



Minutes of Kew Readers' Forum held on 7 June 2007

Title: Kew Readers' Forum

Date of Meeting: Thursday 7th June 2007

Location: Conference Room A, 3pm

Attendees: Staff: RK: Roger Kershaw, Acting Head of Reader Information Services – Chair; NC: Natalie Ceeney, CEO; JJ: Jeff James, Incumbent Head of Reader and Customer Services; LO: Lee Oliver, Head of Development; AR: Andrew Rowley, National Advisory Services; MP: Matt Palmer, Digital Preservation; RS: Ruth Selman, Research Knowledge and Academic Services; DP: David Priest, Document Service; TG: Tom Gregan, Head of Document Services; Helen Barker (secretary)

Action

- 1 Welcome from Roger Kershaw, Acting Head of Reader Information Services Department (RISD)**
 - 1.1 RK informed the Forum that the former Head of RISD, Chris Cooper, had moved to a new post in charge of co-ordinating the Kew 2008 project, integrating the services of the Family Record Centre into the service at Kew. He thanked Chris in his absence for his work and for his contribution to the many Kew Readers' Forums he had chaired in the past.
 - 1.2 Lee Oliver (LO) told the Forum that the Kew 2008 project was nearing the end of the design phase, with the possible publication date as near as 6 weeks away from the date of this meeting. After publication a series of public open meetings will be held. A reader asked if plans would be alterable after publication. Natalie Ceeney (NC) replied that Kew 2008 has been subject to
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extensive and ongoing consultation so TNA is confident that the plans are correct moving forward. Though unlikely, she welcomed any feedback if readers felt there had been a serious error. A summary of the consultation with users is on TNA's website in the Kew 2008 section:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/news/stories/124.htm>

- 1.3 RK introduced Jeff James to the Forum. Jeff will be joining The National Archives as Head of Reader and Customer Services Department in July from the British Library where he had the role of Head of Operations at St Pancras. JJ introduced himself, stating that he would be overseeing the changes taking place to the services, managing the merger of Reader Information Services and Research Knowledge and Academic Services and championing the needs of TNA's customers. JJ also invited the regular readers to one-to-one meetings.
 - 1.4 A reader questioned the use of the term 'customer' in the new name (Reader and Customer Services Department or RACS) for the merged departments of Reader Information Services and Research Knowledge and Academic Services Departments. NC conceded that there had been much debate about the new name, but proposed that TNA had many customers remotely, in addition to on-site readers. JJ stated that his intention was to look at making services accessible to people wherever they may be in the world. NC added that the RACS was still a working title, but the main focus was on giving the users of TNA a fantastic user experience.
- 2. Minutes of the last meeting**
- 2.1 *3. Yellow Lists.* Concerns about dates loading onto Catalogue – this has gone to the web team.
All other points agreed.
 - 2.2 *5. Car Parking* RK announced that Richmond-upon-Thames Council had given planning permission for TNA to charge for use of TNA's car park. The next steps before introducing the charges would involve carrying out surveys of usage and the range of options to put to users of the car park.
 - 2.3 A reader enquired about the status of the car park attached to the old Inland Revenue building. NC informed the Forum that the building had been bought and was waiting to be taken over by new owners.
 - 2.4 *6. Copying of Probate Finding Aid held at Family Record Centre* RK announced that copying the *Index to PCC Admons, 1750-1800* by AJ Camp would be too extensive a job. It would be transferred to Kew as part of the Kew 2008 relocation.
 - 2.5 *7. Reading Room and Document Ordering changes.* David Priest (DP) told the Forum that due to technological hitches the new document ordering/seat booking system had to be temporarily abandoned for the old system. However, when the laptop area is filled, readers will be able to select seats in the non-laptop area.
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Due to Kew 2008 no intermediate system will be introduced, but DP and his team will continue to work on a product for the new set-up.

- 2.6 8.3 Coffee meetings with James Strachan, Director of Public Service and Marketing and regular readers. This is ongoing.

3. **Andrew Rowley – National Advisory Service: Acquisition and Disposition update**

- 3.1 AR outlined the recent developments surrounding The National Archives' Acquisition and Deposition Policy, which ensures that the right records are in the right places – either stored at TNA, deposited in other institutions, or destroyed. A new policy was published at the end of March 2007. It also includes criteria for the acquisition and disposition of electronic records, scientific records and changes to the local records office network
- 3.2 An Acquisition Advisory Forum was created, taking in a wide range of stakeholders, from government departments, users, representatives of local records offices and those with an interest in scientific records.
- 3.3 The report was well received when it was given over for public consultation between December 2006 and February 2007. Now the agenda has moved to implementation, including changes/additions to Operational Selection Policies (OSPs). For example, developing OSPs to cover still and moving images and records relating to people within and outside of government. There will also be moves to flesh out the relationship between TNA and places of deposit and to set guidelines for the way TNA handles presentations and scientific records, as well as records of government staff and other individuals.
- 3.4 AR reminded the Forum that more information would be available on The National Archives' website:
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/selection/acquisition.htm>
- 3.5 AR thanked all those who had contributed to the review. The next review is due in 2012.
- 3.6 A reader suggested holding a dedicated Acquisitions and Dispositions day, similar to the Catalogue Awareness Day. AR announced he would take the suggestion back.

