

2.4 Issues with the number of licenses for the Times Online have now been resolved. It was suggested that the microfilm version of The Times is reinstated in the reading rooms, saving money on the licenses for the digital version. It was pointed out that the Times digital archive is a far superior service, with many useful search functions that are not available in other formats. There are no plans to return the films.

2.5 Additional signage for the new toilets on the first floor is in hand

JA

3 Update on The National Archives Directors and organisational structure

A revised chart showing the directors and their responsibilities was distributed. This information is also on our website (*see separate document*)

There have been some minor changes in the reporting chain, but there will be no reduction in staff numbers as a consequence of these changes.

4 Ministry of Defence consultation on transfer of personnel records to TNA

4.1 Howard Davies announced that the consultation exercise has begun with regard to the next batch of records being digitised and made available at The National Archives. The Ministry of Defence is seeking advice from interested parties and The National Archives would like to encourage any Users who would be affected by this decision to have their say via the online consultation document at: <http://www.forums.mod.uk/feedback/PublicConsultation.htm>

4.2 Once copied, the Advisory Counsel has advised that the originals be destroyed: due to the sheer volume of records the cost of storage would be prohibitive.

4.3 It is thought that maybe smaller caches of records could be kept, either at TNA or other organisations.

4.4 Concern was raised regarding degeneration of digital records and the destruction of the originals. JJ assured those present that effective digital preservation of electronic records is a key concern of The National Archives and we are fully confident that these and other digital records can be preserved in formats that will continue to be accessible in the future.

4.5 Bob O'Hara is writing to Mod on behalf of a number of users of TNA and asked for contributions from those present.

5 Catering Issues

5.1 Jane Ardizzone is responsible for managing the contracts with a number of external companies, including the contract with Yes Dining.

5.2 At the previous meeting users had raised the issue of long queues at the coffee shop. JA reported that Yes Dining are aware of the issue, adding that a number of initiatives are planned to reduce the length of the queues. These include: Staff training and providing filter coffee in addition to the coffee that is currently available, which will be both cheaper and quicker to make.

6 Library issues

6.1 A number of issues regarding the library were mentioned: the main ones being lighting, furniture, access, space and availability of library staff. JJ felt that the library did not come out of the refurbishment as well as we would have liked and has asked HPS to head an internal improvement group to investigate. It was stated that the library enquiry desk would not be returned and that library staff would continue in their present roles.

6.2 The key change for 2008 was to integrate the library service with the records knowledge staff. The department works on a ROTA basis and it is recognised that there can be problems actually speaking to library staff: improvements with ROTA are hoped to provide better access to those with library experience.

6.3 TNA however, continue to believe in the concept of multitasking; problems are only being incurred because training and familiarisation have not yet been completed. Library staff have received records training but it has not been reciprocated. Records staff are due to begin library training in the next few weeks, with the estimated completion date in September

6.4 HPS reported that she has received positive feedback from a number of Library staff that feel that they are now able to provide a better service and have a more rounded and fuller understanding of TNA holdings.

6.5 A recent light touch survey showed that 90% of users are happy with the present library; users felt that this may include many who never use the library. They wanted the questions on the survey to be more specific. Two more light touch surveys are due before a larger survey in September, the next of which will take place between the 30th July and the 2nd August (inclusive).

6.6 Other issues discussed relating to the library included:

- Material in the back office: HPS and her team are still working through material in the back office so, for a while there could be instances where items are not in their correct location.
- HPS will investigate the specific issue raised that a number of items on the recent acquisitions list were found not to be available on the shelves
- Space between the shelf stacks are within legal limits
- Books situated on very high shelves: this will be looked into by

HPS

the improvement group

- Plan of the library area: this will be looked into by the improvement group
- Book of the month will be returning
- HPS will look into providing more foreign language dictionaries in the library (as specifically requested at the forum).

6.7 One user wished to express thanks to HPS and her staff for their support and help over the last month: they had, he said 'gone that extra mile'. This thanks was echoed by other users at the meeting.

7 Project to improve tables in the Document Reading Room (DRR)

7.1 The way of working and researching has changed considerably since the installation of the octagonal tables and the capacity of the DRR has increased due to the Kew 2008 project. We are therefore considering improvements to the furniture in the DRR. We are in the early stages of collecting user feedback and we would like to hear comments and suggestions for their replacements. There may be a variety of types, sizes and shapes of tables required; all will need to be purpose built.

Please contact Lee Oliver through the 'Your Views' forms or contact him personally, or by e-mail: lee.oliver@nationalarchives.gov.uk

7.2 It was asked if there could be some chairs without arms – this would be looked into.

7.3 Will there be more terminals in the DRR?
Yes, 6-7 stand-up terminals have yet to be installed, bringing the total number to 22. This has been delayed due to IT's volume of work, and the fact that the work can only be carried out on Sundays.

8 Complaints, suggestions and compliments received by The National Archives

Statistics, including the accumulative total from January to April were distributed and are available on the website (*See separate document*)

Complaints included:

- Lack of camera stands
- Request for greater availability of staff in the reading rooms

Complaints about the restaurant were mainly about the water cooler, which has now been installed and the length of queues in the café, which are now being addressed.

9 The National Archives public service performance against our targets (standing item)

These will no longer be discussed at this forum unless there are

particular queries. They were distributed and will appear on the website (*see separate document*)

10 Any other business

10.1 Cyber Café

For security reasons memory sticks will not be allowed.
There are no plans to provide printing facilities – printing can be done in the Reading Rooms

10.2 Training Archives Day has been arranged for 3rd October: for more information please contact Rosie Logiudice (email: rosie.logiudice@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

11 Open discussion

11.1 One of the groups wished it to be minuted that the decorum in the Reading Room has degenerated, the staff are excellent but the visitors are becoming nosier. He felt standards had vastly reduced and asked us to look into it.

11.2 The new small lockers in the Reading Rooms were very helpful and just the right size.

11.3 It was confirmed that although there were reported difficulties between GRO and Siemens there was no problem with the digitisation of the 1911 census records, and this work was progressing well.

11.4 It was felt that Security were not searching property properly – LO to discuss with Jack Lincoln

LO

11.5 More information was required on the National Collections Strategy – JL to invite Caroline Williams to a future Forum and to investigate the information provided on the website

JL

11.6 The National Archives Annual Report has now been laid before Parliament: it was asked if there could be a presentation. It has already been agreed that Natalie Ceeney (Chief Executive) will be attending the next forum to report on this.

11.7 The algae in the ponds is quite virulent at present and we have no idea why. We have a team who are clearing it but will be employing two more to help.

11.8 Thanks was expressed for the lunch, which once again was excellent

12. The next meeting will be on Thursday 21 August in the Talks Room – all are welcome