

Comments from the recent User Satisfaction Survey regarding the Library, Quiet Areas and Map and Large Document Reading Room

Library

A total of 170 people out of 1,084 who responded to the survey (15.7%) reported they had used the library services.

446 people (70.8 % of those who responded to the satisfaction question) were satisfied or very satisfied with the integration of the library and records information services.

34 people, (5.4%) stated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the integration of library and records information services (with the remainder stating that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).

(see full breakdown at the end of this document)

27 people made comments relating to their dissatisfaction with the library:

The loss of easily identifiable specialist library staff reduces the benefits of having the stock.	
The library has been spoilt and no longer has staff to assist in the library	The library is noisy at times
Qualified librarians appear to have been dispensed with - WHY?	
The 'library' is more like an unwanted unnecessary accessory. Before Kew 2008 there was a dedicated library that looked and felt like a real research library with dedicated helpful staff. But now....? Where are the library staff? If help is needed to find something we have to join a queue filled with agitated queue jumpers. When one reaches the expert to whom one is making an enquiry one finds that they don't know and they point yonder towards another desk with experts that might know. I find the library 'improvements' very disappointing and lacking normal library atmosphere.	
Shortage of staff.	
Need for library staff on hand there, knowing where items are and not off helping visitors with film or on-line queries that seem to take ages.	
Dispersion of trained library staff so get uneven service.	
I have never known a library that has no librarians. Hence it cannot be called a library--merely a collection of books. Who was responsible for this?	The library needs to be reinstated to what it was before the refurbishment. That means staffed by dedicated librarians. This 'experiment' of staff multi-tasking is a complete sham. It could only have been thought up and implemented by management consultants. It represents the first step towards the destruction of the TNA as we have known it. I would also wish to see the results of this survey published and presented to those concerned?
Too long a wait to find the information I requested -	

there weren't any members of staff in the library so I had to look for someone and then wait in a queue and then be referred to another member of staff - time consuming and frustrating.	
Lack of expertise available in the appropriate areas. I find the multi-tasking is totally unacceptable. I am also deeply concerned at the free access to often unique Library stock by readers whose bags are not vetted, somewhat naive.	
The library staff are professionals in their sphere and there is a lot to know about the library and its holdings that is best found out at a dedicated library desk with dedicated staff. I also didn't like the loss of the racks of recent periodicals in one place. Searching around was time-consuming and I eventually had to trek across the reading room to the enquiry point.	See previous comments on signage and lack of library desk. Plus, the way the tables are laid out means one is forced to divert from where one's heading to trek round vast acreages of table. These high traffic areas are the worst place to work.
Lack of tables near the stacks. Though this is to be rectified? No designated library staff - queues to ask where books are stored.	
For the reasons vented in the reader forum.	
Books are still not all unpacked and available.	
Library catalogue is difficult to access from the public computers.	
Library inadequate resources.	
Since changes can't find a damned thing.	
The library does not seem to have as much as the old one.	
Not easy to use.	
Much better before - now the library is part of the chaos in the main area.	
Not easy to navigate.	
The shelf guiding and explanation is not clear particularly to those on a first visit.	
They are not integrated.	
Cramped facilities compared with a year ago. No tables for consulting books.	
Not aware, till now, that there was a distinction.	
Found it difficult to find items.	Can be noisy
At the back of the journals section there ought to be seating for browsing.	

Response

Helen Pye-Smith, Head of Library responds: The Library staff, qualified librarians and library assistants, have not been dispensed with. The records and library enquiry services have been integrated so that any query can be directed to any of the enquiry points in the open reading room. If the member of staff approached cannot answer the enquiry they can redirect it to a member of the Library team on duty in the room or failing that can contact a librarian by telephone. This is the same approach as for specialist record enquiries, for example military specialists can be contacted by phone if not on duty.

As information professionals, our enquiry skills are easily transferable to other enquiry points. There are advantages for the Library team in learning about the records, as they will develop a fuller understanding of how published works relate to the records, rather than working in isolation as before. This also helps inform acquisition and collection development decisions. Similarly, staff who have traditionally worked with records only, will develop an understanding of what is in the Library. But this is a process that will take time. Nevertheless, the Enquiry Services Team will continue to look at the deployment of Library staff to try to ensure they are easily available to help with specialist library enquiries.

All the book stock is accessible now, either on open access on the first or second floor, a small amount in an onsite basement available on request, and low use material and rare books available with three working days notice from Deepstore in Cheshire. An additional 252 metres of racking has recently been installed and more books put on open access as a result. When this work is complete there will be a review of signage, including a floor plan.