AR

4 **Ruth Selman, Research Knowledge and Academic Services: Introduction to *Your Archives*, The National Archives Wiki – A new tool for sharing knowledge of archival sources**

- 4.1 RS provided the Forum with a background to *Your Archives* and briefly demonstrated how any one can add their knowledge to the site. *Your Archives* uses the same Wiki technology as other well-known sites, such as *Wikipedia*. The basis behind all Wiki sites is the sharing of knowledge. It enables users of websites to add their own knowledge on certain subjects and to edit the entries of

other contributors. The National Archives is the only archive so far to introduce this feature, tapping outside information sources and offering everyone a space in which to contribute, bypassing bureaucracy.

- 4.2 *Your Archives* was launched on the web on 24th April 2007 and was loaded with approximately 600 memoranda (guides of various length and detail on records of interest relating to particular historical events). Some of these are out of date or in need of additional information, so visitors to the site are encouraged to add and edit these. So far 150 articles have been contributed. Contributors can link directly to and from the Catalogue. An upgrade in the near future will automate this facility.
- 4.3 RS welcomed any feedback from the Forum and announced plans to develop subject areas and style guidelines.
- 4.4 RK reminded readers that the paper memoranda would remain unchanged and easily accessible in the reading rooms at Kew.
- 4.5 A reader asked if guidance could be provided concerning possible breaches of the Freedom of Information Act.
- 4.6 Readers praised TNA for supporting the Wiki project.

RK/RS

5 **Matt Palmer, Digital Preservation: Seamless Flow referencing system for 'Born Digital' records**

- 5.1 MP explained to the Forum the logic behind developing a new referencing systems for records which are 'born digital', i.e. documents originating in digital format such as emails and word documents.
- 5.2 Born Digital references will consist of (1) an 'archival' reference which gives the department and series e.g. 'DCA 4', and (2) an 'object' reference, which is the specific digital object within the series e.g. '7', the full reference then being 'DCA 4/7'. There is also (3) a 'version' reference which gives the exact version of that object, e.g. 'DCA 4/7 -P2'. This is the second presentation version of 'DCA 4/7'. For normal purposes the version reference is unnecessary and is not shown by default; users simply receive the latest presentation unless they are specifically interested in other versions. The referencing system will also allow TNA to reflect the various stages of a redacted document and enable much finer degrees of redaction. A redacted object has its own reference, which is another number appended to the original reference e.g. the second redaction would be 'DCA 4/7/2'. For more detail please see:
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/citable-references.pdf>
- 5.3 A reader enquired about the recent shutting down of many government websites and asked whether the information on them was being gathered. NC replied that many of the sites were for small departments whose sites would be incorporated into larger ones, or were sites set up temporarily and were technically 'dead'.

TNA is 'taking shots' of these websites and for many users will be able to have functionality up to 2 layers in. Over the last 4 years TNA has been capturing government websites. For some sites this is done quarterly and for others, like Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which changes frequently, data is captured more regularly. If a key event is ongoing, for example during the Bird Flu scare, websites are monitored closely.

6 Tom Gregan and David Priest, Document Services: Document Services Update

- 6.1 TG informed the Forum that Document Services is reigning in special arrangements regarding length of time for reserving documents and numbers of documents out to readers. The current amount of documents is 21 documents a day. Reservation time is 6 weeks. TG stressed that the 21 documents was a rolling figure.
- 6.2 A reader asked if it would be possible to remind readers when the 6 weeks is up. DP said he would look into putting expiry dates on yellow document slips.
- 6.3 DP said he would ask IT to disable the automatic cancellation of reservations when swiping 'Finished for the Day' screen.

DP

7 Any Other Business

- 7.1 One reader enquired whether TNA's was present on Wikipedia. NC confirmed this, as she wrote the entry.
- 7.2 Another reader enquired whether there was any possibility of having the Army, Navy and Air Force Lists digitised and preserved. Unfortunately the Lists have not had much interest from commercial partners, but NC suggested that the Library and Dan Jones from Business Development could revisit the matter.
- 7.3 A reader asked for a breakdown on TNA's budgets at a future Forum. NC welcomed this interest and agreed to organise a presentation
A suggestion was made to organise a joint staff/reader Christmas party, perhaps through the Friends.
- 7.4 LO updated the Forum on the recent power cut, which affected TNA's services for an afternoon (25th May 2007). The power cut affected a large area of southwest London. Although TNA's own supply kicked in, the CCTV system needed engineers' intervention so TNA was unable to open the original document reading room for the afternoon. As part of the Kew 2008 programme CCTV will have its own separate power supply.

- 8. Date of next meeting: 18th September 2007, 3pm**