

Title: The National Archives' User Forum

Date: 12 July 2012

Location: Talks Room

Attendees (staff):

Jeff James (JJ), Director of Operations and Services (Chair)
Oliver Morley (OM), Chief Executive and Keeper
Chris Mumby (CM), Head of Commercial Delivery
Lee Oliver (LO), Head of Public Services Development
Julia Stocken (JS), Head of Information Management and Practice
Paul Sturm (PS), Service Quality and Complaints Manager
James Lawson (JL), Customer Intelligence Manager
Kate Jarman (KJ), Principal Records Specialist Manager - Family History
Foluke Abiona (FA), Customer Intelligence Officer
Mark Jones (MJ), Customer Intelligence Assistant

Attendees (users): Jeff Jefford, Richard Bateson, John Gallehawk, Peter Gallagher, Anthony De Vere Phillips, Tim Powys-Lybbe, Ron Platt, Joyce Hoad, P Eismark, Francis Howcutt, Scott Reeve, John Seaman, Jennifer Eaglit, Jasmine Belloni, Paul Blake

Annual Report Presentation – Oliver Morley, Chief Executive and Keeper

Oliver Morley gave a presentation on the Annual Report for The National Archives, which was followed by questions and answers:

Q: Are solar panels being installed on the roof of The National Archives as part of your commitment to reduce costs?

A: No. The glass in the roof and side panels in the link is being replaced because it was leaking. However, we are required by law to replace the glass we remove with more energy efficient glass.

Q: How will the 20 Year Rule be implemented?

A: The change from 30 to 20 years arose from the 30 Year Rule Review. The plan is for it to be gradually phased in over the next 10-years, with 2 years worth of records being accessioned each year instead of 1.

Q: Where do you see TNA being in 5 years time and where will it actually be?

A: I feel that we have come through the recent cost saving process well and have made a number of investments that will enable us to maintain high quality services through difficult financial times. However, it is difficult in the current climate to predict what will happen over the next 5-years. We have been able to absorb a 10% cut without too much impact on our front line services but any further reductions would make things a lot harder for us.

Q: Is it possible to open individual items that have been closed for 50-years under the Freedom of Information Act?

A: Yes.

Q: I am surprised that you say it has been difficult to recruit staff recently – surely there are lots of graduates in history and related subjects who would be interested in working at TNA?

A: TNA employs many different people who fulfil many different roles (for example in IT, Education, Finance and Human Resources) not just historians. Unfortunately many of these sectors are very competitive.

Q: Is it possible to get a breakdown of income by directorate?

A: There is only one directorate that is primarily concerned with generating income; the commercial directorate. Some of the other directorates are involved in income generation (for example Public Sector

Information) but income generation is not their primary remit and they are not run on that basis. The figures regarding income are available in the annual report.

Q: Does The National Archives offer consultancy services to local archives?

A: We do, this is part of the remit of our Archives Sector Development department, but we don't charge for it. However, we do receive additional funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport for this activity.

Q: Can you tell us if you or any of your directors received bonuses this year?

A: I didn't receive a bonus. 2 of the directors did. There is a lot of information available in the annual report regarding salary ranges and we are generally very transparent as an organisation regarding pay.

Q: This time last year I asked a question about how much income comes from licensing material to third parties, which you were unable to answer due to commercial confidence. Is this still the case?

A: Yes. However, a lot of information can be found on our website for those interested in our commercial licensing activities: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/commercial/licensing.htm>

Q: Do you think that income levels from licensing records have peaked?

A: No, there are still very high levels of interest in licensing our records and there are a lot of significant licensing opportunities coming up, such as the various series of Second World War related material, for example. However, there are still challenges that need to be addressed. For example, we need to be careful regarding data protection as some individuals to whom these records relate are still alive. Releasing personal data in today's digital environment is very different to allowing physical access to paper documents.

Q: Recently a lot of money has been invested in large infrastructure projects. Will this continue?

A: The amount of investments we make will go down but so will the amount of money we have to spend.

Q: I understand that the London Family History Centre (LDS) have paid to temporarily run their service from The National Archives, but these figures are not given in the Annual Report?

Q: Will you extend the renting out of space to other organisations beyond the current arrangement with the LDS?

A: The London Family History Centre is currently closed for refurbishment and their relocation to our reading rooms is a temporary arrangement, which we came to as a result of these specific circumstances and because many of our users benefit from the arrangement. This does not feature in the Annual Report as LDS have made a donation to the Friends of The National Archives. We don't have any specific plans to extend this arrangement to other organisations but we wouldn't rule it out.

Prices review, new Statutory Instrument – Chris Mumby, Head of Commercial Delivery (see separate price changes document)

CM explained that the prices we charge for the services we offer are determined by cost recovery and set out in a document known as a Statutory Instrument. The Statutory Instrument should be reviewed on an annual basis, taking into consideration changes in costs, such as staff and energy costs. However, our Statutory Instrument has not been reviewed for a number of years. This means that in most cases our charges are significantly lower than they should be. To move to cost recovery in one jump would be too much for many of our users to absorb, so we have agreed with Treasury that we will take a phased approach over a number of years.

Q: In Oliver Morley's Annual Report Presentation we saw that there has been a 48.5% drop in the use of paper at TNA. How is this reflected in the price increase to 25p per copy for self service copying/printing?

