



The National Archives

**Provide
and
Enable:**

**The National Archives'
Online Strategy**

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1. Executive summary

Provide and Enable: The National Archives' Online Strategy is a framework for developing our online services over the next three years. It sets out how our websites will help to make The National Archives' Vision a reality, adapt to the changing online environment and gain the structure and flexibility to continue to provide excellent services in the future.

1.1 The evolving web: challenges and opportunities

The World Wide Web has radically changed how we do business, find and use information and interact with each other – and it is still evolving rapidly.

- The web is becoming less like a collection of individual documents and more like a huge database: users can gather data from different sources and put it together in a way that meets their needs.
- How we access the web is changing. Web-enabled mobile telephones and other hand-held devices now make it easy to get online at any time and from almost any location.
- People's expectations have grown – they expect personalised, comprehensive and almost instant online services.
- The Web Continuity programme, led by The National Archives, was set up to manage the problem of broken links to government information by archiving public sector websites regularly.
- The web makes possible many new ways to use public sector information, and there is growing demand for the government to make data available.

1.2 The National Archives' response

Because of our role in government and the information we hold, The National Archives is uniquely placed to grasp the opportunities offered by new technologies. We can also build on our record of innovation and a reputation for providing high-quality online services.

- We already supply millions of public records online, both through our own efforts and in partnership with private sector organisations. Customers will increasingly expect the records to be available online.
- Most new government records are now produced in an electronic format. We need to plan our web services to accommodate a large quantity of these 'born digital' records.
- Our information needs to be clear, easy to use and well structured; we also need to provide help and guidance.
- We have started exploring new ideas and technologies, including using RDFa for publishing the Gazettes. The way we now publish legislation has a key role to play in the further development of the semantic web.
- The web is constantly evolving, and our services need to be flexible enough to allow us to keep up to date with new trends.

1.3 Our strategy

All our online services need to aim towards making The National Archives' Vision a reality. We have also set out five statements of purpose, which together make up the mission for all our website work.

The Provide and Enable Online Strategy has five goals. A set of ten principles will guide how we deliver our online services.

1.4 Providing services

We will repurpose our online content to form a 'family' of six websites. Each website will meet the needs of particular audiences.

- Corporate – **'The common functions and services of the organisation'**: the corporate functions of The National Archives, contact and visiting information and a press centre.
- Records – **'Advice, guidance and access to records'**: online catalogues and digitised records.
- Education – **'Source-based, enquiry-led learning: onsite and online'**: learning resources and information about onsite teaching services.
- Information Management – **'Leading information management across government'**: the primary way of disseminating advice and guidance from The National Archives and OPSI to public officials.
- Legislation – **'Legislation, in two clicks'**: easy access to primary and secondary legislation.
- Gazettes – **'Published by authority'**: a vehicle to disseminate official, regulatory and legal information online.

1.5 Enabling others

We will allow others to harness the power of our information, leading to a far wider range of products and services than we could provide ourselves.

- We will continue to work with commercial partners to provide online access to millions of records.
- We will continue to use RSS feeds and ATOM to distribute our information to other websites.
- Coding our information in a way that machines and developers can interpret might allow audiences to access and re-use our records directly.
- The Online Panel will look at each of our online services to identify the potential for enabling others to use our content.

1.6 A different way of working

The Online Panel

We will establish an Online Panel of experts from across The National Archives. The panel will advise on and guide projects that have an online component, making sure that the ten guiding principles are applied and that all our online services have strategic fit. It will be proactive in helping colleagues to understand the Online Strategy and will provide a forum for collaboration.

The four agendas

We have identified four agendas that outline how we will embed Provide and Enable within the organisation.

Audience insight agenda

- To make sure we understand our customers' needs, we will examine user intelligence from across the organisation.
- We will fill gaps in our knowledge through testing and research.
- In developing online services, we will use an iterative process of design, prototyping and real-world testing.

Editorial agenda

The National Archives needs a strong editorial 'voice' in its online activities.

- We will reorganise and rewrite the content of our family of websites to meet the needs our different audiences.
- We will streamline our guidance to make it clearer and reduce duplication.
- An editorial lead will agree standards for the sites.
- Content owners will be able to maintain their own editorial content easily.

Communication agenda

Communicating the Online Strategy and the role of the Online Panel widely across the organisation is vital to its long-term success.

- We will build strong partnerships between business owners, content owners and staff in all departments whose work ends up 'online'.
- Key staff within the organisation will receive training in web skills.

Enable agenda

The main aim of the Enable agenda is to support others to create new and innovative services using our content.

