

User Advisory Group Minutes

Title: User Advisory Group
Date of Meeting: 16 September 2014
Location: The National Archives

Attendees:

Staff

Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) – Director of Public Services and Human Resource (Chair)
Jeff James (JJ) - Chief Executive and Keeper
Mary Gledhill (MG) – Commercial Director
Lee Oliver (LMO) - Head of Public Services Development
Guy Grannum (GG) - Discovery Project Manager
Jonathan Cates (JC) - Collections Information and Systems Manager
Stephen Twigge (ST) - Head of Modern Domestic, Diplomatic and Colonial
Roger Kershaw (RK) - Head of Military, Maritime transport and Family
Krishna Kaur (KK) - Equality and Diversity Co-ordinator
Caroline Pegden (CP) - IMP Programme Manager
Foluke Abiona (FA) – Customer Intelligence Officer
Joanna Robinson (JCR) – Customer Intelligence Assistant (Minutes)

Delegates

Professor Grace Ioppolo (GI) – Academic users
Professor Anne Laurence (AL) – Academic Users
Graham Woolgar (GW) – Onsite Personal Interest Users
Susan Moore (SM) – Map Room Users
Margaret O’Sullivan (MO’S) - County/External Archives
Jacqui Kirk (JK) – Independent Researchers
Rosemary Morgan (RM) – Independent Researchers
Else Churchill (EC) - Family History Societies
Jo Pugh (JP) – Student Users

Apologies

Dr Nicola Phillips (NP) – Map Room Users
Gillian Stevens (GS) – Onsite Personal Interest Users
Nell Darby (ND) – Online Users

| Item | | Action |
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| 1. | Meet the new Chief Executive and Keeper | |
| 1.1 | <p>COS welcomed all to the meeting, and introduced JJ to delegates. JJ explained that he had returned to TNA in July after a year's absence, and was pleased to see UAG is still going strong. He said that UAG was set up with the intention to provide separation between 'business as usual' issues, and 'forward planning', in order to allow users of TNA to have influence on TNA projects.</p> <p>He explained that there is a new planning cycle in progress for TNA, and that UAG has an opportunity to feed into the process. He said that TNA will be planning our work around our main stakeholders: government, academia, the wider archive sector and the public.</p> <p>He emphasised how important it is that UAG provides an opportunity for delegates to give constituents' views on many cross-cutting issues, including digitisation and the ways in which TNA should utilise and promote the records we hold.</p> | |
| 1.2 | <p>JK asked how UAG can feed in to the planning cycle process.</p> <p>JJ said that there are a number of ways, including contact via the UAG mailbox, attending User Forum, and participating in the TNA Online community. Delegates can also contact MG and COS.</p> | |
| 1.3 | <p>JK said that many researchers are extremely busy people, and may not have the time to devote to giving the kind of feedback they feel is really important.</p> <p>JJ said that we have time between now and November to listen to feedback and to formulate our strategic goals for TNA's next planning cycle. We will then start to make specific plans from November to March.</p> | |
| 1.4 | <p>MO'S asked what JJ's own priorities are for TNA.</p> <p>JJ said it is important to him that TNA is not overly cautious during the coming four year period. He said that whatever government is in office next year, TNA will undoubtedly be operating within limited financial parameters. He said that nonetheless, TNA needs to focus on remaining ambitious. JJ said he is keen for TNA to continue working with the government, our main stakeholder, but that we need to invest more time and energy in engaging with academia and the wider archive sector. He also said that we need to think more about how we respond to digital documents becoming the norm. He advised delegates that TNA's interim Chief Technology Officer, Rachel Murphy, is now in place following David Thomas's retirement, and that we are reviewing our technological functioning to ensure that we are providing the best service we can.</p> | |
| 1.5 | <p>GI said that the government has just allocated £1.5m to the RSC for a project to translate Shakespeare into Chinese. She said Sotheby's main customers are Chinese. Is working in some way with the Chinese something that TNA has considered?</p> <p>JJ said that there is false dichotomy between 'government' and 'public'. He said that TNA is a complex organisation, with links to many different sectors; one of</p> | |

