

Title: The National Archives User Forum

Date of Meeting: Thursday 17 April 2008, 12:30pm

Location: Training Room

Attendees Staff:

JA: Jill Allbrooke, Head of Enquiry Services, (chair)
LMO: Lee Oliver, Head of Public Services Development
JL: James Lawson, Customer Intelligence Manager (secretary)
PS: Paul Sturm, Quality Manager
CC: Chris Cooper, Kew 2008 Programme Manager
JS: James Strachan, Director of Public Services & Marketing
DP: Dave Priest, Production Co-ordination Manager
AM: Angela Mullen, Web Content Manager
CJAM: Carole MacCormack (minutes)

Readers:

Janet Macdonald, Ken Maxwell-Jones, David List, Walter Oppenheim, Lawrence Woodcock, Bob O'Hara, Jonathan Collins, Susan Moore, Tom Tulloch-Marshall, Maggie Loghran, Paul Blake, Hazel Farren, Stella Colwell, Pauline Eismark, Michael Armstrong, John King, A.H. Butler, Chris Pocock, Peter Towey

1 Welcome from Jill Allbrooke, Head of Enquiry Services, Advice and Records Knowledge (ARK)

JA welcomed the group and introduced James Strachan

JS, who has been on secondment from last October to support the 30-year rule review, addressed the group saying that he was leaving The National Archives in July to work in the Cabinet Office. His current position, Director of Public Services and Marketing will disappear and two new posts will be created. He thanked the group for their support and added that he had enjoyed his time at The National Archives.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

- 2.1 (2.3) When producing a document with an extract, the parent document is produced in the Document Reading Room and the extraction, usually larger, is produced in the Map and Large Document Reading Room. There was a concern that perhaps some users did not realise:

Action

- a) the possible existence of an extract, or
- b) if they did, that it could, by request to a member of Document Services, be produced together with its parent document in the Map Room.

There is nothing on DORIS to alert the user of the existence of an extract: this is not a production issue, but a long-term cataloguing problem.

The issue of developing a process to alert new readers of extracts and consulting them is to be discussed separately from this forum.

2.2 (2.5) A plan had been devised to tattle-tape items at risk:

Top priority – complete by end of April;

Navy and Air Force Lists – done

Army Lists – done up to 1918

Coronation and Jubilee Medals Rolls

Medium Priority 1 – completed by end May

Kings and queens Regulations

Indian Army List

Ham's Customs Year Book

Medium Priority 2 – completed by end June

Calendars and other published works on bookshelves by Red Lists - done

All other published works in the Learning Zone and Open Reading Room

Lower Priority – ongoing

Selection of Library collection, for example annuals and directories

Map Room – the MLDRR manager is drawing up a separate priority list for this area.

Finding Aids – not books – a decision is needed whether we should tattle-tape these. They are not catalogued on the Library Catalogue and therefore have not been tattle-taped – they should probably be added to the list. LO to investigate

- 2.3 (3.5) Owing to cabling it is impossible to move the ATM from outside the Gentleman's toilet. A privacy screen is to be erected and we are waiting for a date for this work to be completed.
- 2.4 (3.6) Seating in the public restaurant has been moved for easier access to the Current Order Screens.
- 2.5 (5.5) JJ to ensure that same-day copying service(s) are considered as part of the pricing and procedures review later in 2008. The User Forum will be informed on progress

LO

- 2.6 (5.6) JA invited suggestions for items to go onto the public information screens.
- 2.7 (9.7) The problem of users not shutting down or logging off computers when they have finished should not prevent others using them: the screens should log users off after one minute. It was felt there may still be a problem: JA would talk to the user who was having particular difficulties.

JA

3 Programme for improvement to The National Archives public services at Kew (Kew 2008)

- 3.1 The Kew 2008 project was now drawing to a close, with only a few areas to be completed:
 - 1. Library books are being restored
 - 2. Talks & Surgery Rooms are progressing & should be ready in May
 - 3. Learning Zone is to be refurbished
 - 4. Signage and Way-Finding to be completed.

Post meeting note:

- 1. *There have been a few Health and Safety issues with the shelving, which will delay the opening of the library area.*
- 2. *Talks and Surgery Rooms are now ready*
- 3. *Learning Zone has been refurbished*

- 3.2 There are a few minor teething problems that need investigation and there will be a small review of the project in the Summer, followed by a major review in October.

- 3.3 Beyond the Kew 2008 programme there will be the introduction of the new payment system for copying and the installation of the public information screens.

Post meeting note: these projects have now begun.

