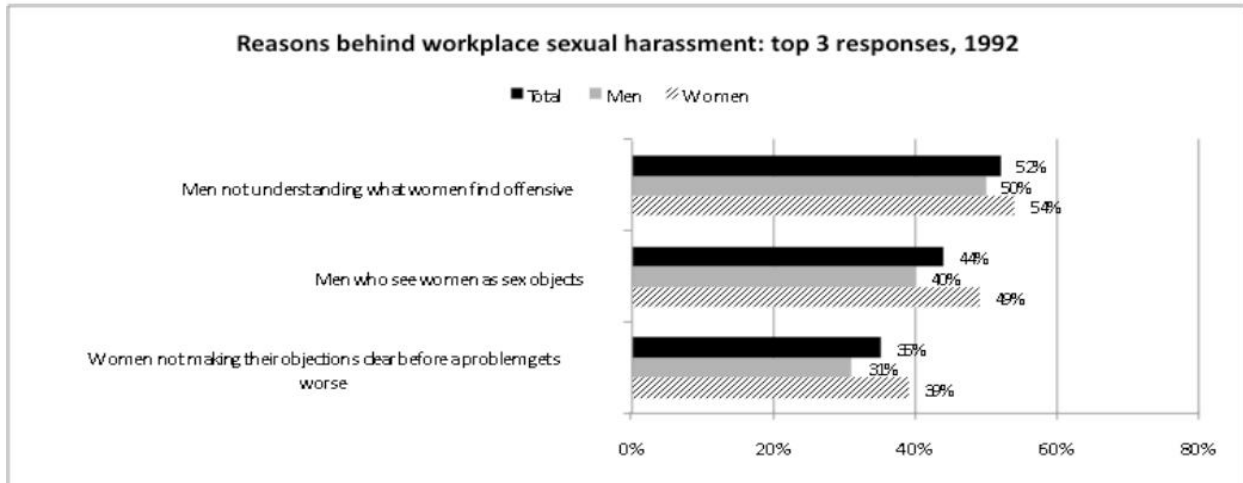
MORI British Public Opinion

Twenty –five years ago MORI were commissioned to carry out a study as part of the GMB’s (General Municipal Boilermakers) campaign to raise the level of awareness of the problem of sexual harassment. **What was tolerated then is unacceptable now.** More precisely women tolerated harassment 25 years ago, turned a blind eye, and did not complain.

Inappropriate behaviour in some high-profile environments might be headline news today, but it has long been a matter for concern. The vast majority of public had a clear view about what constituted sexual harassment. Close to 90% of both female and male workers considered both sexual talk and inappropriate physical contact to be sexual harassment.

Slide 3.

## Sexual harassment. What was tolerated in 1992 is unacceptable now.



MORI British Public Opinion

The most-cited reasons behind sexual harassment also come as little surprise in today's context: the failure of men to understand what women find offensive, and men seeing women as sex objects. Understandably, women were clearer on these reasons than men.

Yet the one clear difference was found in the agree/disagree question "Women not making their objection clear before a problem gets worse." 31% men and 39% women".

Wonderful that GMB wanted to raise the level of the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace; but don't you wish that employers, business schools and professional human resources personnel had been made aware of the research findings. It would not have needed Harvey Weinstein as a nudge. More would have been done earlier to trigger behaviour, to trigger women to report incidences of harassment. With the revelation in the NY Times and New Yorker about Weinstein being accused of sexual harassment, the media storm began. And we in our archive had a great opportunity to get the hungry media to publish our data. Yes! behaviour did change after 25 years, but the degree of awareness of sexual harassment remained the **same** over this period. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose! The same thing.

Attitudes stayed the same over 25 years but behaviour has now changed. Often it is the other way round, behaviour changes and then attitudes but in all cases, past data could have helped decision makers institute new rules, media to publicise concerns among millions of people. Because decision makers did not refer to past data

But let's look at where prediction proved correct and very powerful.

I turn now to generations and predicted behaviour. There is strong evidence that predictions about **generational** differences in attitudes and behaviour would lead to huge differences in how to **communicate** to and how to **market** to them. And those predictions have been successfully incorporated into corporate thinking, political party thinking and public service organisation thinking. Of course I am referring to the successful understanding of differences in millennials (today's 20's to 35's) and among baby boomers (today's 55's to 70s). The latter older age group is the most optimistic generation for many years and were described as such 30 years ago. They were and are optimistic; they are richer, and better educated than any before them with good jobs within reach and family homes waiting around the corner. They are still significantly less concerned about their future outlook compared to the 20-35 year olds..... A reminder that marketers need to be very aware that millennials have great concerns about the future.