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| <p>1.6</p> <p>1.7</p> <p>1.8</p> | <p>which is the cultural sector, in which TNA has not been as visible as we might have been. He said that he would like TNA to encourage more commercial contracts with licence partners and external partners in order to increase funding.</p> <p>AL suggested that as TNA will soon be accessioning born digital files, it would be wise to provide training for both staff and the public in how to navigate this new way of researching archives.</p> <p>JJ said the concept of 'From Records to Presentation' is important to TNA as issues in the future will be not so much matters of storage but how information is captured, stored and presented.</p> <p>MG said we are thinking about the challenges of the digital future of records, and the questions it raises.</p> <p>JJ said that the digital future of records is high on the media and political agendas as we move into the 20 year rule.</p> <p>MO'S said that funding for TNA is a cause for concern.</p> <p>JJ said that we are looking into collaborations with all our partners including government, with regard to sourcing the funding needed for our future requirements.</p> <p>SM asked JJ how long he intends to be in the role of CEO at TNA.</p> <p>JJ said he has a four year contract, but is keen to continue after this time. He said it is a decision for the MoJ, but that he does not plan to be at TNA only for the short term.</p> | |
| <p>2.</p> | <p>Minutes and Matters Arising and General Updates</p> | |
| <p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p> | <p>(Item 10.1 06/14) COS said that we have now separated the digitisation updates into two sections: 'Commercially Sensitive and not for circulation' and 'Not commercially sensitive'.</p> <p>(Item 10.5 06/14) MG said that this point also came up at the 08/14 User Forum. She said we will ask a representative of the London Gazette to attend a User Forum in either October or November.</p> <p>COS said we will inform UAG delegates when we have a confirmed date for this.</p> <p>(Item 10.8 06/14) COS referred delegates to the post meeting note in the minutes.</p> <p>(Item 1.3 06/14) GW referred to this item and to (5.1 08/14 User Forum minutes), with reference to LMO's point that TNA is not allowed to make a profit. LMO had said at the User Forum that while TNA can charge for services such as copying and Digital Downloads from Discovery, regulations prevent TNA making a profit or a loss on these services. He said that we are able to receive royalties from use of our images by commercial partners as this is not covered by the same regulations. GW said this point does not appear in (Item 1.3 06/14), and requested that it is minuted here.</p> <p>LMO said a bigger factor is the upfront investment needed to undertake large</p> | <p>FA</p> |

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| | digitisation projects. | |
| 3. | Update on Discovery 2 and Introduction of IMP Programme Manager Caroline Pegden | |
| 3.1 | <p>Update on Discovery 2. GG said Discovery 2 became the default catalogue on 1 September 2014, and Discovery 1 was removed from access. The legacy sites of A2A, MDR, NRA and Archon are still available.</p> <p>GG then ran through a list of the issues which had been raised by users and testers of Discovery 2. He said that subject categories were thought to be useful, so we are going to bring them back. He said that the search button in advanced search has been re-instated in its previous position.</p> <p>GG explained that Discovery now allows you to search for records held at other archives as well as at TNA. He said that the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography sought assurance from TNA about how their site would be searched through Discovery 2. We reassured them and advised them how they should update their site to be compatible with Discovery 2.</p> <p>JC said the section of Discovery which represents other archives will grow over time.</p> | |
| 3.2 | <p>GW said he had previously raised a question about the ability to choose your search order. He said it was ridiculous that if you find more than 10,000 results you are unable to sort them.</p> <p>GG said there are technical issues with sorting high numbers of results.</p> <p>A discussion followed amongst delegates and staff about sorting results.</p> <p>MG said we will take away the matter of how results can be sorted and try to provide further explanation before the next meeting.</p> <p>GG then explained how to search archives by region on Discovery using the Advanced Search by using a wildcard in the search and then filtering by the regional results.</p> | MG |
| 3.3 | <p>SM said she would like to know what the strategy was for replacing a resource before the replacement is known to be up to standard.</p> <p>MG explained that our strategy is not to wait until everything is perfect, but to add changes bit by bit, in order to provide as large a number of people with updated resources as soon as possible.</p> <p>RM said it was not a problem to put new systems in place, but there was confusion about when the old systems would be switched off, as the MDR resource says it will be switched off in 'autumn 2014' which is not clear enough.</p> <p>JK said a definite date should be provided for the switch off of A2A, Archon, and Manorial Documents online so that people can have a chance to compare the old and new.</p> <p>GG said we often don't seem to get feedback until something is actually gone.</p> | |