- We will commission research on opening up our content and facilitate discussion between our experts and external organisations.
- We will look at all new online content to see whether it can be presented in a way that makes it easy to re-use.
- We will continue to develop external partnerships with Licensed Internet Associates.

2. The evolving web: challenges and opportunities

The World Wide Web is an information infrastructure that spans the globe connecting billions of people. Its emergence and growth is perhaps the single most important technological and social development of the era.

“The universality and flexibility of the Web’s linking architecture has a unique capacity to break down boundaries of distance, language, and domains of knowledge.”

– Sir Tim Berners-Lee¹

The web empowers us to approach old problems in new ways. It is deeply disruptive to traditional ways of doing things. Companies like Google that didn’t exist fifteen years ago have gained massive power and influence, but they have to innovate constantly to survive.

2.1 The web of linked data

The web began as a collection of documents – web browsers display ‘pages’ of information. One limitation of this approach is that the information within documents is not readily available for re-use as data in its own right.

However, increasingly the web is evolving into something more like a large database, with services built with combinations of data taken from many different places. For example, some UK local authority websites are using the Google Maps interface to display information about local services.

New technologies are underpinning the transition from a web of documents to a web of documents, data and services:

- The semantic web is an important development: information is made available in such a way that machines can identify what the data is about.
- Service Orientated Architecture views the web as a platform for delivering services, which can be combined.
- Other developments include application programming interfaces (APIs) and microformats.

2.2 Ubiquitous and personalised

Wherever the network goes, so does the web. The changing role of the mobile phone is an important example of the trend towards accessing the Internet using web-enabled devices, connecting through an increasing range of service networks.

¹ Sir Tim Berners-Lee, *Digital Future of the United States: Part I – The Future of the World Wide Web*, US House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet, March 2007

“We are in the embryonic stages of the Web from any point of view. Maybe when the Model T came out people looked at it and thought that’s what motor transport would look like.”

– Sir Tim Berners-Lee²

Since the late 1990s, many businesses have used the web to provide personalised services to their customers. The online retailer Amazon has been so successful that it has turned its retail experience into a platform for other businesses to adopt and use.

In future, we will use the web from a wider variety of devices, particularly hand held, accessing ever more personalised services. At the moment we can’t switch mid-transaction from PC to mobile phone just because we need to leave the office to travel somewhere else. The continuous experience of the future will let us move seamlessly between devices, choosing when, and how, we wish to access information and services.

2.3 Service Transformation

The forces that shape commerce have also changed the citizen’s expectations of public services. People increasingly expect personalised public services that fit their individual needs.

Sir David Varney’s report into Service Transformation explores how the web can be exploited to deliver high-quality public services. Varney highlights the rise of Web 2.0³ and the ‘increasing expectation that access to services on the Web will be comprehensive, joined-up and capable of delivering a service almost instantly’⁴.

At the core of Service Transformation is the recognition that:

“Services enabled by Information Technology must be designed around the citizen.”

– Sir David Varney⁵

Building on the Transformational Government strategy, Varney makes the case for the government to behave strategically towards the web, taking a user-centric rather than a provider-centric approach. In practice that means focusing citizen-facing services on DirectGov and business services on BusinessLink.

² Sir Tim Berners-Lee, WWW2006, Edinburgh, May 2006

³ Tim O’Reilly, http://radar.oreilly.com/archives/2005/10/web_20_compact_definition.html

‘Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their own data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an ‘architecture of participation’, and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experiences.’

⁴ and ⁵ Sir David Varney, *Service Transformation: A better service for citizens and business, a better deal for the taxpayer*, December 2006

In line with Varney's recommendations, the government has started a programme of rationalising its web estate and producing guidance for the remaining websites, to make sure they meet a set of minimum standards. Many existing government websites are set to close over a four-year period to 2011.

2.4 Web Continuity

Web Continuity is an important part of Service Transformation and the government's strategy for the web. It ensures that links to government web pages continue to resolve correctly – even through periods of tremendous turbulence across the government web estate, such as website rationalisation or a future change of administration.

Developed and led by The National Archives, the Web Continuity programme comprehensively archives the existing government web estate, on a regular basis. As content is removed, users are automatically redirected to the most recent version of that content in a new UK Government Website Archive.

Web Continuity means that government departments can continue to treat the web as an ephemeral medium – even whole websites can be taken down with impunity. It is an ingenious and unprecedented solution to the problem of link degradation, which changes the rules about how the government uses the web.

2.5 The Power of Information

Opportunities for re-using public sector information (PSI) have grown exponentially with the development of the web, as has the demand for government to make more data available. The Office of Public Sector Information leads the re-use agenda within government, driven by recognition of both the economic and the social value of PSI.