Some additional reader desks have been put in the Library, including at the back near the periodicals. This issue will continue to be looked at to see what further improvements can be made.

The Library catalogue is clearly visible on the home page of the public reader's screens and can be accessed from any computer in the open reading room.

Quiet Areas

A total of 486 people (45.8%) stated that they worked in a quiet area. A further 174 people (16.4%) said that they didn't know which areas were quiet areas and which were group working areas.

359 people (78.7% of those who responded to the satisfaction question) were satisfied or very satisfied with the quiet working areas.

21 people (4.6%) stated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quiet working areas (with the remainder stating that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).
(see full breakdown at the end of this document)

28 people gave comments relating to their dissatisfaction with the quiet working areas (the discrepancy presumably due to a number of people not knowing which areas are which – see above):

Most people don't seem to realise that the quiet areas are in fact supposed to be quiet. This is a constant problem; it should be perhaps be more sign posted.	Only to reiterate the problem of concentration / irritation of the noisy,quiet areas.
The invigilators in the reading rooms routinely fail to ask researchers to silence the shutter noises on their digital cameras. I fully support the use of cameras, and commend TNA for making it easy to use them. But researchers' failing to silence their cameras is a systematic problem - so many do it, that it's impossible, as an individual, to ask all of them to silence their cameras; one would end up shushing half the reading room. It is a task that the invigilators could undertake easily however, and I urge its adoption as a priority.	I would only stress, once again, the camera noise issue. Tna reading room rules clearly stipulate that digital cameras should be silenced. Presumably reading room invigilators are meant to enforce reading room rules. That invigilators, as a matter of course, fail to ask people to silence their cameras is frustrating in the extreme.
Because they are not quiet	
It seems that quite a high number of new readers (particularly those who come in pairs/couples) do not seem to be acquainted with the notion of what a 'quiet' work area means....	I find that the National Archives provides a consistently professional and efficient level of service. I rarely have any problems with accessing documents and have found staff very helpful should I have any questions. As I mentioned earlier, one slight bug bear is the occasional noise levels in the main reading room - maybe signs indicated that it is a quiet area should be posted on the pillars and walls in the room. Other than that, I always enjoy visiting the National Archive and find my research is enhanced as an experience.
I think it is fair that laptops are excluded from this area so I didn't use it but still the other areas are noisy with talking/sound effects from digital cameras.	
It is very very loud today and nothing is being done about it (aside from by users).	The quiet area is louder than the tube.
People were in there chatting!	
Readers talking loudly - no attempt by TNA staff to quell the noise.	
Failure to maintain silence.	
People were talking quite loudly.	The questions were not well worded, and did not cover some aspects very well. Some did not make clear what was meant e.g. The original documents. On the whole the national archives is not as good as it was. What a pity.
Use of laptops with 'tap-tap' in a 'quiet' area can be disturbing. Was better when laptops in own separate area.	See earlier comment on laptop use in what supposed to be a 'quiet area'.
Too noisy.	Again too noisy.
The 'Quiet Area' hardly lives up to its name; genies chatting, cameras flashing and rattling - a very	I've already answered this. It should be renamed 'Silent Area' then maybe some readers would get

difficult place to work!	the idea that it isn't a nice place for a 'quiet chat.' Photography should be banned from the area; the noise of rattling shutters, even on digital cameras makes work difficult. I've had to change my seat three times in the last couple of months; there are perfectly adequate photography facilities elsewhere.
Ended up next to two people who talked and were distracting.	Explained this earlier.
They're not exactly quiet - what can you do?	
Where? I saw nothing that indicated that there were even quiet working areas, let alone where they were.	
Too many people talking.	
A fellow researcher was turning document pages noisily and quickly for quite a while - just a tad irritating.	
It would be better if there were some areas reserved for quiet work - it's very distracting with so much talking going on.	
Too noisy and chaotic - much better environment for research in the previous layout.	They don't operate as such.
Readers with noisy cameras and machinery.	Noisy machinery means its never really quiet- why do readers not read the signs about turning noise off cameras; mobile phones always going off.
More and more loud talking in the document reading room disrupting concentration. Security staff do not often respond.	
Loud talking across tables, people need to be told to be quiet.	
There are no signs telling people not to talk. There seems to be no security in the main reading room any more. I note people with pens and pencils with rubbers on the ends.	Stop people talking! Not a problem today but usually is!
No enforcement evident.	
It was very noisy.	It would be good to have a study area where plugs are set higher up: I have to bring an extension lead to plug into my laptop. Also I would like those who chat to be asked to be quiet: security staff don't seem to mind them, but it can be very disturbing.
Can be noisy.	Noise from behind wall behind me.
Other readers did not seem to realise that it was a quiet area.	