Millennials unstable in work, unstable at home, highly educated but unable to make that education pay, stifled by debt, a generation shackled at birth, in which only those born to parents wealthy enough are likely to prosper. It is normal for young people to feel poorer than their parents; it takes time to move up the career ladder and accumulate wealth.

Millennials are feeling poorer **for longer**. More of them than any other generation before place themselves in a low income group. Anxiety is rife among the Millennials and our attitudinal data shows that millennials are willing to sacrifice their free time to get ahead in their careers and are also more motivated by career progression than by money. (Ipsos MORI reanalysis of British Social Attitudes) In actuality, Millennials' disposable income has shrunk. Growth in disposable income is below national average in European countries, USA and Australia. (You Gov)

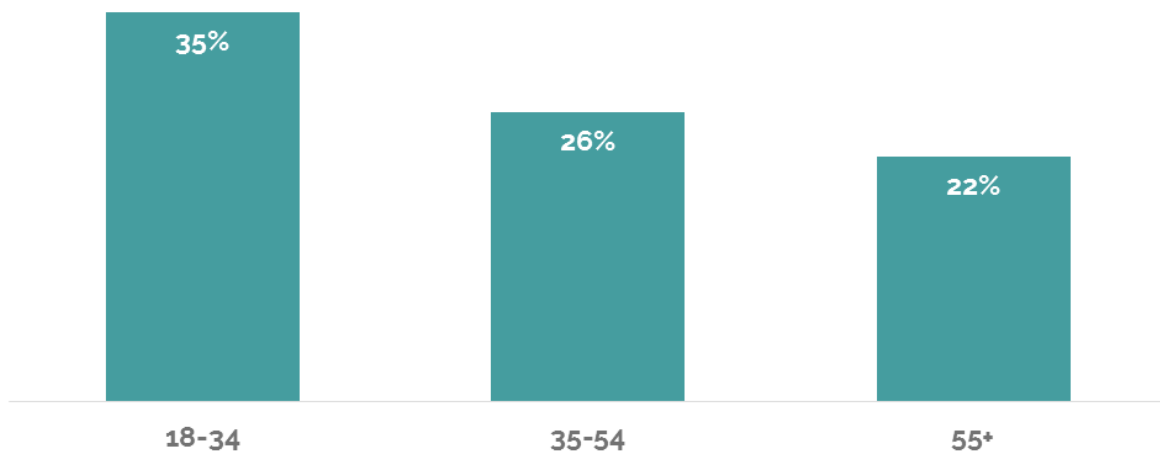
Past data predicted the present and will predict the future with these generational differences. Clever marketers have taken on board the fact that several decades ago the Millennials were predicted to be the heavy users of technology and indeed they are today. Capturing and using personal data is a norm for millennials and on the positive side these young people are most active in punishing sloppy data-handling.

Another marketing opportunity is found in this chart. This group of young people are open to new sources of news.

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### Many Millennials feel they are missing out on news

Percentage (by age) who agree with this statement: "I'm concerned I miss some news stories because websites tailor content to my interests"



YouGov | yougov.com

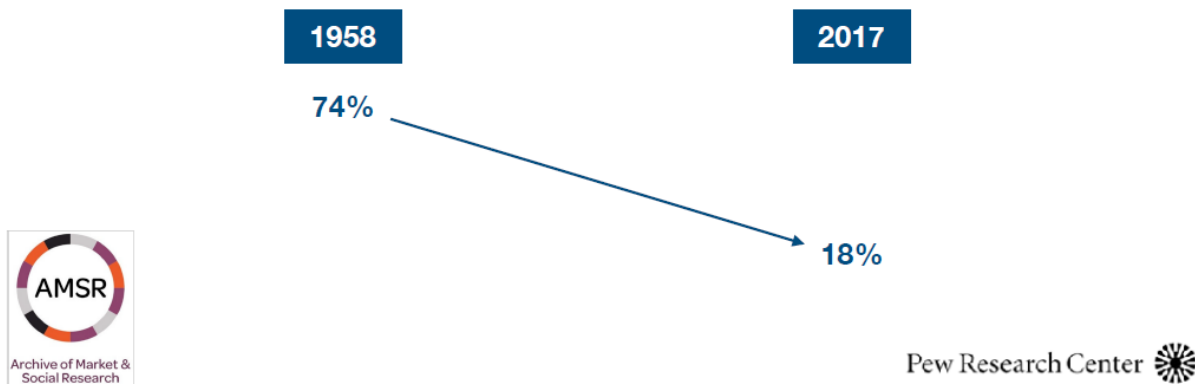
Source: YouGov Millennials report, August 2016