European Union member states set themselves the strategic goal of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. Recognising the enormous value of public sector information and the contribution it could make to stimulating the growth of Europe's information industry, an EU Directive for the Re-use of Public Sector Information was agreed in 2003 and was transposed in domestic law in July 2005.

In 2007, The UK Government commissioned two independent experts, Tom Steinberg, of MySociety, and Ed Mayo, of The National Consumer Council, to produce a report, entitled The Power of Information. The Power of Information review looks at the trend towards social networking and identifies how the re-use of public sector information can underpin the development of new communities and services.

“When enough people can collect, re-use and distribute public sector information, people organise around it in new ways, creating new enterprises and new communities. In each case, these are designed to offer new ways of solving old problems.”

– Tom Steinberg and Ed Mayo ⁶

The government responded positively to the Power of Information review. Michael Wills, the minister responsible for both The National Archives and PSI, summed up the potential in an interview for *the Guardian* newspaper:

“Let people follow their own instincts; let them make some money; if it works, great. That’s the way you’re going to get the creativity and the energy. If you start saying what should happen, you won’t get something wonderful.”

– Michael Wills MP ⁷

⁶ Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg, *The Power of Information: An independent review*, 25 June 2007

⁷ Michael Wills MP, *the Guardian*, Technology section, 26 July 2007

3. The National Archives' response

The National Archives is uniquely placed to lead by example and grasp the opportunities offered by new technologies. We are a major strategic thinker in government about the web, with a reputation for successful and innovative delivery of online services. The information we hold has almost limitless potential in terms of enabling others to create new services.

The National Archives also has important policy responsibilities in the areas of information management and the re-use of public sector information, with a key role reporting to ministers on the progress of The Power of Information.

Our record of innovation and reputation for high-quality services is testament to our achievements; but the changes of the modern world mean that we must continually innovate, adapting our business to maintain our success in the future.

3.1 Putting services online

The National Archives already supplies millions of public records on the web, and we have formed partnerships with the private sector to put many more records online.

Under the auspices of the Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office we provide access to legislation. We also enable licensing and re-use of public sector information.

Widespread use of the web has increased our customers' expectations that everything should be available online. The trend of accessing information online is likely to accelerate as electronic media become ubiquitous. We must also continue to meet our users' expectations and the Transformational Government agenda⁸ effectively.

Archiving 'born digital' records (records originally created in an electronic format) demands a new approach to managing government information. It is crucial that we plan now to ensure that our web services can accommodate a potentially enormous quantity of 'born digital' records, in a wide variety of formats.

3.2 Making information useful

People increasingly struggle with information overload, so we must make information available in a way that is useful to them. Meeting our customers' needs in a user-centered way is the cornerstone of our online services.

Archival research is by nature a complex subject. We need to guide our users through their research, and re-develop our online services so that they are structured, clearly labelled and easy to use.

⁸ Transformational Government Enabled by Technology
http://www.cio.gov.uk/transformational_government/strategy/

3.3 The future of our services

Thinking ahead to the future, we must position our online services so that we can take advantage of new technologies and continue to innovate.

We have begun to meet the challenges by exploring the semantic web, developing partnerships with leading research institutions and exploiting technology including wikis, discussion forums and mobile services. However, we must also look beyond the technology of today to the trends of tomorrow to ensure that we stay at the forefront of delivery.

4. Our strategy



4.1 The National Archives' Vision

A new Vision was created for The National Archives in 2006, in response to the shift in our business, the merger with OPSI, the changing online environment, the Transformational Government agenda and the increasing expectations of our customers.

This Vision⁹ states that our purpose is to:

- Lead and transform information management
- Guarantee the survival of today's information for tomorrow
- Bring history to life for everyone⁹

The online services we create need to make the Vision a reality.

⁹ A New Vision for The National Archives: 2006–2011.
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/vision.pdf>

4.2 Our mission

The following five statements of purpose for our online services now underpin all our activities online.

1. Our online services exist to **give people access** to government records, legislation, official information and guidance.
2. Our job is to help people **discover what information is available from us** and to provide them with content. We will support users to contextualise the information we have provided. We will be clear about the limitations of what we are able to make available.
3. Our online services provide the means for **publishing our recommendations, advice and guidance**. Sometimes this is the dissemination of policy and recommendations to government and the wider public sector. Sometimes this is advice to the archival sector. Sometimes this is guidance to the general public.
4. Our online services provide a route for people to **fulfil tasks and transactions**.
5. Our online services provide the means for **our users to engage with us and each other**, to enrich the content that we make available.

4.3 Our goals

We have defined five goals for the Provide and Enable Online Strategy. These goals describe how we intend to meet the challenges of the changing external and internal environment in which we operate, and make sure that our online services continue to evolve.

