



FORUM ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

- Date:** Thursday 3 December 2020
- Time:** 13.30 - 16.20
- Venue:** Virtual Meeting
- Chair:** Ms Hillary Bauer (HB), Deputy Chair
- Minutes:** Isabel Saunders, Senior Governance Coordinator and Secretary to the Advisory Council
- Members:** Ms Hillary Bauer (HB), Deputy Chair in the Chair
Dr Helen Forde (HF)
Professor Leon Litvack (LL)
Ms Lesley Ferguson (LF)
Ms Adele Redhead (AR), Independent Forum Member
Ms Jenny Shaw (JS), Independent Forum Member
Ms Jeannette Strickland (JSt)

Others in attendance:

The National Archives (TNA)

Mr Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper (ex officio)
Dr Valerie Johnson (VJ) Director of Research and Collections
Head of Standards & Improvements
Dr Emma Markiewicz (EM) Head of Archives Sector Development
Mr Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office
Ms Pip Willcox (PW) Head of Research
Mrs Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance
Development Manager: National and Networks – Agenda Item 9
Strategic Partnerships Manager – Agenda Item 6

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members and other attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from the Master of the Rolls.
- 1.3 No declarations of interest were made.

2. Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

- 2.2 Members asked if there had been any further update on Item 54 on Police records. JJ stated there was no update but TNA were liaising with all the appropriate groups.

- 2.3 Members resolved Item 28 on business archives could now be closed.
- 2.4 Members resolved Item 39 on the ARA programme could now be closed and the event would take place next year.
- 2.5 On Item 56 JJ noted a storage capacity paper was being drafted by TNA and this could be brought to the March 2021 Forum meeting.
- 2.6 Members queried whether a response had been received from the Royal Courts of Justice for Item 61. JJ to check.

ACTION: IS to close items 28 and 39 and updated items 56 and 61.

ACTION: To check for Royal Courts of Justice response.

3. Keeper and Historical Manuscripts Commissioner's (HMC) Update

- 3.1 JJ provided an update to the paper, following further government Covid 19 guidelines. All of London, including Kew has been placed in Tier 2 and TNA would formally reopen on 8 December 2020. Capacity had been increased by 150% and TNA would recommence opening on Saturdays. Users would also be able to request twelve records with three reserve records. Based on current booking trends, TNA has resolved previous concerns of oversubscription.
- 3.2 Members queried the previous concerns on oversubscription for TNA's services. JJ noted prior to the November 2020 lockdown there had been complaints due to oversubscription of available slots. Over the lockdown TNA had prioritised this as an issue and had put measures in place to increase capacity.
- 3.3 Members asked for further clarity on reserve records. JJ explained that currently records must be quarantined after use. If the record a user requested is in quarantine, the user could instead be issued with one of their reserve choices.
- 3.4 Members asked about the scientific information on virus survival rates on paper. JJ and VJ explained there was no consensus among scientists but TNA was monitoring the information available. TNA was operating on a 72 hour quarantine period for records.
- 3.5 Members asked for further detail on the HM Treasury Intangible Assets Review. JJ noted involvement began two years previously. JJ had participated as an external consultant, due to TNA's interest on behalf of the Crown. This involvement presented opportunities to highlight the current limitations on commercial licensing. Through this some flexibility had been built into the official treasury guidance and this would progress to the intangible assets review, where its impact on commercial assets could be further explored. Upon publication of the review it will be possible to use it as a case study.
- 3.6 The review would also contain a case study on TNA's relationship with the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE have an international strategy, and work with TNA for research, enhancement of knowledge and improving access to collections. This strategy provides further commercial opportunities. The UAE wish to build a digital archive for the Gulf. TNA is an obvious partner for this as it has many records relating to the Gulf states. Using the UAE funds and TNA's records and expertise the UAE have formed the Arabian Gulf Digital Archive. The hope was to act as a management consultee and become a broker for other connections such as the British Library. The Forum congratulated TNA on this work.
- 3.7 Members queried the use of internal auditors on the International Development Objectives. JJ stated their involvement had been to get an external perspective and to be more strategic,

particularly in its relationships building. The international strategy would be refreshed in 2022 and this was a way for TNA to frame its thinking.

- 3.8 Members asked about TNA's concerns with the use of Slack as a communication medium. JJ clarified it was a concern over internal government communications overall. The use of non-traditional platforms did not negate the creation of a record and so appropriate record management practices were needed to manage this.
- 3.9 Members congratulated TNA on their Novice to Know How programme and queried whether this would be an ongoing project. EM noted the large impact the programme had had, but that there would be a saturation point of programme users. Data collection on usage had been commissioned as part of the programme, and TNA would analyse this to evolve the programme. VJ added feedback from the Archive School programme could be used.
- 3.10 Members highlighted previous discussions on training for non-archivists who work with archivists. EM stated a set of materials had been produced as part of the Plugged In and Powered Up programme and TNA could seek feedback on this. There was also a further plan to bring the Society for Innovation, Technology and Modernisation (SOCITM) to professionals. JJ noted he and EM had met with the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) and discussed leadership development at the Audit and Risk committee. It had been noted there that the DiAGRAM resources could be used to demonstrate risk to senior non-archivists and this may be a future promotion opportunity.
- 3.10 JJ provided an update on the spending review settlement. He noted there had been a funding allocation £37m and £7.5 of that was specifically to address digital challenges and securing the digital record. This funding increase demonstrated government confidence in TNA. The additional funding would allow TNA to invest in capital infrastructure. The current digital team was 100 members strong, however attracting members was difficult as remuneration for the public sector is lower, and retention is more challenging. The Web Archive team however, has grown from three to eight members.