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| <p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p> | <p>A discussion followed between GG and delegates about how to use Discovery to search for Manorial documents, with GG demonstrating search techniques.</p> <p>GW asked if the help pages on how to use these aspects of Discovery can be expanded.</p> <p>JC said we will be doing this.</p> <p>MO'S suggested a FAQ for the MDR.</p> <p>Introduction of IMP Manager Caroline Pegden. CP from TNA's Information Management and Practice (IMP) department introduced herself to the group. She spoke about the Digital Transfer Project, the aim of which is to create a standardised digital records transfer protocol from other government departments to TNA. CP said IMP is currently preparing government departments to appraise and select 'born digital' records. The first bulk transfers of 'born digital' records are likely to start in September 2017, and we are currently working on how we will make them accessible to the public. IMP would like to invite UAG delegates to a user workshop about the project on one of three dates: 13, 20 or 22 October. An invitation and an agenda for the workshop will be sent to UAG delegates shortly.</p> <p><i>Post Meeting note - Following further conversations on the timeline of the digital transfer project and the agenda of the next UAG, we will be able to fit the discussion at the next UAG in December and will not hold a special workshop in October.</i></p> | <p>CP</p> |
| | <p>Red Lists Update</p> | |
| <p>4.1</p> | <p>RK explained to delegates that the Red Lists are a set of binders containing TNA's paper catalogue as it was before the move to the online catalogue. He explained that 2,000 lists relevant to the MLDRR were moved up there, and are not part of the Red List removal project; 16,000 lists stayed in the Research and Enquiries Room.</p> <p>RK said the Red Lists became increasingly out of date as the online catalogue became the authoritative source for the catalogue of public records. In 2012, James Lawson co-ordinated a survey of how Red Lists were used. From the results, a method was identified for the gradual removal of the Red Lists from the Reading Rooms, which began in January 2013.</p> <p>RK explained that the criteria for removal were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalogue descriptions had been enriched by a fuller online catalogue description • The total number of piece descriptions was less than 100 and • There had been less than 20 productions in one calendar year <p>6,000 Red Lists have so far been removed. The last tranche will be removed in October 2014.</p> <p>RK assured delegates that none of the Red Lists are destroyed, simply removed from open access. He advised delegates that if a reader requests a list which has been removed, staff will first assist the reader to find the entry on Discovery. If it is</p> | |