A: The 48.5% figure is across the whole of the organisation – not purely for paper used by visitors to TNA. The demand for copying is reflected in the price increase, although it is worth noting that the increased price of 25p is still lower than The National Archives was charging in the early 1990s.

Update on the June 2012 User Advisory Group Meeting – User Advisory Group delegates

Q: Is energy saving the reason for introduction of Thin Clients? They are desperately slow to use.

A: Thin Clients do offer a significant energy saving opportunity. There have been some ‘teething’ problems with the Thin Clients, although we are confident that we have overcome these.

Q: The minutes show that there were five apologies from delegates at the last User Advisory Group Meeting (UAG). Why was this?

A: It was unusual. We were caught out by it being the summer and delegates taking holidays at the same time. However, we still had a very productive meeting.

Q: Was there an update on the Red Lists survey at the UAG meeting?

A: We are deliberately taking our time with the Red Lists project to ensure that we get it right. The survey was still taking place at the time of the last User Advisory Group meeting, so the first opportunity to deliver the results to the UAG will be at the next meeting in September.

Q. Can we have a discussion at a future meeting regarding the effectiveness of the User Forum and User Advisory Group.

A. Yes (JL to arrange)

Q. A question was asked at the UAG about inquests held in private, had an answer been given yet?

A. Yes (*post meeting note; the full answer is as follows:*

We have assumed that your enquiry relates to the [Justice and Security Bill](#), which originated in the [Justice and Security Green Paper](#) (October 2011, Cm 8194). This Green Paper made proposals to extend closed material procedures to civil courts and Coroners Courts, effectively allowing courts to hear certain evidence in secret using Closed Material Proceedings. However, the Government decided not to go ahead with all of these proposals, and the provisions relating to inquests were not included in the Justice and Security Bill published on 29 May 2012.

The National Archives considers the implications of proposed legislation for the public record, but did not comment on the Justice and Security Green Paper or Bill.

As background on inquest records, Coroners’ court records are transferred to local places of deposit. The formal selection of records occurs after 15 years and is guided by our [Operational Selection Policy 6](#) and the [Coroners Rules 1984](#). The Register of Deaths Reported is identified for permanent preservation and the files of cases that proceed to inquest are appraised for selection on the basis of agreed criteria due to the volume of material created. The National Archives works closely with departments and their agencies to ensure that transfer and deposit captures all relevant material under the selection process.)

Q. It was mentioned that a new Records Collection Policy was in the process of being drafted. Is this ready yet?

A. No, the draft policy isn’t quite ready yet but we will let you know when it is. *Post meeting note; the draft policy is now available on the following page on our website:*

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/news/742.htm>

Q. Please can the Records Decision Panel and Re-closure Policy be discussed at a future meeting?

A. Yes, this has been scheduled for the October 11th meeting.

Matters arising from the last meeting

The updated Terms of Reference for the User Forum were distributed at the last meeting in draft form. JJ noted that no comments or suggested amendments had been received. It was therefore agreed that these would become the official Terms of Reference going forward. They will be accessible from <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/get-involved/user-forum.htm>

Q. Is it true that new accessions are no longer being added to the old online Catalogue?

A. Yes, new accessions will only be available on Discovery.

Q: Do you keep data regarding document usage at TNA (the most popular series etc)?

A: We are able to run reports on our database to tell us this type of information. (DP agreed to compile a list of the top 100 most popular series and top 25 most popular documents).

Q: Please can you update us on when the Second World War Navy and Air Force service records will be made available?

A: As you know, we are currently in the process of a pilot project to make a sample of the Home Guard records available on Discovery. This is very near completion. It is likely that the RAF records will be made available next and that the Navy records will be the last to be made available. The Pilot Home Guard project has proved the concept that records can be digitised and accessioned electronically, but it has been an extremely complex process, involving the creation of a whole new infrastructure, and a very steep learning curve for all those involved.

Q: Do you proactively call back documents that are shown on the catalogue to be 'out to a government department'?

A: Yes. Records that have been out to a department for 6 months or more are routinely called back. We can also request that individual records are sent back earlier if an individual asks us to do this (there is a form that can be filled in at the Document Reading Room counter). Increasingly we also try to send a copy to the department rather than the original document itself.

Q. Would it be better for documents that are retained to be held by TNA? A document that was retained and then transferred to Surrey police (MEPO 9/152) has now been lost.

A. We will investigate this. *Post meeting note: Our Access Manual explains the various reasons for retention. The relevant section is on pages 23-27.*

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/information-management/access-to-public-records.pdf>

In the case of this particular file, the reason for retention is stated as 'security or other specified grounds' which is covered by the following paragraph in the Access Manual:

Retentions for 'any other special reason'

The Open Government White Paper indicated that retention for any other special reason, in the words of s3(4), is appropriate for records whose sensitivity is such that it cannot be estimated when the record may be released. In other words, the sensitivity is indefinite.

This provision has most commonly been used for national security records which remain classified.

Consider redaction if the removal of a small portion of the record would enable the rest of the file to be transferred.

JJ and JL agreed that one meeting per year could be dedicated to 'mopping up' any outstanding issues from previous meetings.

Next meeting – The next meeting is on Saturday 18th August at 11:00 am in the Talks Room (**please note new time: rescheduled due to likely travel disruptions owing to the Olympics**)