Response

Jill Allbrooke, Head of Enquiry Services responds: It is not clear which comments about quiet areas refer to the Document Reading Room and which refer to the Open Reading Room (ORR). As far as the ORR is concerned, the quiet zone (near the Library area) is clearly signed as such though we are aware that the signage may need to be extended. However, this area of the reading room is currently being re-purposed in order to provide dedicated search facilities for the 1911 census. We will review the signage in this area once these changes have been embedded.

Staff on duty in the ORR will explain to readers when necessary that the desks in straight rows constitute the quiet zone and that if they wish to talk to each other or to consult staff they should occupy seats outside the quiet zone. Staff also make every effort to ensure that readers comply with the rules regarding mobile phones, pens and erasers.

These matters are already covered by the daily New to Kew induction talk (and the forthcoming New to Kew leaflet), but I will ensure that all staff who deliver the talk in future lay more emphasis on the importance of maintaining the quality of the quiet zones.

Dave Priest, Production Co-ordination Manager responds: All readers are asked to turn any equipment into silent mode upon entering the reading room. When a reader uses the seat selection process they have to agree to obey our rules before they are allowed to select a seat. This screen includes information about disabling noise from lap tops, cameras and respecting the rights of others to conduct their research in appropriate conditions. Previous experience suggests that extra signage in the reading room does not solve the problem. The more signage put up, the less readers acknowledge it. There are only 2 entrance points into the reading room and it seems appropriate to place any additional signage at these points. This will ensure that every reader has a prompt to disable the sound from any equipment that they are using every time that they enter the reading room.

There are specific tables available in the Quiet area of the main document reading room that intentionally have no power supply to ensure that readers undertaking silent research are not unduly disturbed while working. The number of readers using cameras and lap tops is now such that we cannot justify having a separate area for non lap-top or camera users. Towards the end of the old reading room format we were regularly running out of lap-top seats when the non-lap top area was significantly undersubscribed. Ultimately the number of readers using lap-tops and camera's is already at a point where other than the tables already mentioned it is untenable to refuse readers access when there are other seats available.

Readers are advised to contact a member of staff if they perceive other readers to be disobeying the reading room rules, including noise level. We do not advise readers to challenge other readers directly.

Map and Large Document Reading Room

309 people (75.5% of those who answered the satisfaction question) were satisfied or very satisfied with the Map and Large Document Room.

9 people (2.2% of those who answered the question) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the Map and Large Document Reading Room (with the remainder stating that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).

(see full breakdown at the end of this document)

5 people gave comments relating to their dissatisfaction with the Map and Large Document Reading Room:

Noise from staff discussing with readers.
Waste of space, not silent as promised because guards do not shush loudmouths.
Not all the staff are helpful, they think they know all the answers until questions asked that they don't know or can help with then avoid you.
Layout needs rethinking.
Not enough room.

Response

Jessamy Sykes, MLDRR Manager responds: We plan to refurbish the Map and Large Document Reading Room (MLDRR) during 2009 and 2010 and I hope that most of these comments will be addressed through this. I am conscious that the space, and therefore the layout of the MLDRR can become awkward when it's very busy and we will seek to address this in the confines of the space. Although staff endeavour to keep noise to a minimum, it is necessary to have some discussion with readers who make often prolonged enquiries. Staff do try to enforce the silence rule, but again this can become harder when the room is very busy. MLDRR staff are regularly complimented for the help they give in the room, and I am sorry to learn that a reader has been dissatisfied on this occasion.

Tables

Satisfaction with the Integration of Library and Records Information Services

	No. of respondees	% of respondees
Very satisfied	170	27.0%
Satisfied	276	43.8%
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	150	23.8%
Dissatisfied	26	4.1%
Very dissatisfied	8	1.3%
Total	630	

Satisfaction with the Quiet Working Areas

	No. of respondees	% of respondees
Very satisfied	160	35.1%
Satisfied	199	43.6%
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	76	16.7%
Dissatisfied	19	4.2%
Very dissatisfied	2	0.4%
Total	456	

Satisfaction with the Map and Large Document Reading Room

	No. of respondees	% of respondees
Very satisfied	133	32.5%
Satisfied	176	43.0%
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	91	22.2%
Dissatisfied	7	1.7%
Very dissatisfied	2	0.5%
Total	409	