



The National Archives

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The National Archives



The work of the National
Advisory Services

Nick Kingsley
National Advisory Service
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History of National Advisory Services

Created following the merger of the Public Record Office and Historical Manuscripts Commission in 2003

Currently have three teams (under review):

- Archives Advisory Services
- Records Management Advisory Services
- Information Resources



Archives Advisory Services

- Exist to “improve the archival health of the nation” by driving up standards through:
 - Supervision of “places of deposit” for public records held outside The National Archives
 - Advice and guidance to other repositories and private owners, especially on buildings and strategy
 - Advice to funding bodies and operation of National Cataloguing Grants Scheme funded by charities
 - Advice to Government on wider archives sector, including current development of new Government Policy on Archives
- Standards underpin all our advisory work:
 - TNA Standard for Record Repositories (2004) and supporting Framework of Standards (2005)



Records Management Advisory Service

- Provision of records management advice to public bodies outside central government (local authorities; NHS bodies; NDPBs etc)
- Assessments of compliance against s.46 Code of Practice under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (eg Nottingham City Council 2007) at request of Information Commissioner
- Promotion of digital preservation work in the wider archives and records management sector.



Information Resources Team

- Responsible for four main services:
 - The National Register of Archives
 - The Manorial Documents Register
 - The ARCHON database
 - Access to Archives (A2A)



National Register of Archives

- Begun in 1945 as first attempt at creating a national resource discovery mechanism for archives, collecting paper copies of catalogues from UK repositories and indexing them at a high level.
- Indexes computerised in 1980s; system twice upgraded since; now at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/>
- The most comprehensive source of information about the location and content of archives about the UK; includes information about collections overseas and in private hands; and about uncatalogued material in UK repositories.
- In 2007, record structure adapted to conform to ISAAR(CPF) standard for name authority files. Now working with other resource discovery system providers to take forward goal of comprehensive online access to archive catalogue data.



National Register of Archives

- Gathering new and maintaining existing information, chiefly through annual survey of accessions and indexing of new hard copy and online catalogues; about 5,000 records a year are added
- Indexing by staff of the creators of these resources (persons, families, organisations and businesses) and the description of these creators (generating place and subject access routes)
- Establishing links to on-line multi-level catalogues, and where appropriate discarding paper lists; about 97,000 entries are now linked – over 30%. In 2008, digitising lists from smaller repositories with no access to online catalogues, and mounting as linked documents online, also searchable via Global Search
- Entering name authority information into database and making links to other online authorities (eg Oxford DNB)



Manorial Documents Register

- Established when HMC took over responsibility for administering the Manorial Documents Rules from the Master of the Rolls.
- The work involves maintenance of the register <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/mdr/> with information supplied by repositories and gleaned from the NRA and other sources.
- Answering enquiries, including complex legal enquiries about the status of records and legal title to them.
- Currently the subject of a programme of revision to ensure the register is up-to-date and available online:
- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Cumbria, Hampshire, Middlesex, Norfolk, Surrey, Yorkshire & Wales done; Hertfordshire and Dorset started 2008; other counties under discussion.



ARCHON database

- ARCHON <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/> is the database of archive repositories in the UK and overseas holding British archives; it holds details of more than 3,200 institutions that provide some measure of access to their holdings. Widely linked to NRA, A2A and repository sites.
- Repositories are encouraged to advise NAS of any changes of contact details, staffing, opening hours or collecting policy that should be recorded on ARCHON
- Once a year we ask mainstream collecting repositories to review and update their entry.



Access to Archives (A2A/A4A)

- Addition of new content to A2A and A4A programmes ceased in March 2008, when maintenance and management of the database was transferred to NAS.
- System transferred to new and more robust hardware but with less effective search functionality in June 2008. Improvements have since been made within the limitations of the software.
- Repositories can still update catalogues held on A2A when amendments are required or additions are received.
- Over time, we expect to manage down the volume of material held in A2A, as the same lists become available on repository websites
- We will continue to deal with enquiries from the public about A2A, as now.



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That's it folks