Title: **User Advisory Group**

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 5th March 2019

Location: The Swan Room, Kew

Attendees:

**Staff**
- Steve Burgess (SB) – Head of Exhibitions (item 6)
- Sarah Leggett (SL) – Marketing Manager (item 7)
- Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) – Director, Public Engagement (Chair)
- Julie Taylor (JT) – Head of Marketing (item 4)
- Ailsa Vigrass (AV) – Personal Assistant (Notes)
- Sam Whaley (SW) – Head of Chief Executive’s Office (item 3)

**Delegates**
- Sue Adams (SA) – Independent Researchers
- Carol Beardmore (CB) – County/External Archives
- Kristina Bedford (KB) – Map Room Users
- Nigel Browne-Davies (NBD) – Equality and Diversity
- Adam Chambers (AC) – Map Room Users
- Stephen Daglish (SD) – On line Users
- Martin Farr (MF) – Academic Users
- Angela Graham (AG) – County/External Archives
- Francis Howcutt (FH) – Family History Societies
- Sophie Kay (SK) – Diversity and Inclusion
- Will Reid (WR) – Diversity and Inclusion
- Anne Samson (AS) – On site Personal Interest Users
- Camilla von Massenbach (CvM) – Online Family Historians

**Apologies**
- Howard Llewellyn (HL) – Equality and Diversity
- Geoff Monks (GM) – Academic Users
- Lee Oliver (LO) – Head of Venue Management and Services
- David Shiels (DS) – Early Academic Careers Researchers
1 Minutes, matters arising and general updates

1.1 The minutes of the 4th December 2018 were approved.

1.2 COS thanked those delegates whose last meeting this was, for their contribution to the work of UAG.

1.3 There will be no further User Forum meetings; instead users may raise questions or concerns via UAG members.

2 Recruitment

2.1 A campaign is underway to recruit four delegates to UAG to represent academics, onsite personal interest, student users and early career academics with the intention they are in place for the next meeting in June. CvM had used the buddy scheme which she felt was helpful for new members although she didn’t make full use of it herself. It was reassuring to know there was someone to call on if needed.

3 New Strategy (SW)

3.1 ‘Archives Inspire’ concludes in March and TNA’s framework agreement with its sponsor, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport requires TNA to seek Ministerial agreement for its strategic priorities every four years. A series of conversations with colleagues and stakeholders focusing on where TNA should be in 2030 have been held and the conclusions from these agreed with the Board and Executive Team. Three key aims have been articulated for TNA as a 21st national archive: To become The Inclusive Archive (building trust and breaking barriers), The Entrepreneurial Archive (realising value, opening out the collection) and The Disruptive Archive (rethinking practice, increasing agility, developing new skills and leading on the digital challenge). Dialogue with DCMS is now underway and it is hoped to launch the strategy in March.

3.2 MF asked if benchmarking against international archives had been undertaken. SW advised that the differing legislative context and TNA’s unique model makes this challenging. That said, Jeff James has shared the draft strategy with his international peers who have responded positively.

3.3 KB commended the ‘Disruptive’ objective specifically with a view to leading local archives facing challenges of fewer resources, reduced hours etc. SW confirmed that the new strategy would link into the aims of ‘Archives Unlocked’ and TNA’s work with the sector.

3.4 AS and CvM commended the ‘Inclusive’ goal as part of an increasing focus on engaging with overseas archives, especially as a means of sharing and exploiting digital intelligence and aiming to embrace the range of diverse groups in the UK.

3.5 FH suggested that a focus of the strategy should be to increase public engagement by communicating content. Discovery could be a key tool in this and used as an example to commercial partners and local archives.

3.6 COS will ask a member of the Licensing team to attend a future meeting to update the group on work in this area.

3.7 AC asked for more detail on what the ‘Disruptive’ theme would involve. SW emphasised the scale of the digital challenge, and the need for TNA to rethink its practice to meet it as set out in our Digital Strategy. This has dramatic implications for everything we do imagining ourselves as the ‘disruptive’ archive is a helpful way to think about and approach these challenges.
3.8 WR highlighted the lack of funding that many local archives are facing; they would benefit from coaching in how to fund initiatives. CvM agreed there was a risk of an increasing gap between the digital future and archives with older interfaces for their catalogue index. KB pointed to the search functions of commercial sites which link to other collections as an option for TNA in future.

4. Brand (JT)

4.1 The launch of ‘Archives Inspire’ and ‘Archives for Everyone’ has provided the opportunity for a brand review. TNA has changed as an organisation over the last four years but this is not reflected in its brand, look or logo. The project has a tight deadline of 3 months so as to meet funding protocols. A tender was sent to leading design agencies for their bids and TNA was delighted to receive 38 submissions of which 6 were selected to present. The winning bid was submitted by Hemingway Design (HD) co-founded by Wayne Hemingway.

4.2 Staff engagement has been a key feature of the review; HD has met with over 17 stakeholders and an all staff survey (which attracted 146 responses) and workshop has been held. This input has fed back into HD’s report which will be presented to ET next week with a subsequent presentation to the Board to enable sign off by the end of the month. Subject to approval new brand guidelines will be issued and phased in to permit materials to be updated over time.

4.3 CvM asked if changes to the website were planned. JT advised that the project team are working with Digital colleagues to enable the visual identity of the website to be updated to enable public participation in a clearer way. A ‘mix and match’ approach will enable the best of the website to be retained.

4.4 AS asked if the new concept had been tested externally. JT advised that it will be offered to critical friends to review and UAG would be an invaluable ambassador in promoting it both with regional archives and those new to using archives.