1. We recognise that The National Archives has many functions. We will restructure our websites to meet our key stakeholders' needs and our business requirements.

- We will review the content and structure of our web services and redefine them as a family of websites, taking account of the Vision, Transformational Government, and the wider environment in which we operate.

2. We will understand our online users; their goals, behaviours and interactions with our websites.

- We will define who our online users are, and what their needs are, by interrogating the data that we already collect. We will commission research to fill in the gaps in our knowledge.
- We will embed a programme of user-focused website development and testing to ensure that they are easy to use and that they support our users' behaviours.

3. We will meet the growing demand for our content by developing high quality online services with one-to-many interaction.

- We will rewrite and reorganise our content to improve access for our customers, ensuring that our guidance is clearly written.
- We will ensure that our online content reflects our onsite expertise and is a single point of service for all.

4. We will make our content searchable, usable and available for 're-use'.

- We will support developments that make our content simpler to use or search.
- We will investigate how to 'enable' our content, making it available to the public to 're-use' in ways that we are not best placed to do.

5. We will create a holistic environment for the planning, development and support of online services.

- We will work together, across departments, to prioritise work, maximise deployment of resources and provide expertise.
- We will foster communication and provide advice and support to colleagues about online development to enable everyone to take pride in delivering online services.

4.4 Our guiding principles

A central theme of Provide and Enable is to create online services that put our customers at their heart, addressing not just **what** content our audiences want but thinking about **how** those customers interact online. A set of ten principles will guide the delivery of our online services.¹⁰

1. We are defined by our online presence. Our online developments will realise the Vision and strengthen our role in providing public services.
2. We are part of the web. We will respect and take advantage of the way the Internet works.
3. We will do the things only we can do and do them really well, enabling others to add value where they can.
4. We will understand the audiences we serve and build services that meet their needs and expectations. User-centred design is core to this.
5. Accessibility is not optional. We will design services so that they can be used by anyone, with any ability.
6. We will innovate to the benefit of our users, anticipating needs not yet fully articulated.
7. We will design flexibly for the future, considering the needs of developers and machines.
8. We will develop content and services that work across multiple devices.
9. Organisation, quality and ownership of content is all important.
10. Evaluation, sustainability and exit strategies will be in place for all our online projects.

¹⁰ The Principles are expanded in Appendix A.

A supporting worksheet, 'The Principles Framework', sets out the factors that need to be considered in the development of our online services.

4.5 Where we provide, we deliver. Where others provide, we enable

Where we provide, we deliver high-quality online services that meet our customers' needs. This is something that we do well already, but we can improve by gaining a deeper understanding of our customers and meeting their expectations.

We also recognise that the market will drive innovation and that we should enable that to happen. So the second strand of our strategy is that **where we enable** we leave it to **others to provide**. By allowing other people to harness the richness and variety of our information there is scope to create an astounding range of products and services – far more than we ever could provide as an organisation.

We need to make choices. Provide and Enable seeks to introduce a new mindset to The National Archives, a shift in how we decide what we do online and, crucially, how we decide what not to do.

“The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do.”

– Michael Porter ¹¹

¹¹ Michael Porter, Harvard Business School.