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| | <p>not found, the relevant Red List can be requested and consulted. RK explained that since the removal of some of the lists, only 10 have needed to be produced for consultation. One list was brought back permanently; this was because our partner's online site did not provide the full document description as it appeared in the Red List.</p> <p>There was a second stage survey in Spring 2014 which investigated the continued use of the remaining Red Lists. RK is planning the next phase which uses the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalogue descriptions had been enriched by a fuller online catalogue description • The total number of piece descriptions was less than 1000 and • There had been less than 20 productions in one calendar year <p>The limit of 1000 has been chosen because this is the maximum number of descriptions that can be exported into a spreadsheet. RK then demonstrated how to export results to an Excel spreadsheet.</p> <p>RK said that progress will be reported to UAG in June 2015.</p> <p>4.2 JP asked what the cost would be of leaving the lists in the Reading Room.</p> <p>RK said the issue was not so much about the cost of having the lists in the rooms, but that the lists have become increasingly out of date. Some of the lists now contain incorrect information.</p> <p>4.3 SM said she was concerned that some people may feel it is going to some trouble to order a Red List. The old indexes are often very useful.</p> <p>LMO said this is why we are ensuring that the lists are still available if needed.</p> <p>Further discussion about the Red Lists followed.</p> | |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Delegate Submitted Items</p> | |
| <p>5.1</p> | <p>Report on the analysis of User Survey</p> <p>LMO gave an update on User Survey analysis. He said that TNA has been conducting user surveys for 15 years, and was one of the first archives to conduct them. This led to the formation of the National Survey for visitors to UK and Ireland archives, in which TNA also takes part.</p> <p>LMO said the National Survey provides a convenient way for other, smaller archives to survey their users. They pay a small fee to take part. Once the data is collected, those taking part receive the data results. Most archives take part, and this system allows different archives to benchmark results.</p> <p>TNA's own user survey includes basic profile questions including gender, research type and other topics which are important to us. We sometimes ask questions about series we are considering digitising. We also ask for the first half of the postcode, as this allows us to map where our visitors come from.</p> <p>Our overall satisfaction rating has always exceeded 90%. We do conduct online surveys but these can be more challenging, and receive a much lower result than surveys promoted in person.</p> | |
| <p>5.2</p> | <p>MO'S said the National Survey results show that local archives visitor numbers</p> | |

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| | <p>are declining but show an increase in the length of search time. Is this reflected at TNA?</p> <p>LMO said we will find out.</p> | LMO |
| 5.3 | <p>GW said that many researchers who visit TNA collect data by taking photographs of documents they have ordered and analysing the information at home.</p> <p>MO'S said this is an increasingly common pattern in local archives as well as at TNA.</p> <p>LMO said we have seen changes in how users use information over the years at TNA.</p> | |
| 5.4 | <p>GI said that lots of young people will be using TNA online, and said TNA could build on online visits.</p> <p>LMO said that when WO 95 was released online, the Web Team tracked spikes in interest over the day and monitored how smartphones and computer users were accessing the website throughout the day.</p> | |
| 5.5 | <p>SM asked if there were statistics for the geographical distribution of TNA's online users.</p> <p>MG said we will look into this.</p> | MG |
| 5.6 | <p>GI commended TNA's blogs. She said they provide an opportunity to promote other information that readers of the blogs could find at TNA.</p> | |
| 5.7 | <p>RM said that survey results are only as good as the method used to gather them. For example, people usually respond to online surveys when something is annoying them, which produces low satisfaction results.</p> <p>LMO agreed with this point, but said that TNA is not allowed to 'incentivise' our users to participate in our surveys. He said we have reduced our online survey to two a year.</p> | |
| 5.8 | <p>AL advised that Institutional users of the TNA website are unable to get access to the survey page, as the institution system bypasses the home page.</p> <p>LMO said we will look into this.</p> | LMO |
| 5.9 | <p>Foreign Office Card Indexes and Conversion. ST introduced himself as the Head of Modern Records. He said that FO records are accessed by the 1906-1920 card indexes which include approximately 750,000 cards. From 1920 to the 1950s, printed indexes were produced. Currently staff have to convert the original references to modern TNA document references. However, the indexes also refer to material that was not selected for transfer. This is not known until the document is ordered and viewed. The cards have been digitised, and algorithms produced to undertake the conversion, however this is complicated by the matter of not all records surviving. Discussions are under way internally as to the best way to make this service available without causing complaints or raising expectations which cannot be met.</p> <p>LMO said we will report progress to future UAG meetings.</p> | LMO |

