



FORUM ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Date: Wednesday 29 July 2020
Time: 11.00 - 14.20
Venue: Virtual Meeting
Chair: Ms Hillary Bauer (HB), OBE, Deputy Chair
Minutes: Trish Humphries, Strategic Relations Coordinator, TNA
Members: 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
Dr 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
(PG), 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
(JT), Cultural Property Manager - Agenda Item 5
(LH), Senior Advisor (Manorial Records) - Agenda Item 7
(ARo), Places of Deposit Manager - Agenda Item 8
(JC), Head of Government Services - Agenda Item 8

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Deputy Chair welcomed members and other attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Deputy Chair advised that Ms Lesley Ferguson had agreed to a short extension of her term as a member of the Advisory Council and Forum and members welcomed her back.
- 1.3 Apologies for absence were received from the Master of the Rolls.
- 1.4 No declarations of interest were made.

2. Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log

- 2.1 Subject to minor amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

- 2.2 The Forum noted that a workshop on Capital Tax would take place as a virtual event on 8 September and details would be circulated in advance. A Stakeholders meeting on Archival Significance is likely to take place in early 2021.
- 2.3 JJ advised that TNA was continuing to liaise with the Metropolitan Police regarding police records.
- 2.4 The Forum reviewed and approved the actions log.

3. Historical Manuscripts Commissioner's (HMC) Update

- 3.1 The Forum received an update paper from the Keeper/HMC.
- 3.2 A discussion ensued and the following points were noted:
 - Re-opening of The National Archives – Some readers had expressed disappointment at the document restrictions, but overall feedback had been very positive, with a number of first time readers visiting. Within the next few weeks consideration would be given to ways in which the service could be enhanced, possibly with more allocated seats or increased record allocation, although this would depend on effective quarantine methods for the records.
 - Work to support the sector was continuing and Forum members advised that the guidance and information provided to date had been very well received. A letter to the sector was being drafted and some of the lessons learned from the re-opening may be included for information. A recent webinar on the Digital Archiving Graphical Risk Assessment Model had attracted a large audience and archives from across the country contributed to the discussions.
 - A number of record descriptions had been added to the online catalogue during the lockdown period, mostly catalogue enhancements created by records experts and volunteers.
- 3.3 The Forum welcomed the update.

4. Update on Archive Sector

- 4.1 The Forum received a paper providing an update on Archive Sector activities.
- 4.2 Members noted that more than 160 services had now been accredited via the Archives Services Accreditation and that, once current applications had been reviewed, the scheme would be paused until site visits were able to take place again.
- 4.3 The Forum was pleased to note the establishment of a 'Records at Risk' fund as a pilot scheme to form part of an emergency response to some of the current challenges faced by the archives sector. The British Records Association had recently agreed a proposal to host the fund. It was hoped that small sums would be made available for the emergency removal or short term storage of collections at risk due to the financial crisis.
- 4.4 The Forum noted the update and congratulated the team for their achievements during the lockdown period.

5. Deposited Collections

- 5.1 The Forum received a paper regarding Deposited Collections and was asked to consider the impact of the pandemic on private deposited collections and how the risks to these collections might be mitigated.
- 5.2 Forum members were concerned to note that private deposit places were unlikely to be eligible for emergency funding from government. The possibility of major owners resorting to selling off manuscripts in addition to paintings and other chattels was considered to be a risk.
- 5.3 The Forum was keen to ensure that the various difficulties faced by private owners and places of deposit should be discussed at the forthcoming workshop, in an effort to seek ideas on how to modernise some of the mechanisms in place.
- 5.4 The wider strategic risk, of the sale of existing deposited collections by their owners and existing private archival collections being sold rather than deposited with archive services, was also considered and maintaining the quality of collections had been highlighted in a recent submission sent to a DCMS Select Committee from The National Archives on the impact of the pandemic on the archives sector.
- 5.5 The Forum was pleased to note The National Archives' continued efforts to support the sector.