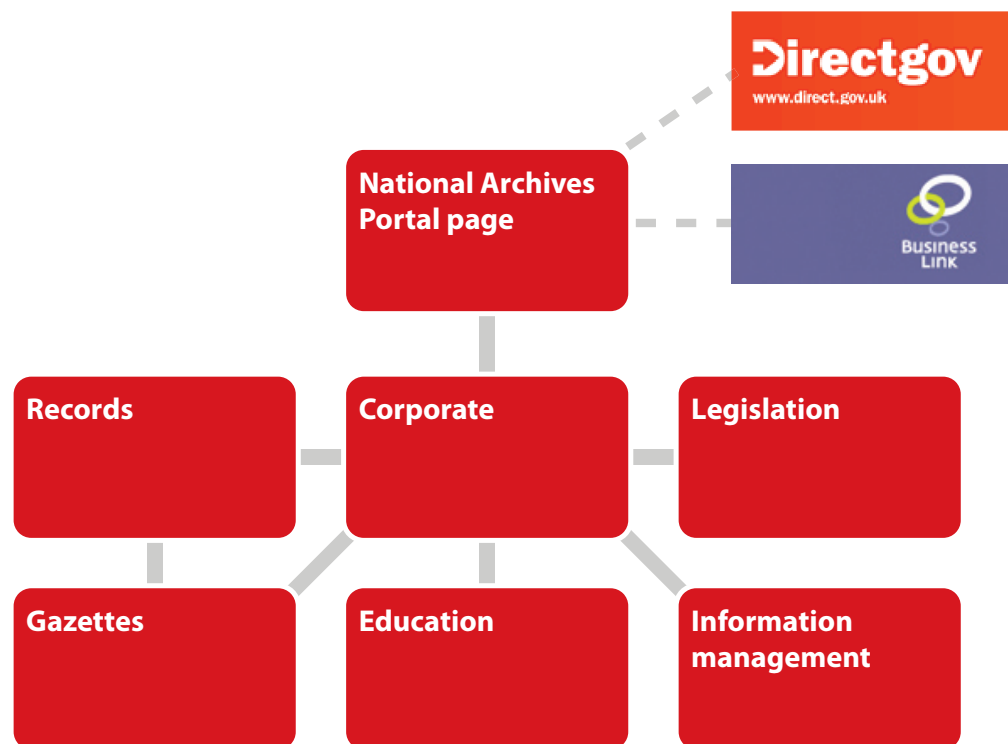
5. Providing services

To meet the challenges of the changing world of information, we need to review our websites and how we develop and deliver online content. We will do this by restructuring our websites into a 'family' of sites, more directly focused on the needs of our customers.

5.1 Family of websites

The National Archives' provision of records and guidance online is growing exponentially. Our online content is used by a broad spectrum of customers: government policy-makers, legal practitioners, researchers, historians and educators. We need to restructure our online services so they focus on the goals and information needs of our customers and support the Transformational Government agenda.

We intend to repurpose our online content to form a 'family' of websites.



5.2 Corporate

'The common functions and services of the organisation'

The corporate site is relevant for, and linked to, all the other sites within the family of websites. It provides information about the corporate functions of The National Archives as an organisation: our Vision, values, strategies, plans, governance, performance and partnerships. It centralises information on how to contact or visit us. It is where we showcase our functions and activities. It incorporates a media centre that contains information for journalists and the general public.

Key audiences

The key audiences for the corporate site are other government departments, organisations within the libraries and archives sector, journalists, onsite visitors, online visitors, prospective or current partners and prospective employees.

5.3 Records

'Advice, guidance and access to records'

The records site provides information about, guidance on and access to the records held at The National Archives. The site contains all our online catalogues and digitised records, as well as providing pathways to other organisations that either hold records or have digitised records on our behalf.

Key audiences

The key audiences for the records site are family historians, researchers, academics and anyone interested in accessing the records we hold.

5.4 Education

'Source-based, enquiry-led learning: onsite and online'

The education site provides online learning resources and information about onsite teaching services, such as workshops and videoconferencing. All our educational services are based on The National Archives records.

Key audiences

The key audiences for the education site are students, teachers, and lecturers from the primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors.

5.5 Information Management

'Leading information management across government'

The information management site provides the primary way of disseminating advice and guidance from The National Archives and OPSI to public officials, be they in central government or the wider public sector. The content covers a wide variety of different topics related to information management – from records management, digital continuity, through official publishing and licensing the re-use of information, to archiving advice and guidance for local archives.

Key audiences

The key audiences for the information management site are officials in central and local government and the NHS, such as:

- departmental records officers
- archivists
- librarians
- freedom of information officers

- publishing managers
- licensing officers
- legal officers
- communications professionals
- eComms professionals
- website managers
- policy officials
- MPs/MEPs and their researchers
- and generalist civil servants and local authority officials looking for advice and guidance from The National Archives and OPSI.

5.6 Legislation

'Legislation, in two clicks'

The legislation site makes it easy and quick for people to find out what a particular law says. It provides access to primary and secondary legislation, as enacted and revised, alongside Church Measures and supporting documents such as Explanatory Notes and Memoranda. The aim is to create a single legislation service from government, bringing together HMSO's legislation publishing responsibilities with public access to Statute Law Database and a range of related services.

Key audiences

The legislation site will service a wide range of audiences – from the citizen or business person wanting to know what the law actually says, through to lawyers, legal professionals, law students, academics, officials etc.

5.7 Gazettes

'Published by authority'

The Gazettes website is a vehicle to disseminate official, regulatory and legal information online, primarily by way of statutory notices. It is a wide-ranging resource, bringing together data from numerous official sources. This site aims to provide a provenance source for key information, enabling the re-use of Gazettes data as far and widely as possible.

Key audiences

The key audiences for the Gazettes site are developers and machines re-using gazettes data as a source of information, those wishing to place a notice (advertisers), organisations and individuals wishing to browse the contents of a particular recent notices and researchers wishing to find an old notice (perhaps about an award or honour given to a relative).

6. Enabling others

“Data is... part of the infrastructure now of our society and our economy and it's going to become more so...the extraordinary intellectual creative energy that's being unleashed is something that as a government we have to respond to.”

