

Title: The National Archives' User Forum

Date: 24 April 2014

Location: Talks Room

Attendees (staff):

Lee Oliver (LMO) Head of Public Services Development (Chair); Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) Director of Public Services and Human Resources; Nick Kingsley (NK) Head of Archives Sector Development; Emma Bayne (EB) Head of Systems Development; Tom Gregan (TG) Head of Document Services; David Priest (DP) Production Co-ordination Manager; Guy Grannum (GG) Discovery Product Manager; Jonathan Cates (JC) Collections Information & Systems Manager; Foluke Abiona (FA) Customer Intelligence Officer; Joanna Robinson (JCR) Customer Intelligence Assistant (Minutes).

Attendees (users):

Judith Mitchell; Richard Travell; Tom Adams; P. Eismark; Robert Whitfield; Brian Swann; I. Tzortzis; John Seaman; Graham Woolgar; Annie Thompson.

1. LMO welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Matters arising.

2.1 (3.2 02/14) Q. GW said that both Rosemary Morgan and Jacqui Kirk of the User Advisory Group would be happy to attend User Forum, though neither are able to attend today or next month. Can the dates of the whole year's User Forums be published on the website?

A. The year's User Forum dates are displayed in the corridor noticeboard, but we will make sure they are published on the User Forum website page. *Post meeting note - the full dates of this years' User Forums are now available on the website:*

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/get-involved/user-forum.htm>

2.2 (2.5 02/14) LMO said that there are no further Nazi persecution files other than this 4,000.

2.3 (3.4 02/14) Q. Is there an update on a digitisation session for User Forum?

A. There are no plans to repeat the UAG digitisation presentation for User Forum, though we are always happy to take any questions on digitisation from attendees.

2.5 (2.6 02/14) LMO confirmed that the Royal Navy cards will be a digital accession.

2.6 (3.8 02/14) LMO said that an edited version of the digitisation update given to UAG has been put on the UAG meeting papers page on the website:

http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/Item_10_Digitisation_Update_for_UAG_March_2014_online_published_version.pdf. He stressed that this is an internal working document and remains in that original format.

2.8 (3.9 02/14) GW corrected the date given in this item; the Ministry of Defence were consulting on the release of service records of men with dates of birth up to 1904, not 1895. He said he was advised by the MoD that they were consulting TNA on the matter.

A. LMO said this issue was previously covered at the User Advisory Group meeting. He said TNA had been consulted on the matter, and added that while the MoD had previously conducted an extraordinary public consultation, they don't carry out public consultations as a matter of course. He has no further information on the matter.

2.9 (3.15) Q. Are there any plans to digitise the green introductory notes?

A. LMO said that most of the information contained in these notes is online. There are many indexes for medieval and early modern documents; however the challenge we have is that most of these notes were produced at Chancery Lane, and indicated specific areas within that building where the documents used to be accessed. There are paper lists in the Map and Large Document Reading room which have not been touched for this reason.

3. Update on the Finding Archives (Discovery II) project.

3.1 NK and EB gave attendees an overview of the Discovery II project. NK said information provided by current finding aids for non-TNA archives and records held in the UK can overlap, and a lot of the software used is coming to the end of its useful life. Therefore, Discovery II will act as a union of catalogues, and will be able to provide a 'one stop shop' where information on the records of UK archives can be found in one clear and easily navigable space. He assured attendees that there will be no loss of functionality with the changeover from Discovery to Discovery II. He explained that there will be a range of options to enable more efficient searches, including a 'search only' option to search exclusively within a specific area, for example 'TNA', 'TNA on-line', or 'Manorial Documents'. He also said we will be carrying out more user focused research on Discovery II.

3.2 EB then spoke about some of the new features which will be available. She explained that feedback received has led to many of the developments, including the rearrangement of features currently on the home page. For example it was discovered that 'Browse' was not a widely used tool; it has therefore been moved to a less prominent position, next to the 'Advanced search' box. She assured attendees that we will not be removing tools from Discovery II, which has been designed to enhance user friendliness. Popular collections and popular search terms will be highlighted on the main page, and information advising which record series have

been digitised will be available. A Beta version of Discovery II is available on our website: <http://beta.discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

3.3 Q. How were decisions made as to what should be taken off the home page?

A. Decisions were based on feedback we gathered about the most useful aspects of Discovery.

3.4 Q. It would be helpful if there were a Discovery User guide on the site.

A. We will be building a 'How to' guide to incorporate into Discovery II. There will also be a Help link.

3.5 EB then explained how other aspects of Discovery II will work. There will be explicit information about which records are held at TNA and which are not, so that visitors don't come to TNA to view documents that we in fact don't hold. There will be a 'Records' Creator' page, which will have information on records' origins and give the context of their creation. The 'Archives' tab will give details of the archive in which the record is now held, and will include contact details. In addition there will be information on how to obtain copies of documents which are catalogued in Discovery II. EB explained that there will be a selection of filter options, including an option to search for 'downloadable' records. She said that we are currently in the process of building a new search engine for Discovery II and will be collecting feedback from users over the next few weeks.

3.6 Q. Discovery is currently a catalogue of The National Archives. Discovery II will contain data from other archives across the nation and is therefore of a very different substance to Discovery. There should be an acknowledgement that there is a vast difference between the two.

A. EB said that this is exactly how we will be presenting Discovery II. It is certainly a very different entity to the current Discovery, and this fact will be highlighted.

3.7 Q. This is a very impressive project. I feel that the United States in particular will show great interest in this concept.

A. NK said that we work closely with other archives across the world, and we hope to make the work we have done on Discovery II available to other archives. We also hope it will inspire other archives across the world.

3.8 Q. The National Maritime museum has no digital catalogue. How will issues like this affect Discovery II?

A. NK said that part of this project involves communication with other archives to make sure the data we have on their collections is as up to date as possible.

3.9 Q. How will Discovery II be arranged?

A. EB said that filter options will include dates and subjects. We use algorithms which search based on descriptions. We are reviewing our algorithms as we are now dealing with a wider range of layers.

3.10 Q. Will information still be available on A2A?

A. EB said that A2A will cease to exist. From now on archives will be able to load information directly on to Discovery II, and will enable us to update accurately.

3.11 EB then spoke about developments on the current Discovery. She said that the Discovery team have been working with the digital records team and we are now able to provide videos on the TNA website. Previously only screenshots from videos were available. She explained that we are developing technology that will enable us to load different record formats into Discovery so that they are immediately accessible.

3.12 Q. I wanted to download two specific pages of a document but there was no option to download only what I needed. Will you be able to download specific pages rather than full documents?

A. Yes, we will be putting that option in place so you can download only what you need from a document.

3.13 EB asked attendees to give feedback on Discovery:

discovery@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

4. Open Discussion.

4.1 Q. How will downloading from partner websites work with Bring Your Own Device?

A. LMO said there are a range of technical challenges which we are working on.

4.2 Q. Will it be possible to order documents, and make print outs from your own device?

A. LMO said it will be possible to order documents from your own device, but you should not need to print. Digitised images will be downloadable thereby making redundant the need to print a hard copy.

4.3 Q. Will it be possible to download Royal Navy service records in colour?

A. We don't have a release date for the Royal Navy service records, but we expect the 'Bring Your Own Device' project to be active from April 2015. We don't know which of these projects will be complete first, so are not able to give a definite answer as yet.

4.4 Q. The BT 98 Crew lists are degenerating. Could this be tackled?

A. We can't make any promises on that issue, but will take it away and speak to record specialists about the matter.

Next meeting: Saturday 17 May 2014, 12:30-13:45