4. Update on Research and Academic Engagement

- 4.1 PW presented the update, which covered research applications, research dissemination, policy internships, doctoral partnerships, academic events, research across TNA, and recruitment. She highlighted the work and research projects for Towards a National Collection Discovery. She also noted that the UK Research Institute have acknowledged that cultural heritage collections are infrastructure for arts and humanities, and so TNA has applied for funding for a spectrometer.
- 4.2 Forum members wished to note their appreciation for the work done by the Research teams. They also wished to congratulate TNA on its work with other organisations.
- 4.3 Forum members queried TNA's use and interest in crowdsourcing. PW noted it was a useful tool for transcribing. TNA was looking to understand what cultural heritage organisations were using crowdsourcing research methods, with the largest focus on Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning and would create recommendations to make the work method more usable.
- 4.4 Forum members emphasised their desire to be kept informed of relevant lectures and workshops. PW confirmed she would ensure Forum members are aware.

ACTION: IS to liaise with TNA on circulating relevant events information to Forum members.

5. Archives Sector Update

- 5.1 EM introduced the report, which covered records at risk, New Burdens funding, archive service accreditation, and TNA's archives sector leadership role. TNA had identified twenty to thirty institutions eligible for the Archives at Risk Fund, but unfortunately some organisations' staff were furloughed, and some were currently unable to access information. In addition the application period for the fund fell over the Christmas period. TNA was making efforts to be as flexible as possible within the bounds of the criteria and wanted to ensure the most vulnerable did not miss out.
- 5.2 On the Malcolm Arnold archives, JJ noted TNA had been in discussion with the Ministry of Justice and the department for Digital Culture Media and Sport. TNA is preparing a briefing for the Secretary of State and is continuing to liaise with departments but the matter was currently with government ministers.
- 5.3 Members asked about the commercial potential for the Ministry of Defence service personnel records. JJ responded discussions were taking place. The first batch of material would be transferred before the end of 2020 and would continue for the next seven years.
- 5.4 Members expressed concern with the involvement of private equity companies acquiring rights to records. JJ clarified that where commercial licensing arrangements are made, TNA always retained the originals and the intellectual property rights. Licenses are always non exclusive and would remain so.
- 5.5 Members were pleased to note mention of the road map for the accreditation standard and confirmed they would like this to be brought to Forum. Forum members had previously suggested using accreditation as encouragement for organisations to report on inclusivity. TNA was considering the best way to approach this for organisations of very differing sizes.

ACTION: EM to bring the Road Map to Accreditation to a Forum meeting.

6. Archives Unlocked Action Plan

- 6.1 OM introduced the plan. The plan was aimed at TNA's strategic priorities and set out the plan for the following two years. This had been built in consultation with the archives sector development team and had been to the Archives Unlocked Board twice.
- 6.2 Members congratulated TNA on its aims of becoming the 'disruptive archive' and felt this was particularly relevant this year with the impact of Covid 19.
- 6.3 Members asked how TNA planned to evaluate achievement of the plan and what monitoring would be in place. EM responded this would be through the work plan element, and for each of the various programmes there would be an evaluation phase. There would also be a long term assessment of the vision as a whole, linking with TNA's leadership role and its consultative work within the sector, to assess if a different business model could be evolved.

7. Manorial Documents Register Advisory Panel Feedback

- 7.1 Forum member LL gave a brief summary of his work on the manorial documents register advisory panel, including an induction and an initial meeting in October. The meeting received a number of project reports. Some projects had been effected by Covid 19. Many archives were taking the chance to publicise work digitally. The panel also received the results of the manorial documents survey. In addition the meeting discussed the centenary celebration in 2022, and the panel would be involved in planning an event at Nottingham University.

8. Update on Membership

- 8.1 IS presented an update on Forum membership. She noted members HB and LF would be retiring in June 2021 and the Council Secretariat was currently seeking the reappointment of HF and JSt. Members were encouraged to consider applying to be Deputy Chair of the Forum. Members were also informed the Advisory Council would be recruiting four new members in Summer 2021 and to consider whether following the discussion on the skills audit at the September 2020 meeting, they might wish to highlight underrepresented skill areas to the Advisory Council.

9. GDPR Toolkit

- 9.1 CS introduced the project which was to help the archives sector to achieve compliance with GDPR legislation independently. Current legislation had not been written with a focus on archives. Compliance with GDPR legislation had created a lot of concern for independent archives, who regularly consulted with TNA's Archive Sector Development team. The aim of the GDPR Toolkit is to provide independent archivists with the skills they need and would be underpinned by a variety of resources and decision trees. Work was ongoing with consultants and a number of independent organisations varying in size and risk profile to ensure the Toolkit's effectiveness. The Toolkit would be launched at a virtual event in late Spring 2021. Following its launch TNA would monitor its impact and would track all the incoming queries, and subsequently seek to improve its effectiveness and continue to update the work going forward.
- 9.2 Members asked how the team found the Information Commissioner's work. CS noted the ICO would inform TNA when they have made a subsequent ruling on something affecting the archive sector. The aim with this Toolkit however, was to keep the advice and resources in plain English.
- 9.3 Members asked whether the Toolkit could be used by archivists to explain GDPR to others in their organisation. CS confirmed staff would be able to use this as a reference point for conversations with their GDPR officers and it would explain the protections for archiving in the public interest.

10. Any Other Business

- 10.1 Members asked how they could access articles which were relevant background information for Forum members but may be behind paywalls. TNA representatives discussed the possibility of corporate access for Forum members.
- 10.2 Forum members wished to note the support TNA was providing to the archive sector throughout the pandemic.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 15.45am.

Date of next meeting: 12 March 2021