– Michael Wills, Minister of State for the Ministry of Justice

As we move from the web of documents to the web of data, it falls to The National Archives to lead the creation of a core part of the nation's information infrastructure. Opening data up so others can access and re-use it is one of our most important tasks.

The potential transformation the web can bring to The National Archives' holdings is almost limitless, presenting us with endless and occasionally perplexing possibilities. The issues raised are profound, which makes our Online Strategy central to the business as a whole.

6.1 Enabling through commercial partnerships

The National Archives already uses Licensed Internet Associateships (LIAs) to deliver some of our digitised records. By allowing the commercial sector to exploit market forces, we can provide online access to millions of records. We could not digitise our records on such a large scale without LIA partnerships. The LIA websites also provide value-added services, including access to other people's family trees, photo galleries and social networking.

www.findmypast.com | www.ancestry.co.uk

6.2 Enabling through syndication

Re-use of our information does not have to be complicated. Using Really Simple Syndication (RSS) and ATOM, The National Archives distributes information to other websites and devices without having to build additional services.

RSS feeds can be displayed on other websites and are automatically updated. The real power of RSS feeds lies in combining different feeds from different sites to create entirely new sets of information.

The Government Central website gathers government feeds from key English-speaking countries (US, UK, Canada, Australia) in a single place. Free services such as Netvibes help individuals to create custom homepages built out of RSS feeds.

www.government-central.com | www.netvibes.com

6.3 Enabling for our future audiences

The semantic web, the web of data, gives us the means to open up our data in new ways. The National Archives embraces the principle of serendipitous re-use¹².

Public sector information is already being combined with maps to track election campaign trails, pollution levels and the status of legislation in the United States. We already know that our audience has needs that we could 'enable'. For example, The Weald painstakingly pulls together information from many different sources to form cross-referenced genealogical resources. Providing our content as 'data' could allow audiences to access and re-use our records directly, with relatively little effort.

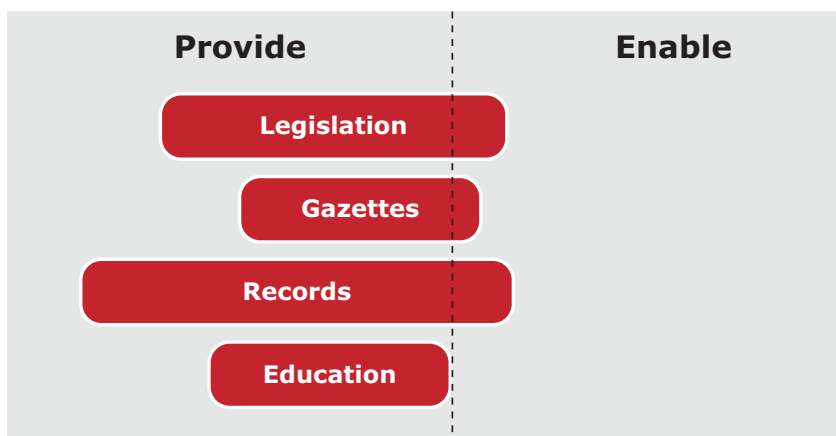
www.programmableweb.com/tag/government | www.theweald.org/

6.4 Unlocking the potential

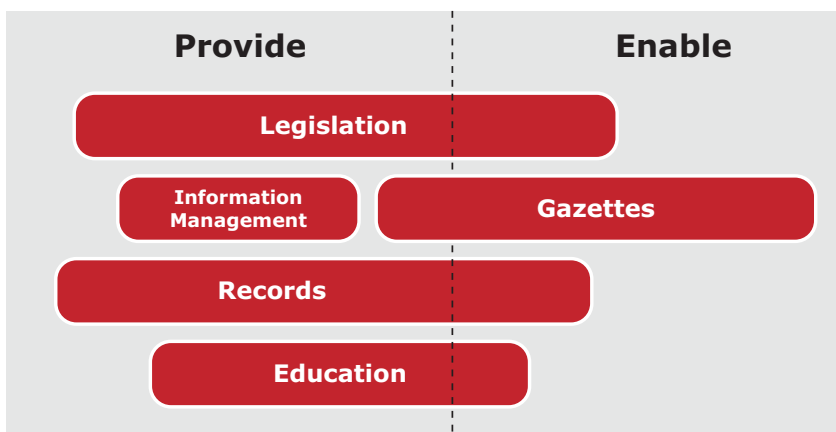
The Online Panel, a group of online experts drawn from across the business, will look at each of our services to identify the potential for re-using and opening up our content.