Baby boomers 1946 to 1964 Generation X 1965-1982 Millennials 1983-2000

**Where is Social Change Taking Place?** Perhaps two of the biggest changes we have seen in recent years relate to **decreasing trust in establishments** and to **increasing dependence on new technology**.

Less trust in established systems and organisations is highly correlated to the growth in many countries of Populism. The Pew Research Centre in the USA has done some work in this area 1958 to 2017. Pew reports these actions against established systems: “UK Brexit; US the Election of Trump; Italy rejections of reforms; Brazil an impeached president; Columbia rejection of the government’s peace treaty. The loss of belief in the system provides the context in which a variety of fears can spur people to act”

# Public trust in Government USA



Slide 5 Public trust in the government remains near historic lows. About three-quarters of Americans trusted the federal government to do the right thing almost always or most of the time. Trust in government began eroding during the 1960s, amid the escalation of the Vietnam War. Only 18% of Americans today say they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right “just about always” (3%) or “most of the time” (15%).

**“Trust and influence now lie more with the people - families, friends, classmates, even strangers - than with top-down elites, experts and authorities”**

*Rachael Botsman “Who Can You Trust” Penguin 2017*



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**TNS.**

Slide 6 This is a quote from Rachel Botsman in her book *Who Can You Trust?* (Penguin 2017).

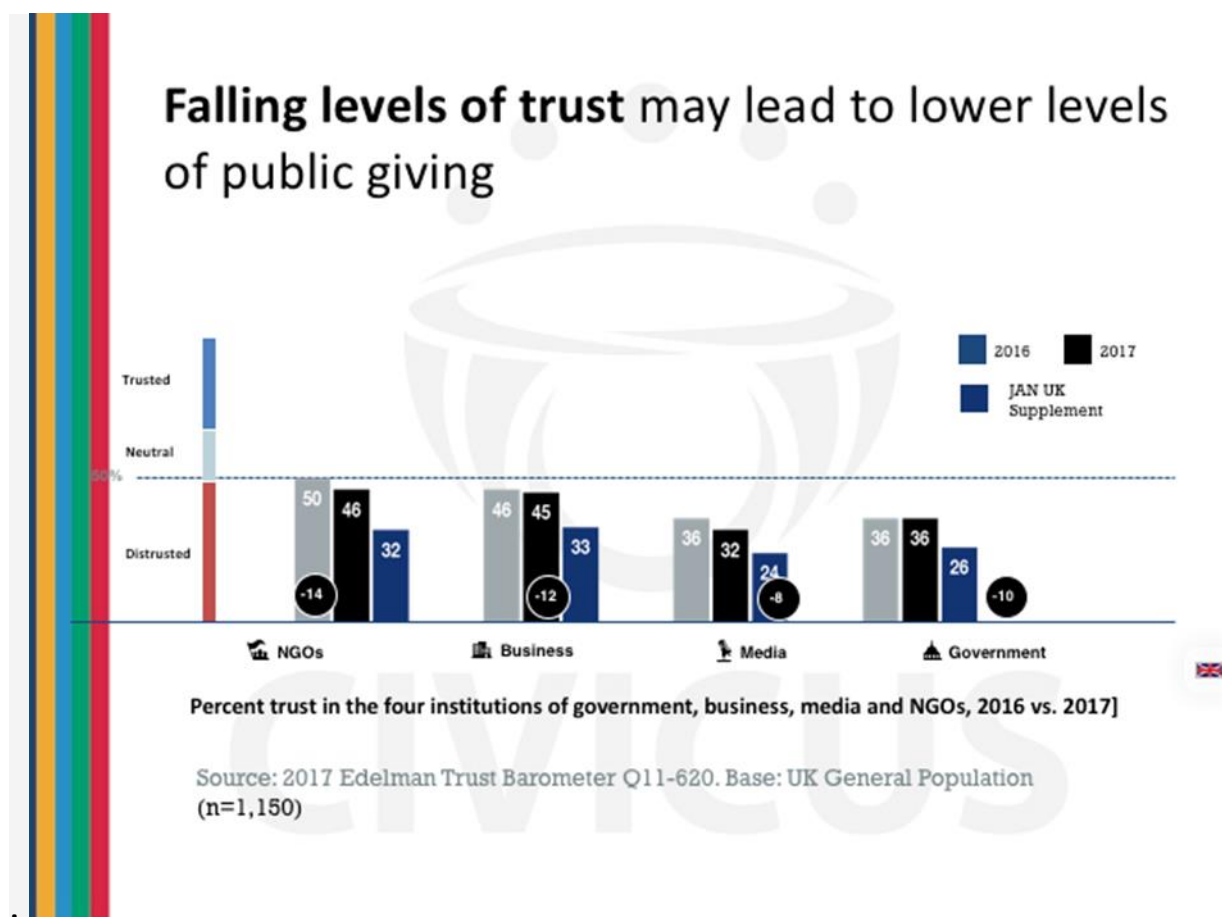
There are security holes in hospitals. There is now the tragic story in the UK which appeared very recently. 450 perhaps 600 patients were killed by overdoses of opiates. Gosport Hospital patients were dying between the 90's and through the early part of this century until 2014 when a proper enquiry was set up. The findings have only recently been disclosed. Prescribed by a doctor and not discovered for over 20 years. Hospitals and their patients are vulnerable to hackers.



