

# Minutes

Title: Kew Readers' Forum

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2007

Location: Training Room, 3pm

Attendees: Staff: JJ: Jeff James, Head of Reader and Customer Services – Chair; LO: Lee Oliver, Head of Development; CC: Chris Cooper, Kew 2008 Programme Manager; TG: Tom Gregan, Head of Document Services; JL: Jack Lincoln, Head of Security; JS: James Strachan, Director of Public Services and Marketing; SA: Sarah Abbott, Corporate Information Services Librarian; JLW: James Lawson, Deputy Customer Relations Manager; Robin Gilby (secretary)

Readers: 12 Readers present

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## 1 Welcome from Jeff James, Head of Reader and Customer Services (RACS)

## 2. Minutes of the last meeting

2.1 *3.6. Acquisition and Disposition.* JLW stated that it has been agreed with Records Management that it would be a good idea to provide a forum for users to feedback on cataloguing issues. However there are no resources at present to do this. A Reader enquired what the time span on this will be. JLW to report back.

2.2 *4.5. Breach of FOI on Your Archives.* JS reported that within the last week the Terms and Conditions on *Your Archives* have been amended to make it clear that any contributed material that breaches FOI legislation will not be allowed on the site. Any such material will be removed. For material that has already been posted the intention is to have a light touch and not make any changes. A reader expressed concern that where there were two files with different levels of access, details from one might be published which would then expose information from the other, thus breaching FOI. JS responded that a case-by-case approach

Action

JLW

would be taken and that there was no desire to censor unless there was a clear breach of the FOI Act. Further discussion of this issue was to be pursued outside the meeting.

2.3 *6.2. Document reservation reminders.* TG reported that date of return will be included at the bottom of document tickets. This will be implemented after the 17<sup>th</sup> December when The National Archives re-opens.

2.4 *7.3. Budget Breakdown.* JJ reported on behalf of Natalie Ceeney that a breakdown of The National Archives budget should hopefully be available by the time of the next meeting.

### 3. **Chris Cooper, Kew 2008 Programme Manager – Plans and timetable for works to extend and improve services at Kew (see separate presentation).**

3.1 CC reported that there had been a delay in the release of the plans due to funding issues. The presentation represents what will actually be put out to tender.

3.2 A Reader asked what would be happening with the HMC's National Register of Archives lists. CC responded that he had been informed that the library had adequate space for this, which was confirmed by SA.

3.3 A reader asked about the security of library books with the proposed changes. CC responded that all books have tattle tape, which was confirmed by SA. Scanners to pick up the tape will be in operation at the entrance to and from the stairs on the first floor, as well as to the new public toilets on the first floor. [Post meeting note: there will in fact be no scanners at the latter point].

3.4 A reader asked what indication there would be of silent and non-silent areas in the reading rooms. CC responded that this is being looked at very carefully. JS stated that he regards it as our duty to provide a silent area for readers.

3.5 A reader asked about copying facilities in the library, which it is proposed would be merged into one area, it would be preferred if facilities were kept in the library area. CC stated that the preference is for a supervised copying area. It was agreed that this would be reviewed.

3.6 Readers expressed concerns over the security of books, fiche and other items that will be available on open shelves. JL responded that floor staff would be supported by a sophisticated security system, with over 90 CCTV cameras covering the building. One reader wanted to see a much stronger security presence, and felt that it was important that visitors perceived this

LO

presence. JL reported that at present security officers deal with over 1000 incidents a month, and that a balance had to be struck between security and customer service.

3.7 A reader asked whether it would be necessary to continue having loose sheets of paper stapled together. JS said there would be a review of this policy. JS

3.8 Readers expressed concern over the admittance of bags and coats onto the first floor; this could be a nuisance and also might present security issues. A number of readers requested a review of this. JS responded that this would be reviewed, but that the feedback received had been consistently positive. JS also wanted to receive feedback on this from the FRC User Meetings in order to have a balanced view. JS

3.9 CC reported that it was planned that the lighting in the Map Room would be improved within the next financial year.

3.10 A reader asked how the new layout would affect evacuation procedures. CC responded that the construction of a new emergency exit was being considered, and that new evacuation procedures were also currently under consideration and had not yet been finalised.

3.11 CC reported on reduced capacity during building work. A reader expressed concern over seat allocation during this period. JS responded that TNA would be encouraging people to postpone their research if it was not essential to undertake it at that time. CC and JS responded that it would be on a first come first served basis but consideration would be given to allowing some 'special case' reservations. The details needed to be thought about more closely and plans for this would be published. JS

3.12 A reader asked whether Catalogue Awareness Day would be affected by the work. JS will confirm this.

3.13 A reader asked whether there would be a wide net of publicity for the work and closures, including universities and the BBC. JS confirmed that publicity had been extensive and he would ensure that universities and the BBC were included. JS also stated that there would be special newsletters sent out to registered users. JS/SH

3.14 A reader asked what the lifespan of these changes would be. JS stated that he felt it would be about 10 years. JJ stated that after May 2008 there would be continued reviews of the services.

#### **4 Jeff James, Head of RACS: Proposals to relaunch the User Forum at Kew (see separate presentation).**

- 4.1 A working group in TNA has been formed to action this.
- 4.2 JS went on record to apologise that during the financial climate last year he had to discontinue the provision of refreshments at meetings, but that this would now be reinstated.
- 4.3 A reader stated that people would come back to the meetings if they felt that they had a real influence on decision making. JJ agreed and hoped that this would be demonstrated over time. JS endorsed this and stated that Kew 2008 has been an example of this in action.
- 4.4 A reader asked if there were too many groups involved in various forums. JJ said that there had been a review of the various groups, and that the forum would hopefully represent individual users rather than groups. JJ also said that TNA does not want to be proscriptive and we want to encourage established and new users through the doors to these meetings, with the aim of being representative of users. This would be done without being too intrusive into people's details.

## 5 Any other business

- 5.1 A reader asked that with bags and coats being allowed onto the first floor would food and drink also be permitted. LO responded that this would not be the case.
- 5.2 A reader asked if there would be drinking fountains available. LO responded that drinking fountains in the toilets were being considered.
- 5.3 A reader expressed concern over possible attacks with the new security arrangements. JJ said that this would be reviewed and that there would be feedback. JL stated that as a government department we are seen as being at a low threat from terrorist attacks. JS reiterated that this would be reviewed.
- 5.4 A reader wrote a letter in February regarding Acquisitions and Dispositions but nothing has appeared on the website. JJ said that this would be looked at with feedback to follow.
- 5.5 A reader asked if a representative from Your Archives could come to a meeting. This was received positively and will be considered.

**Date of next meeting:** 16<sup>th</sup> October 2007, 12.30pm, Conference Room A

JLW

JJ/RS