

## Report on 'Meet the Chief Executive Officer day' at Kew, 8 November 2007

Issue raised by readers	Our response
<p>Relocation of the Family Records Centre/ Changes at Kew</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A number of readers were concerned about the move and how it would work, particularly future access to Birth, Marriage and Death indexes, and whether we can 'fit everyone in'.</li> </ul>	<p>Access to Birth, Marriage and Death indexes is not actually part of The National Archives. This is the responsibility of the General Register Office (GRO), who share the running of the FRC with us. GRO are changing the methods of access to their indexes, and details of their plans will be published on their website: <a href="http://www.gro.gov.uk">www.gro.gov.uk</a>. We will continue to discuss how we can assist them in ensuring that their indexes remain accessible.</p> <p>We are confident that we can accommodate existing users of our FRC services at Kew. We are investing in our services at Kew under the 'Kew 2008 Programme'. Full details of our plans can be found on our website: <a href="http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/kew2008.htm">www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/kew2008.htm</a>.</p>
<p>Cycling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was mentioned that we have created a cycle lane from the tow path, but still display 'no cycling' signs.</li> </ul>	<p>We will change our signage by 31 December 2007.</p>
<p>Area behind bike sheds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was mentioned that the area behind the bike sheds was untidy.</li> </ul>	<p>We have asked our groundskeeper to ensure that they keep the area clear of rubbish.</p>
<p>Car Parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several readers asked for an update on our plans for the car park.</li> </ul>	<p>Following the car park survey in October, we are currently developing a proposal which will be announced at the December meeting of The National Archives User Forum, to which all our welcome. This will then be published on our website at:</p>

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	<a href="http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/events/readers.htm">www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/events/readers.htm</a>
<p>Digitisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were many requests for more digitisation, and better indexing, including specific requests for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fleet Prison Marriage Records (currently on poor quality microfilm and not indexed)</li> <li>○ WW1 Officers' Records</li> <li>○ Army, Navy and Airforce lists (books are heavily used, and in deteriorating condition)</li> <li>○ FO 800</li> <li>○ SP35 and SP36 (Microfilm is very poor quality – and hand written catalogue is difficult to use).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Our overall aim is to digitise as much of our collection as possible. However, we don't have the funding to do it all, and so prioritise according to levels of use, and also where the partners we work with are prepared to invest. We have a wide range of digitisation projects currently underway (more than at any time previously) including the current digitisation of the 1911 Census. On the specific record series queried:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Fleet Registers are part of a current digitisation contract, and are due for release online in April 2008</li> <li>• There are no current plans to digitise the WW1 Officers Records, but the indexes in WO 338 are being digitised as part of a separate pilot project.</li> <li>• There are two companies interested in digitising the Army, Navy, and Air Force Lists.</li> <li>• There are no plans to digitise FO 800, but we will suggest it to some of our academic publisher partners</li> <li>• Cengage Learning (formerly Thomson Gale) begin release of State Papers Domestic, Foreign &amp; Ireland 1509-1714 in April 2008. We will discuss the digitisation of the later State Papers with our academic publisher partners.</li> </ul>
<p>Digital Cameras</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were a number of comments, mainly requests for more camera stands, allowing scanners, and a query regarding charging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the Kew 2008 Programme we are installing 24 more camera stands in the Document Reading Room.</li> <li>• We still view handheld scanners as posing an unacceptable risk to the documents, so will not change our ban on them.</li> <li>• Allowing readers to bring in their own digital cameras has proved to be very popular, and we have absolutely no plans to introduce charging for this facility.</li> </ul>
<p>Can readers put images of</p>	<p>This is complex, as it involves issues such as</p>

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documents they have taken themselves online?	copyright, licensing, cataloguing, and system capacity, however we are exploring mechanisms to allow readers to upload document images taken in the reading room.
DocumentsOnline website looking dated	We are planning a complete overhaul of the site in 2009.
<p>Document Copying</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were a number of comments about self-service copying in the Document Reading Room, especially regarding the number of machines, and queuing.</li> </ul>	<p>We recognise the issue, and take on board the concerns raised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As part of the Kew 2008 programme we are revising the layout of this area, which will make queuing fairer and more straightforward.</li> <li>• We are investigating the possibility of upgrading our copying equipment in 2008, subject to the availability of funds.</li> </ul>
Requests for longer hours of opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unfortunately there is no prospect of us being able to afford this. Our overall funding will diminish in real terms over the next 4 years, so our priority is maintaining current opening hours and service levels to the current standards.</li> <li>• However, following consultation with staff and readers, we are exploring adjusting our hours slightly with regard to the 10:00 start on Tuesdays. Further details will be confirmed at the December 2007 or January 2008 User Forums.</li> </ul>
<p>Removal of microfilm from open access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some concerns were raised regarding our policy of removing microfilms from open access when a digital version is available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We only remove the films from open access once we are satisfied that the digital version is of acceptable quality to meet the needs of the majority of users.</li> <li>• We encourage and include feedback from readers when making these decisions. We still retain the master microfilms, which can be produced on demand, if required.</li> </ul>
<p>Research Guides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some concerns expressed about some out of date information in our Guides, and also the use of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Research Guides are regularly reviewed by the network of content 'owners' in our Advice and Records Knowledge Department. We are about to</li> </ul>

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<p>numbering to refer to them. In some cases the paper copies are different to the online version.</p>	<p>launch a thorough review of the content as part of our Expertise Online Programme. The initial audit for this review will be completed by Christmas 2007.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We provide an alphabetical index to the Guides in the reading rooms. The numbering is there to help users locate the right guide once they have identified which guide they require.</li> </ul>
<p>Document Pre-ordering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Why did The National Archives move the pre-ordering time back from midnight, to 4pm?’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We changed the deadline to 5pm about a year ago, to give staff enough time to process these requests ready for the next day. We will keep the situation under review.</li> </ul>
<p>Reader Ticket swipes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Readers have to swipe their cards through various gates etc – but some of the swipe readers are different ways up! Can we have them all up the same way please’</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are checking all the fixed swipes to ensure they are mounted the same way. The gate swipes have been checked and are all mounted the same way. We will amend any of the wall-mounted swipes before Easter 2008.</li> </ul>
<p>The Catalogue</p> <p>Several issues were raised related to our Catalogue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It’s really hard to print from the catalogue – the page is the wrong size etc. Can we create a printer-friendly version (other than having to download the table?)</li> <li>• Post Office records – Shouldn’t they be on A2A rather than The National Archive’s catalogue? (Have confused some really experienced readers, and are on our catalogue as an anomaly)</li> <li>• The Abbreviations on our catalogue are not always sensible...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will investigate these issues and report back to the March 2008 meeting of the Users Forum.</li> </ul>