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| <p>5.10</p> <p>5.11</p> <p>5.12</p> <p>5.13</p> <p>5.14</p> | <p>Timing and nature of UAG communications. JK said that two weeks is not enough time between seeing the agenda and attending the meeting. She asked if the agenda could be published three weeks before the UAG meeting.</p> <p>LMO said we could do this but made it clear that it would be a draft agenda.</p> <p>MG said we would endeavour to do it so it can be used as a 'head's up' on possible items to be covered, but it should be understood that timings etc., may change.</p> <p>JK said she is concerned that there are press releases about subjects that UAG members have not been told about.</p> <p>MG said there is lots of press coverage about records management, but often this is not prompted by a TNA press release.</p> <p>JK asked if UAG can be put on a circulation list when press releases come out.</p> <p>MG suggested UAG delegates follow @TNApressofficer on Twitter to get up-to-the-minute information.</p> <p>RM said a colleague of hers was unable to download a document to her own device while at TNA which would have cost £3.30 outside TNA.</p> <p>LMO said we have never offered a service of free downloads to your own device. It is sometimes possible to download documents to your own device but we do not advertise it as we can't guarantee a successful result in the same way that we can guarantee our catalogue. We therefore do not advertise such a system but provide it on a 'best endeavours' basis. LMO said he would like to pilot the scheme, but is currently unable to because of infrastructure limitations. He said we hope to be able to get the resources to launch a formal pilot some time next year.</p> <p>GW asked if the scheme would apply to TNA's partner sites as well.</p> <p>LMO said it would.</p> <p>RM asked about the LFHC, who allow users to download to memory sticks in their computers.</p> <p>LMO said LFHC has a separate IT system with different rules. They are prepared to take the risks involved with allowing users to insert USBs, but as a government department we do not allow this risk to our network.</p> <p>Digitisation of RN Record Cards and National Health registers. GW asked if the Royal Naval service records which the MoD had consulted on in 2008, were included in the current digitisation project.</p> <p>LMO said we can check this for GW.</p> <p>MG said we have now completed the scanning and transcriptions and will be published this financial year.</p> <p>GW asked how TNA will be accessioning the 1939 Health Register records.</p> <p>LMO said we will be accessioning the digitised image of part of the record, which does not include the health information.</p> | <p>LMO</p> |
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| | <p>GW asked if TNA accessioned records which aren't public records.</p> <p>LMO said we do, and that 'Not public record' will be found in the appropriate part of the catalogue entry.</p> <p>GW asked if the NHS have complete control over the 1939 Health registers.</p> <p>LMO confirmed that these records do belong to the NHS.</p> <p><i>Post meeting note – for clarity, the records are held by the Health & Social Care Information Centre.</i></p> | |
| 6. | UAG Recruitment Update | |
| 6.1 | <p>MG introduced KK, TNA's new Equality and Diversity officer. KK said we received a very positive response to the advertisement for this position, with 90 enquiries, and a shortlist of 11 candidates. She said we used diversity champions to help get the message out across the archive world.</p> | |
| 6.2 | <p>MG said a sift was carried out to select two delegates from the 11 candidates. Once they have confirmed they are happy to join UAG we hope to see them at the next UAG in December.</p> | |
| 6.3 | <p>MG said the next phase of recruitment will begin in October, when we expect to have four vacancies. Gillian Stevens has said she is willing to stepping down from the role of Onsite Personal Interest users' delegate. MG asked GW if he is happy to continue as the other Onsite Personal Interest users' delegate for the next year. GW confirmed that he is.</p> <p>MG said that as per discussions over the summer, we will include role-specific guidance in the advertisement where we would particularly like to appoint representatives who can bring complementary expertise to sit alongside the existing representatives on UAG.</p> | |
| 6.4 | <p>GI questioned the 12pm start time of UAG meetings. She said it was usually much easier for delegates to attend a meeting at around 3pm than 12pm.</p> <p>MG said we had experimented with different User Forum times, but this didn't affect attendance. We could however bear this in mind before setting meeting times for next year.</p> | FA |
| 7. | New Members Pack | |
| 7.1 | <p>MG thanked JK for her work on the welcome pack which will in future be given to new UAG delegates. She said she hopes current UAG delegates like what we have created, and that they should let us know if they think there should be any minor changes.</p> <p>MO'S said the pack is very good, and said that the information on current and ongoing projects and the sheet on acronyms are particularly helpful.</p> | |
| 7.2 | <p>MG said we have been trying to raise the profile of UAG in advance of the</p> | |

