

## Minutes

Title: The National Archives User Forum

Date of Meeting: Thursday 20 November, 12:30pm

Location: Talks 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)

NK: Nick Kingsley, Head of National Advisory Services

JC: Jenny Cottle, Senior Marketing Manager

JS: Jessamy Sykes, Map & Large Document Room Manager

II: Ian Ireland, Advice and Records Knowledge

CJAM: Carole MacCormack (minutes)

Readers: D Heywood, K Payne, Joyce Hoad, Paul Blake, Len Barnett, Tom Tulloch – Marshall, Pauline Eismark, Susan Moore, John Court, Kay Priestley, Scott Reeve, A Meare, P Gallagher, A.H. Butler, John King, Hugh Compton, Michael Jeffries, Richard Bateson, Denys J Voaden, Simon Lilley, John Gallehawk, Stephen Hals, John Martin

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		Action
1	<b>Welcome</b> JA welcomed the group.	
2	<b>Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising</b>	
2.1	(2.1) It was confirmed that the Action points following the 'Meet the CEO' day would be in a Reader Question/CEO comment/action format.	
2.2	(2.3) Deployment of specialists on Rota – JJ had taken this on board and spoken to the Head of the Resources team; the Rota review is on going.	
2.3	(2.4) J18: Change of name – it was confirmed that these records are not available on film.	
2.4	(7.3) The access button at the back of the building has now been fixed.	
2.5	(3.2.4) It was confirmed that more training sessions have now taken	

place.

2.6 (3.2.8) Helen Pye-Smith wanted to assure everyone that day to day Library duties were still being carried out; if there were any problems with items in the wrong place, please contact JA.

2.7 (3.2.9) The table has been relocated nearer to a power socket.

2.8 (3.13) 12 extra chairs have been ordered for the Open Reading Room.

### **3 Presentation: the work of the National Advisory Services – Nick Kingsley (see separate presentation document)**

Questions following presentation:

3.1 Q: How successful have you been with local authorities in promoting records management?

A. Records Management is not as successful as we'd like, as we do not have the solid leverage needed to persuade others.

3.2 Q: You advocate a hub system for local authorities to merge together – but can you see this happening?

A. This is not out for consultation; it is just a draft proposition at present. The smaller services are not able to provide a sustainable service so it was suggested that smaller archives join with others – this is not necessarily just local authorities but could involve libraries joining with museums, NHS Trusts or Universities joining with local authorities.

3.3 Q. The NRA is not very well known – are there any plans to advertise your existence?

A. The NRA has appeared in a number of publications, including Ancestors and we are in the process of producing a leaflet for local authorities, libraries etc.

3.4 It was suggested by a user that not all staff who work in the reading rooms are fully conversant with the National Register of Archives and other NAS services. *(post meeting note: All Research Enquiries desk staff have been trained on NRA/NAS sources and indexing. Most of the Open Reading Room staff have also been trained. There is an ongoing training programme, NAS/NRA is a fixed module and is offered on a 9 month basis to all staff. For those previously trained It is not compulsory, but available.)*

### **4 Report on the recent Onsite Customer Satisfaction Survey – Jenny Cottle (see separate presentation document)**

It was made clear that the results presented were a summary and that the full report would be made available *(see separate document)*

- 4.1 It was noted that some did not answer certain questions; e.g. those who carry out their own research do not require the service of staff and are therefore unable to comment on the quality of staff advice.

It was questioned whether certain 'types' only completed the questionnaire – but it was confirmed that it was open to all and everyone had a chance to complete one.

Questions following presentation:

- 4.2 Q. How much did the survey cost  
A. The survey cost approximately £3,000.
- 4.3 Q. What percentage of those that visited filled in the survey?  
A. Approximately 400 people visit per day, however a proportion of these visit several times over the period of the survey. We received over 1,000 results, which makes the survey statistically valid.
- 4.4 Q. Who was responsible for bringing the FRC to Kew  
A. LO offered to discuss this complex issue away from the meeting.
- 4.5 Q. Why were there no comments about the Library in the report? – there were a few comments made.  
A. The company who ran the survey only included the most frequently made comments in the report. However all comments made have been made available to staff.