- 3.4 There were complaints about the clarity of announcements. A new system is being purchased in 2008 and all messages will be pre-recorded professionally.
- 3.5 We were thanked for keeping disruption to a minimum in the Reading Rooms during the refurbishment.
- 3.6 There were complaints regarding the noise issuing from the area of the Map Room enquiry desk and a suggestion that the desk could be moved or be 'encased'. This will be considered when redesigning the Map Room.

4 Complaints, Suggestions and Compliments received by The National Archives

- 4.1 PS manages the various channels receiving complaints, compliments and suggestions: letters, e-mails, telephone calls and the 'Your Views Matter To Us' forms. These are recorded as part of our Chartermark assessment. The information recording our progress will be displayed on the public information screens.

Some areas we have been able to act on as a result of these communications have been: resolving the lighting levels in the Open Reading Room; increasing the number of camera stands; investigating poor paper quality (sent to us in error); and the various problems with the lift over the last few months.

Alongside our 'Your Views' and the box to post them into is our leaflet 'Putting things Right' which explains our complaints procedures.

If a complaint cannot be resolved it may need to go to the Chief Executive for an internal review. If there is no satisfactory result the complaint can be referred to our Independent Complaints Reviewer (ICR), Jodi Berg (leaflets for the ICR are also available in the same area).

We consider our system efficient: in the last twelve months there has been no occasion where the ICR has been asked to investigate any complaint.

Two pie charts were produced to shown the number of complaints, compliments and suggestions since January and these will appear on our website (*see separate document*).

- 4.2 It was noted that there have been a high percentage of complaints involving security: these were mainly the move of the security barriers to the first and second floors. This has meant that users have to go through these barriers more than they had when the barriers were at the foot of the stairs. The number of computer terminals in the Document Reading Room is due to increase this weekend from 7 to 22: this should alleviate the need to pass through the barrier to use those in the Open Reading Room.

Post meeting note: The number of computer terminals has now been increased.

- 4.3 A 'Your Views' form had been sent in regarding the difference between the catalogue entry and the paper lists in AIR 27. We are aware of the problems and this is being dealt with.

- 4.4 There was concern expressed by a reader that The National Archives were more interested in digitising the records and not considering the 'end users'.

Jone Garmendia, a Senior Archivist and Catalogue Manager will be invited to a future meeting to address these issues.

JL

5 Non-availability of original documents

There was a short presentation by DP (*see separate document*).

- 5.1 DP stated that documents should only be kept out of the controlled area of the repositories for a maximum of six weeks, with two exceptions: those being catalogued or those in our conservation studio. When being catalogued documents are stored within a controlled environment within the Staff Reading Room. If in conservation we have to accept the estimated time the item will take to conserve.
- 5.2 Staff document tickets now include return dates.
- 5.3 To protect documents copying estimates are produced in the controlled repository areas.
- 5.4 We are attempting to keep a firmer control on documents out to government departments. Lists are now produced twice a year and spot checks are done to ensure their safety and storage conditions. Government departments can only apply for their own departmental records.

It was suggested that copies were made of documents before sending them out to government departments: this has been tried before, but is an extensive task and not viable.

- 5.5 It was asked why there was an inconsistency between different departments with regard to the release of World War II service records, and could TNA intervene with MoD to 'iron out this inconsistency'.

Meg Sweet, Head of Records Management and Cataloguing and Howard Davies, Information Management Consultant, have been invited to the next meeting and will be able to communicate TNA's perspective on these issues.

- 5.6 It was confirmed that a document could be borrowed from Record Copying if it was not about to be copied. If this is the case it will probably be marked up for copying. The person borrowing it may consult the document in the Invigilation Room, and if copies are required only a camera can be used: we cannot alter the marking-up of the previous user.

6 TNA's public service performance against our targets (*see separate document*).

7 Open discussion

- 7.1 Information on our website stating that there were still no advanced orders will be changed today (17 April).
- 7.2 A member of staff had incorrectly re-tagged a file: tagging the whole item instead of tagging either side separately. **PS**
- 7.3 A new water cooler is being purchased today (17 April) and will be fitted as soon as possible
- 7.4 It was asked if someone from Collection Care could come and give a talk on conservation criteria. **JL**
- 7.5 Bulk orders have now moved to the First Floor and this was applauded, as camera stands were more accessible. It was confirmed that all tables with camera stands would eventually have power.
- 7.6 The Navy Board Project: would the paper abstracts survive?
JL to investigate. **JL**
- 8 The next meeting will be on Thursday 15 May in the new Talks Room – all are welcome**