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| | recruitment campaign, including UAG posters around TNA. She advised delegates that Nell Darby's blog on Getting involved with the User Advisory Group is soon to be published on the TNA website. We will be promoting it in order to provide more informal information about UAG and encourage potential delegates to apply. It would be great if other UAG members could link to the post as part of 'spreading the word' about the vacancies. | |
| 8. | Accessibility | |
| 8.1 | LMO advised delegates that additional lamps have been purchased for the Map room. There are signs in the public locker rooms to encourage people to use top and bottom lockers if there is no inconvenience to them, so that the middle lockers are free for those with mobility issues. | LMO |
| 8.2 | LMO advised that there is a seat booking system onsite which allows you to decide on the most accessible seat for your needs. When ordering from offsite, there is no seat allocation and it is arranged once you are onsite in the document reading room. | |
| 8.3 | JK asked if the advance ordering system could give an indication of seat location. LMO said we can do this. He said we are currently reviewing the 'About Us' section of the website, and plan to include more about accessibility in that section. | |
| 8.4 | JK said it would be useful to indicate the seat letters on the plan shown on the advanced orders web page. LMO will take this away. | |
| 8.5 | GW said users studying the plan when choosing a seat, may think that the camera icon indicates the only seats where a camera can be used. If possible it should be made clear that a camera can be used at any seat, and that camera stands are available for those who specifically need them. | |
| 8.6 | JK asked how accessibility and usability issues can be reported to TNA. LMO said if anyone has ideas on how accessibility can be improved, they can use our Contact form . LMO also said that there was a recent visitor to TNA who used a larger than average wheelchair, which made it difficult to get into one in particular of our disabled toilets. The visitor pointed out how a minor adjustment to the positioning of the support bar on the door would give him easier access to the room. We have now made those changes to this room. | |
| 8.7 | LMO advised delegates of the ' Your feedback and our response ' on the 'Have Your Say' section of the website. He said that this is where we report on some of the changes we have made, and our responses to user concerns about issues at TNA. | |
| 8.8 | EC asked if UAG can have a similar section on the UAG page. LMO said we will consider this, and will work on this idea. | |

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| 9. | Updates on Cataloguing and Digitisation | |
| 9.1 | A delegate pointed out that 'Dardanelles' was incorrectly spelt in the Commercially Sensitive catalogue list. | |
| 10. | Any other business | |
| 10.1 | <p>MG mentioned the two books we have recently published: Maps Their Untold Stories by Rose Mitchell and Andrew Janes, and Secrets of The National Archives by Richard Taylor.</p> <p>10.2 MG also advised delegates of the 'Explore Your Archive' 2014 campaign week, running from 10 to 16 November 2014. She said that support from UAG delegates to help raise awareness of the campaign by tweeting, and promoting the campaign through their networks would be very much appreciated, particularly as we are hoping to have a big social media presence this year. We will communicate with UAG by email nearer the time of the week.</p> <p>10.3 GI strongly suggested that TNA should produce an app. She said this would allow TNA to reach 16-18 year olds who rely heavily on apps as research tools, and to reach audiences who would not otherwise engage with TNA at all.</p> <p>COS said it would be useful to feed this suggestion into our business planning.</p> <p>10.4 GI asked how the FWW100 event 'Conference: War and Peace - diplomacy, espionage and the First World War' on 28 June was received.</p> <p>MG said it went very well, although attendance was not quite as high as had been hoped. Those who attended said it was a very useful and enjoyable event.</p> <p>10.5 GI suggested that TNA organise a conference or study day for the 2016 anniversary of Shakespeare's death, which she believes would be extremely popular.</p> <p>10.6 AL asked if TNA would be marking the anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising.</p> <p>MG said we will be considering which anniversaries to mark, especially the Shakespeare anniversary, during the work on our Four Year Plan.</p> <p>Next meeting: Tuesday 16 December 2014, 12:00 – 14:30</p> | |