- 5 Introduction of barriers to the Visitors Car Park – Lee Oliver**  
The National Archives has a limited space in our car park, and we are doing our best to manage it so that as many of our users have access to it as possible. The HMC building next door has been sold and soon there will be no access to that area as an 'overflow' car park. We are taking actions to discourage non- users from using our car park.

- 5.1 From 9<sup>th</sup> December those using The National Archives car park will have to take a ticket when they park and have it validated in The National Archives building before they leave.
- 5.2 There is no plan, desire or intent to introduce charging, although we can't guarantee that external forces won't, in the future, intervene and alter the situation.
- 5.3 It was noted that staff will continue to be allowed to use the visitor car park, but will have to use the same validation system.
- 5.4 We will not be introducing a booking system; parking will be on a first-come, first-served basis.
- 5.5 The car park will be open Monday – Saturday from 8.30 every

morning, and will close 30 minutes after The National Archives closes.

- 5.6 There will be no facility for cars to park overnight – they may be clamped. TNA closes, at 19:00 on the latest nights and does not provide parking through the night.  
*(post meeting update: Due to technical difficulties, the activation of the barriers has been delayed, but they will be put in to use before the end of December.)*

## **6 Open discussion**

### **6.1 Places of deposit:**

Records of the Fleet Air Arm Unit (a very small class of records), have been sent to the Fleet Air Arm Museum. What is the ruling that keeps records here or allows them to be sent to other places of deposit? Could a system be put in place to return these documents to The National Archives if requested here?

A decision was made to make the Fleet Air Arm Museum the official Place of Deposit for these specialised records. For preservation and administrative reasons, we would not arrange for the records to be moved between repositories. NK agreed to speak to the person who raised this question away from the meeting.

### **6.2 Business archives**

NK explained that the National Strategy of Business Archives Council are there to help to improve the preservation of documents of businesses in general. Their aim is to ensure that more businesses have the facility in place to look after their own records. A lot of work has already been done in this area and an explanatory document will be available in January: they are anticipating a new post will be provided to support business archives.

### **6.3 Inter Departmental Archives Committee (IDAC) – why have no minutes been published since June 2006?**

This committee attempted to provide a co-ordination body for government departments. Unfortunately all departments involved sent different grades of staff to the meetings, so decisions were unable to be reached. It was felt that there was little contribution or commitment and the last meeting was held in June 06. Work is needed on a more bilateral basis to engage the development that is needed.

### **6.4 It was requested that 'Finding Archives Day' be made a regular event. NK responded that it is definitely planned for next year. JL will keep in touch with NK regarding this and ensure that any news is communicated at the forum.**

### **6.5 Concern was expressed that the digitisation of WO 338 was not widely publicised.**

It was explained that this was because it was a pilot project to test the technology which would enable a whole piece to be downloaded as a single download. There has been positive feedback over the last 6 weeks regarding this project – if all goes well, the microfilms will be withdrawn.

- 6.6 Traditionally County Archivists reported to a Chief Executive, but over the last 30 years the trend has changed and this is no longer happening. It was explained that local government's tiers of management were changing, but that as long as the mechanism was in place for the information to be disseminated, both up and down the chain that there was no cause for worry.
- 6.7 More tables were requested for the cloakroom. (*post meeting note: CJAM is currently investigating if there are any spare tables that can be used for this purpose. Shelves will also be put up in the rear section of the cloakroom*)
- 6.8 The 1911 census will be released in 2009, to register for e-mail updates sign up to 1911census.co.uk: <http://www.1911census.co.uk/>

Please note that all minutes and presentations are available at our website at: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/events/readers.htm>

- 8 The next meeting will be on Thursday 18 December in the Talks Room – all are welcome**

**CJAM /  
LO**