Rich data is published by the Edelman Barometer published in January 2017 lists the 10 countries where the populations have multiple fears about gov't systems, above-average percentage of the population hold multiple fears. The list reads like a "who's who" of countries where the people have taken action against established systems.

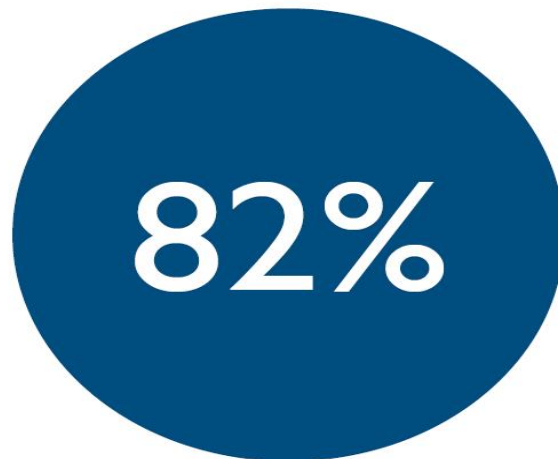
The countries remained almost the same in 2017 and 2018: India, Indonesia, China, Singapore, UAE, Netherlands, Mexico, USA, Colombia, Canada, Brazil, Italy, Malaysia. But as I said before the biggest fall in trust is in the USA. In 2018 significantly more believe the American system is failing them. Only 18% say they can trust the government in Washington to do what is right

Slide 7 Here from Edelman the prediction that falling levels of trust will mean lower public giving. This is UK data predicting that charity donations will fall.



**The Delphi Group report on technology and trust.** Delphi Group is a think tank development of the UK Market Research Society. This excellent report is called Great Expectations: How Technology impacts consumer trust (1)

The Delphi Group founded by the Market Research Society has prepared an excellent report earlier this year investigating the issue of trust with a particular focus on technology and data.... The Delphi Report was published before the Facebook/Cambridge Analytica news proving that it is vital to understand how important technology and the data it produces are to consumer perception of trust in business. The Delphi group had the idealist aim of inspiring organisations to turn the prevailing negative narrative on its head by looking at how technology can build trust by meeting new consumer expectations of transparency, control, relevance, security and fulfilment in the government and technology. Consumers were asked about their trust experiences and rank what they truly think is important. Their expectations include transparency, ethics, data security, permissions and flexibility. The Delphi report ends with 12 steps to greater Trust. So here is some good news. Slide 8



82% of people read reviews before purchasing for the first time



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- (1) In the issue jan2018 IMPACT examined how technology impacts consumer trust: breaches in the trust of where connected devices provide a flow of data from consumer to business. The well-publicised examples include Uber, yahoo, Talk Talk and most dramatic Facebook.

82% of people read reviews before purchasing for the first time.

And it is the millennials and who are most likely to agree with this statement. Here is the score on reading reviews before buying or using a product that

The aim of the Delphi report is to create insight for decision-makers who want to understand what those customer expectations are and score their organisations' performance against them. It also offers guidance on how to persuade decision makers to employ technology to provide customers with trust in their brand and to diagnose any hidden trust issues in their organisation.