6. Proposal for the Manorial Documents Register 2022 Programme to mark the centenary of the Law of Property Act 1922

- 6.1 Following discussion at the previous meeting, Forum members considered an update paper on preparations to mark the centenary of the Manorial Documents Register and the Law of Property Act 1922.
- 6.2 PG advised that a draft event programme was being developed, and initial discussions had been held with the Office of the Master of the Rolls with regard to a possible joint reception at the Royal Courts.
- 6.3 Plans for a national day conference on manorial records, were being drawn up, subject to any ongoing COVID-19 restrictions and discussions were being held with the Keeper of Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham to explore whether the conference might be hosted at the University which, in addition to holding a number of manorial records, was situated near one of the few remaining manorial courts.
- 6.4 A national online survey was being prepared to gather data on how much research involving manorial documents is being undertaken and how the register is being used. The survey will run from 7 September to 19 October and results will help planning of the future development of the register.
- 6.5 The Forum was asked to consider nominating a member to join the Manorial Documents Advisory Panel. Members were asked to contact the Secretariat if they wished to express an interest. **POST MEETING NOTE:** LL has agreed to be the Forum's nominated representative on the Adviosry Panel.
- 6.6 The possibility of an exhibition was discussed, and it was suggested that a small exhibition could be attached to the conference, and consideration was being given to developing a template for local archives to use and share their own manorial documents.
- 6.7 The Forum was pleased to note the plans being developed and asked to be kept updated so that the Centenary would be appropriately celebrated.

Action by: AB/LH

7. Update on Research and Academic Engagement

- 7.1 The Forum received an update on The National Archives' research and academic engagement work.
- 7.2 A number of current projects were discussed, including:
- 7.3 The National Archives had received a number of approaches to partner on the Arts and Humanities Research Council 'Towards a National Collection' Discovery projects and these were currently being considered, in consultation with colleagues across the organisation.
- 7.4 The Gerald Aylmer Seminar had been held on 11 March and had been very successful, despite lower attendance than anticipated. Planning had commenced for the 2021 event, which would be held online.
- 7.5 A one year research fellowship was being supported by The Friends of The National Archives, to work on advanced digital methods, using unit war diaries, to develop understanding of the British Army and its units on the Western Front for researchers and public audiences.
- 7.6 The Forum was pleased to note the continued successes of the Research team, despite the COVID-19 restrictions.

8. Research Funding Landscape

- 8.1 Forum members had requested more information in relation to the 'ecology' of the various research funding bodies and the funding landscape, at the meeting in December 2019.
- 8.2 An update was provided for the meeting, and will be uploaded to the documents library in Egress for future reference.
- 8.3 The paper outlined the number of funding applications made and funding received since 2016. PW advised that the team had carefully considered how success could be measured and felt that working with the research community and involvement with research work was important. Obtaining a grant for a specific piece of work and having a successful outcome was more beneficial than seeking an upward curve of increased funding.
- 8.4 The Forum was very pleased to note the success of the team and were grateful for the comprehensive update.

Action by: AB

9. Public Record Keeping by Arm's Length Bodies and Places of Deposit

- 9.1 The Forum received a paper outlining the relationship between Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) and associated Places of Deposit (POD), and The National Archives, the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives and the Forum on Historical Manuscripts and Academic Research.
- 9.2 Whilst the Forum had been created to provide a focus on private records, with the Advisory Council primarily considering public records, the sector was quite fluid and many Places of Deposit held both public and private records.
- 9.3 JJ advised that the working relationships with Places of Deposit and Arm's Length Bodies was slightly different, although both were expected to meet accreditation standards.
- 9.4 ARo advised that many Places of Deposit had been seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the museum and gallery sector, around 95% of staff had been furloughed.

Many of these organisations were experiencing financial pressures and there was likely to be a loss of staff overall in the long run.

- 9.5 The National Archives continues to monitor and support Places of Deposit, working to keep local records in the community or moved to suitable alternatives, where necessary.
- 9.6 The Forum welcomed the briefing paper and suggested that it be shared with the wider Council for information.

Action by: AB

10. Any Other Business

- 10.1 Forum members were advised that The National Archives had recently been subject to its first conditional exemption claim.
- 10.2 The Forum expressed their thanks to The National Archives for continuing to support the Forum through the COVID-19 pandemic and for arranging a successful virtual meeting.
- 10.3 AB provided an update on secretariat changes. The Forum expressed their thanks to Trish Humphries for her interim support to the Forum.
- 10.4 There being no further business, the meeting was closed.

Date of next meeting: 25 September 2020