



The National Archives

Summary of meeting

National Collections Strategy

9 July 2008

Attendees:

Caroline Williams (The National Archives, Chair), Justin Cavernelis-Frost (MLA), Jude England (British Library), Bruce Jackson (Lancashire County Archive), Nick Kingsley (The National Archives), Patricia Methven (King's College, London), Heather Needham (Hampshire Record Office), Jonathan Pepler (Cheshire and Chester Local Studies Service), Cathy Smith (The National Archives), Meg Sweet (The National Archives), Ed Hampshire (The National Archives, Secretary).

Introductory

Attendees were welcomed to the first National Collections Strategy Panel meeting.

The gestation and background to the National Collections Strategy was explained: the National Archives (TNA) would not be necessarily taking in additional records as a result of the strategies, but that the aim was to help support and develop the collecting and preservation of records across the archives sector (including archives beyond the public sector). TNA was now taking the discussions out into the archives community.

The Panel, which includes representatives from the archives community, replaces the Collections Strategy Board, which had included only TNA senior managers.

The National Collections Strategy

It was explained that the National Collections Strategy should be seen as a framework within which individual strategies (based on themes, sectors and formats) would be created and developed. A table was distributed of current and projected strategies.

The Panel members discussed the suggested strategies and their prioritisation. The blurring of boundaries between the museums, libraries and archives sectors, and also within the university sector was discussed. The importance of locating areas of expertise and disseminating knowledge was also noted.

Example of an individual strategy: Health Collections Strategy

Early plans being developed for a Health Collections Strategy were set out. A survey of health record holdings (resulting in a report and analysis of gaps and issues) was being considered, as was a guide to general health record types to help Place of Deposit archivists.

Documentation

The panel discussed the National Collections Strategy documents placed before them: the introduction, vision statement, strategy, principles, success criteria and context. Agreed modifications have been added to the final version of the documents.

Consultation

It was stated that the strategy will be presented at the next National Council on Archives' meeting at the end of the month and at the Society of Archivists' Conference in August. It was agreed that producing specific questions would make the consultation easier to manage and help elicit more replies. Three months was standard for TNA consultations. It was also agreed that the questions would be first asked at the Society of Archivists' conference, which would be the official launch of the consultation period.

Panel terms of reference

The Panel discussed the draft terms of reference. The agreed changes have been added to the finalised document.

Membership of the Panel

All attendees confirmed that they wished to attend the Panel again. The Panel agreed that the addition of a technical/digital specialist would be helpful. With respect to representatives of the user community, it was agreed that different representatives could be co-opted at different times depending on the subjects being discussed.

AOB and next steps

It was asked whether the remit of the panel and of the strategies would include resolving questions of overlapping collecting policies of institutions and those situations in which more than one archive is bidding for a collection. In response it was noted that this was part of the day-to-day work of the National Advisory Service, and though this might be relevant for a particular strategy it would not be a core role of the National Collections Strategy. Panel members were asked to contact the Panel

secretariat if they had any further ideas or questions with respect to what was discussed today. Another meeting would be arranged for January 2009 following the completion of the consultation.