4.5 The project’s tight timeline did not permit a review of TNA’s name. There was a discussion around the use of ‘The National Archives’ for other UK and overseas archives and whether TNA should use a different name to distinguish it. JT advised that TNA’s name is prestigious and for authenticity it is important that it is the same both internally and externally. However a strapline could be used for international audiences supported by house style guidelines.

5. Cold war programme (SB)

5.1 The Keeper’s Gallery is being fitted out for this exhibition opening on 4th April, a UK centric view of the events from the end of WW2 to the collapse of the Berlin Wall. On entry the visitor will pick up an ID card from a table introducing key personnel in a nuclear bunker. A highlight will be a display of Churchill’s ‘naughty document’ annotating the division of Europe with Stalin and Roosevelt.

5.2 A section on ‘Britain and the Bomb’ will show government correspondence relating to the ethics and rationale for the acquisition of nuclear power. Also included will be a document display on ‘war gaming’ and Government role playing in the event of a nuclear strike, showing the management and communications structures and a matrix for regional power centres. Included will be mock ups of newspapers and a speech to be given by the Queen.

5.3 A section on ‘Spies and Traitors’ will provide case studies based on MI5 papers for 3 UK spies: Klaus Fuchs, Commander Lionel Crabbe and Anthony Blunt.

5.4 ‘Governing from the Bunker’ will show how government plans for continued functioning and an above ground recreation would show the strategy for a Civil Defence League and communications designed to maintain morale.
5.5 A film featuring Dame Stella Rimington, historian Dominic Sandbrook and Mark Dunton of CEE will be available to watch in a screening area.

5.6 A 1980’s living room has been recreated designed to show the ‘Cold War at Home’. This will include more positive stories from this time including cultural exchanges and the Olympic Games. Also included will be personal loans from staff of popular culture items highlighting the ‘wallpaper of menace’.

5.7 CvM suggested that any accompanying information sheet includes suggestions for further research including where records are open. SB confirmed this would be taken into account.

5.8 A creation of an immersive ‘spy experience’ is being explored – sensitive to balancing the aim of informing and entertaining against the adult and personal content.

6. Sunday opening (SL)

6.1 As a trial, the ground floor only will be open to the public on the first Sunday of every month from April to November with the aim of encouraging visitors from the local community. There will be a programme of activities linked to the Cold War exhibition and front of house staff will greet and guide first time visitors.

6.2 The ground floor will also be open on Saturday 25th and Monday 27th May (the weekend of the Spring Bank Holiday). There will be outdoor activities in the grounds for families focusing on arts and crafts.

6.3 KB asked if the trial of extended hours for researchers had been successful. SL advised that it had not increased the number of visitors although existing visitors had stayed for longer. Unfortunately on this basis it was not viable to continue.

6.4 AC recommended that improving signage to indicate that records could be accessed to increase public awareness of the facility. COS to take forward.

6.5 KB asked if there were any plans to improve the children’s play area. SL advised there will be an upgrade in the next few weeks. There are also plans underway to provide an immersive family experience along the lines of a treasure trail and provision of a free family fun pack.

7. Delegate submitted items:

7.1 Car Park Security (AS)
Signage reminding users not to leave valuables on display has been improved. There was one reported vehicle break-in 2018 which was the first that has been reported for several years. There have been less issues of late and TNA works closely with the local Safer Neighbourhood Team from the Metropolitan Police.

7.2 Distinguishing Discovery records not held at TNA (AS)
This is being looked at by the Findability team as part of their improvements schedule. Their full response is given below per COS:

‘As I’m sure [UAG] know, we receive lots of insights about Discovery and also conduct UX research. When somebody provides a useful insight about the way Discovery is or isn’t working, we assess the impact of that problem (how many people it’s affecting, how exactly it’s impacting them) and what the possible solution might be and then we prioritise it to make sure we’re working on problems that makes the most sense to resolve now. Right now, the Findability team are working on design of the search bar (we’ve learned that useful search tools are completely
hidden to some users, which means they often call up and ask to be walked through a problem instead, which then has a business impact). Evidently the point about clarifying archive location is also important because it could result in wasted trips or orders, but the solution isn’t as easy here – it could be that we need to amend the way search results show, or it could be that we need to change the delivery options, for example, and we need to think about how that works onsite/offsite, on mobile etc. So we do understand the importance of it and will get to it. We are also working towards having a roadmap we can share with stakeholders so they can see where they’re insights are in the prioritisation pyramid and why, which we think might really help with helping people feel their insights are being considered and actioned.

7.3 Car park charging and visitor numbers (KB)
The introduction of charging has had no noticeable effect on visitor numbers. What we have seen is the end to use of our car park by those who should not have been using it.

7.4 Reading room power sockets and card swipes (KB)
All the swipes have been cleaned and checked by Dave Priest. Longer term, Dave is looking at alternatives the current swipe readers. Lee Oliver is working with Estates regarding a full check of all reading room power outlets (a substantial task).

7.5 Reduced ordering hours (KB)
It would be impractical to try and identify which records might be suitable for inclusion in such a scheme (i.e. specifically for the Medieval/Early Modern collections) and it would probably only serve to confuse the majority of users. However, Bulk Orders might be an option for checking runs of sequential records.

8. AOB:

8.1 Removal of TV from ground floor cafeteria (COS)
This is on a permanent basis in order to improve the overall ambience. Visitors primarily check for weather and news on their mobile devices.

8.2 George Orwell segment on BBC1 ‘The One Show’ (WR)
This will be aired on the evening of Tuesday 12th March. WR to circulate details.

8.3 Next Meeting; 11th June, 12.00 – 14.30

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