The following diagrams show how some of our websites may be repositioned over time from being websites that mainly 'Provide' services to becoming websites that 'Enable' others to create services.

Now



In five years' time



¹² Serendipitous re-use is the effect by which one accidentally discovers a fortunate use for something, especially while looking for an entirely different way of using it.

7. A different way of working

The Provide and Enable Online Strategy sets out an ambitious agenda to change not just what we do online, but also how we think about online delivery.

- We will establish an Online Panel to oversee the implementation of the Online Strategy.
- We have identified four agendas that outline how we will translate the philosophy of Provide and Enable into action.

7.1 The Online Panel

Delivering the type of transformative projects we need to make the changes envisaged in this strategy will not be easy. The projects go to the heart of what each business area does; be that providing expertise, cataloguing records or publishing legislation. The Online Strategy isn't just about presentation. We need to find a way to run transformative, business-changing projects whilst maintaining a degree of corporate-level oversight of what we do online. That is the role of the Online Panel.

7.1.1 Role of the Online Panel

The Online Panel will advise and guide business owners of projects that have an online component. The aim of the panel is to apply the ten principles to all online development, making sure that all our online services have strategic fit. It will be pro-active in helping colleagues to understand the Online Strategy and provide a forum for collaboration.

The Online Panel will meet as often as needed to consider project proposals, discuss changes and developments in the external environment and review the direction of the Online Strategy.

The Online Panel consists of:

- Head of IT Strategy
- Head of E-Services
- Head of Online Product Strategy
- Head of Advice and Records Knowledge
- Head of Business Development
- Other business owners as appropriate to the topic.

7.1.2 Mission statement

The Online Panel exists to support the implementation of the Provide and Enable: The National Archives' Online Strategy. It ensures that we are adhering to our principles, that the strategy is being progressed, developed and updated and that everyone in the organisation is supported in developing and delivering online services.

7.2 Four agendas

We have identified four agendas that outline how we intend to embed the philosophy of Provide and Enable within the organisation: 'Audience Insight', 'Editorial', 'Communication' and 'Enable'.

Each agenda is a complex set of activities involving communication, negotiation, policy, procedure and skill development. There may be a number of related pieces of work associated with each agenda. We anticipate that each agenda will be ongoing, have multiple stakeholders across the organisation, and influence other areas of work.

The agendas are vital to the success of the Online Strategy.

7.2.1 Delivery framework

The diagram below shows how the four agendas are integral to all the work of the Online Strategy.



7.2.2 Audience insight agenda

If we are to create online services built around the needs of our customers, we first need to investigate and redefine our audiences by their characteristic behaviours online, research skills and technical ability, rather than solely by market segment.

We will make use of the user intelligence that is collected across the organisation: search entries, research interests, customer enquiries, web statistics and marketing data. We intend to fill the gaps in our knowledge by carrying out testing and research with a wide cross-section of our online users.

To make sure that the services we produce are fit for purpose, we will develop them using an iterative process of design, prototyping and real-world testing.

7.2.3 Editorial agenda

The National Archives websites are content-rich, serve a number of different audiences and rely on contributions from a large number of our expert staff. The websites play an important role in our services – 'online' is our primary communication channel. To support a consistent user experience and to reflect our corporate values, The National Archives needs a strong editorial 'voice'.

We will reorganise and rewrite the content of our family of websites to address our different audiences and their behaviours. Our guidance will be streamlined to make it clearer and reduce duplication. An editorial lead will agree standards for the sites, ensuring that the content is appropriate and that it can be re-used in multiple formats.

People across the organisation need a shared sense of ownership of the websites. Content owners will be able to maintain their editorial content easily, without needing specialist technical support.

7.2.4 Communication agenda

The Online Strategy aligns with, builds on and works with other strategies, business plans and projects across the organisation.

Communicating the Online Strategy and the role of the Online Panel widely across the organisation is vital to its long-term success.

We need to build strong partnerships between business owners, content owners and staff in all departments whose work ends up 'online'. It is only within an environment where knowledge is shared and staff are actively supported that online work can be collaboratively developed.

To embed the agendas and to carry out the project work, key staff within the organisation will need to receive training in web skills.

7.2.5 Enable agenda

The main aim of the Enable agenda is to support others to create new and innovative services using our content.

We will explore the possibilities for 'enabling' content by commissioning research and, through the Online Panel, by facilitating discussion between our experts and external organisations. We will look at all new online content to see whether it can be presented in a way that facilitates re-use.

We will continue to develop external partnerships with Licensed Internet Associates, as one way of enabling re-use. We also want to show how our material can add value to other services by trialling some aspects of re-use ourselves.