The examples are all from the commercial world, but I firmly believe that government organisations, political parties, local councils could learn from the research on consumer perception of different commercial institutions. Institutions can learn from the best of the commercial organisation. When you flip through different organisations, please remember that dependability is not as important as other variables; and **personal security is the most important variable.**

## **Some surprises**

Banks often maligned but are high on dependability. Media, not secure and low on customer service. Retail do very well on dependability and high standards on customer service. Public services only do well on “never put me at personal risk”—as high as retail; but low on dependable

(1) All institutions –political parties, governments, local councils, charities, NHS can build trust by meeting new expectations of security above all but also transparency, dependability, and fulfilment. Let's end with the optimistic Delphi Report with the view of the future and increased use of technology.

(2) Delphi quote that 82% of people read reviews before purchasing for the first time. The Delphi Report is optimistic about the future ... and the ability of technology to increase public trust: “Technology can provide security and protection”

If technology can make possible for brands to be open and vulnerable, by sharing more information with customers, surely the same applies to public organisations and government institutions

And what commercial organisation gets the highest rating all round????? Do you know? I shall ask you at the end this paper.....Amazon

Can I leave you with a couple of thoughts.

**Final comments.** 1) The desired outcome of my paper is to persuade other researchers to employ trend data and wherever possible create appropriate databases. In the UK we have the Target Group Index (TGI), British Public Opinion (MORI's BPO), Eurobarometer, World Panel. Surely there are other countries who could benefit from preserving their country's longitudinal market and social research data. That is the purpose of this paper....but the archive, not this paper, may have two other purposes.

2) The archive has been developed and is run entirely by over 40 unpaid volunteers, the vast majority of whom are "retired" researchers. They have learned about the choice of materials to collect and how to collect and store data, the cataloguing, digitising, promotion of the archive, website development, promoting the use of the archive, fund raising to keep us going for the next 3 years. I would even go so far as to say that the second purpose of the Archive is to promote it as a model for those who believe that the retirement age should be relaxed and be a haven for those researchers, who like me, refuse to retire. That's for another day.

3) Its third purpose is to become a **portal** to other relevant databases and archives. For example, the University of Sussex in the UK now has the Mass Observation archive—sometimes described as "the anthology of the UK from the 1930's" We are aware that many universities have their own archives and we shall use our AMSR archive as a portal to these archives and vice versa.

Our president Professor Denise Lievesley is the director of Green Templeton

College in the University of Oxford. This establishment was originally a business school and Denise was previously head archivist of Kings College London and a statistician and member of our Market Research Society. One of our founder patrons is Sir Robert Worcester and he has been so helpful in providing past materials from MORI—now IPSOS MORI—of which he is the founder.

As citizens, we regularly feel out of control, unable to keep up, or vulnerable to fake news. But we need data, we need to preserve materials from the past to help us become better at predicting the direction and nature of change. And technology can increase trust. And above all, researchers should realise that successful predictions from **trend data must be publicised**, must be acknowledged by business and marketing teachers and by all decision makers,

Perhaps “Reinventing the wheel” could be a description of the market and social research which died out in the early part of the 21st century

### Conclusion What I have learned from the archive?

No change over time is as important to decision makers as significant change

Researchers need reminders of the past data. Access to content must be easy and free

Populism entails a diminution of trust in established systems---advertisers have the savvy to keep levels of trust high

If your office is moving, don't allow anyone to destroy old records. In the Bodleian Library in Oxford, the other day there was a most wonderful find. The earliest-known book dust wrapper has been found in the Bodleian collections. Dating from 1829, it protected a finely-bound gift book entitled Friendship's Offering.

As brands become open and allow themselves to be vulnerable by sharing more information..... public bodies, media and governments should learn the strength of this transparency,

What I have learned from the archive: Finally, we have a rich mine of able and motivated people among our ex-researchers. They want to go on learning and they are very proud of the history of social and market Please tell me that someone here would like to start a national archive.

[www.amsr.org.uk](http://www.amsr.org.uk)

### **Harness the past and present to help predict the future**

- Over time no social change is as important as significant change
- Over time less trust in organisations can be turned around. Use advertising skills
- Over time preserve your company's history
- Over time archives can provide amazingly fresh data
- Over time Public bodies should learn the strength of transparency
- Over time data collected 10,20, 30, 60 years ago can become more valuable. Free access to past data is vital, along with preserving present data for the future