Not all developments in the Enable agenda can be anticipated, so it will be continually reassessed and refocused by the Online Panel.

Any questions?

If you would like more information, please contact webmaster@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Appendix A

The Principles

1. We are defined by our online presence. Our online developments will realise the Vision and strengthen our role in providing public services.

- It is essential for the delivery of the Vision that proposals for online services are aligned with our business objectives and that success is defined against this.
- To ensure that we focus our effort where it is most effective we should look at the development costs and the benefits for each proposal.
- To make the most of our finite resources we will have to choose what we decide to do and what we decide not to do. It is in all our interests to make responsible and informed choices.

2. We are part of the web. We will respect and take advantage of the way the Internet works.

- We will create intelligent and persistent URLs.
- We will make use of the different ways that content can be disseminated on the web (links, RSS feeds, syndication of content).
- We will structure our data so that it has meaning and authenticity even before it becomes part of a web page.
- We will make sure that our content is search engine friendly so that people can find it.

3. We will do the things only we can do and do them really well, enabling others to add value where they can.

- We should question if we are the only people who could do this? We will concentrate on providing services where we should and enable others to add value where they can.
- The expertise of our staff is invaluable and we will explore how we can disseminate our knowledge better.

4. We will understand the audiences we serve and build services that meet their needs and expectations. User-centred design is core to this.

- Decisions taken about our online services should be based on the needs of our users.
- We must identify and understand our online user group(s).
- Requirements gathering for projects should incorporate user research as well as the needs of business stakeholders.
- User-centred design methodology will be used for all online development. Design of our online services will reflect our users' real-world tasks and their skill level and will follow usability standards in navigation and search.
- The development cycle for online projects will include a programme of evaluation, testing and amendment. After completion of the project it will continue to be evaluated regularly from a user and market perspective to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

5. Accessibility is not optional. We will design services so that they can be used by anyone, with any ability.

- We will take the needs of disabled people into account when planning our websites. Where a single, integrated, accessible solution is not feasible, a comparable accessible alternative will be provided.
- Our services will be designed so that they can be used by anyone, with any browser, platform or ability. Our decisions will be guided by our observation of real world use.
- Meeting the needs of our users means keeping up-to-date with the latest techniques, anticipating change and engaging in debate.
- Our standards, policies and legal obligations also apply to work done by external suppliers.

6. We will innovate to the benefit of our users, anticipating needs not yet fully articulated.

- We should use research and development methods so that we can anticipate ground-breaking services to serve our users without taking focus away from the aims of our organisation.
- The success of innovation will be measured against a user and/or business benefit. Ongoing monitoring of our success will allow us to adapt to where our users want us to go.
- We will encourage people to make the time to innovate.

7. We will design flexibly for the future, considering the needs of developers and machines.

- We will make our content directly addressable (i.e. giving every one of the important objects on our websites its own URI).
- URLs must be persistent, reliable, intelligent and easy to modify.
- We will enable, without second-guessing, those who re-use our content and provide it in a different form to indirect users.
- We must design systems flexibly so that we can respond to future requirements as we move into the 'always connected' world.

8. We will develop content and services that work across multiple devices.

- Online is not just delivered via the standard PC. There are mobile phones, PDAs, TVs, kiosks and even 'enabled' houses connected to the web. When creating content we must think about how it will be used.
- We must plan ahead for changes in the way the web is accessed and be ready for advances in technology and changes in society.
- We will develop websites, which are 'mobileOK' to support devices such as mobile phones and other types of handheld, where appropriate.

9. Organisation, quality and ownership of content is all important.

- We will maintain a consistent and high quality of content (accuracy and style) through recognised and rigorously applied editorial standards to ensure a corporate voice.
- Content creation for an online environment must take account of subject knowledge, place and context in the wider TNA online output, page layout, structural standards, writing for search engines, and corporate branding.
- Content will be written appropriately for the audience and medium with reference to the Plain English Campaign guidelines.
- Content creation is a jointly owned enterprise, we all share responsibility for creating high quality, appropriate and up-to-date content.
- While an overall content owner should be appointed, content creation is a collaborative exercise.
- Coherent organisation and planning of content is essential to ensure users have easy access to the information they want.
- It is also our duty to present the content that we do not own in the best, most fitting way possible.

10. Evaluation, sustainability and exit strategies will be in place for all our online projects.

- We must celebrate and nurture success.
- Before a project starts we must have identified what post-launch support is required and what success will look like.
- Not all resources needed to support a project are immediately obvious or joined up. Do the research, talk to the right people and keep records.
- We must identify realistic operating costs over the lifetime of the service
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of projects is vital. If the project begins to fail, identify the cause, correct it, or be ready to pull in the plug without sentiment.

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