Title: User Advisory Group
Date of Meeting: 12th June 2018
Location: Swan Room, Kew

Attendees:

Staff
Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) – Director, Public Engagement (Chair)
Roger Kershaw (RK) – Head of Strategic Operations and Volunteers, CEE (Item 3 only)
Chris Mumby (CM) – Head of Commercial Services (Item 4 only)
Susannah Baccardax (SBx) – Head of Corporate Programmes (Item 4 only)
Paul Davies (PD) – Director of Operations – (Item 5 only)
Mark Newman (MN) – Head of Estates - (Item 5 only)
Steve Burgess (SB) – Head of Events and Exhibitions (Item 6 only)
Lee Oliver (LO) – Head of Venue Management and Services
Catherine Hill (CH) – PA to Caroline Ottaway-Searle (notes)

Delegates
Kristina Bedford (KB) - Map Room Users
Jacqui Kirk (JK) - Independent Researchers
Anne Samson (AS) - On site Personal Interest Users
Adam Chambers (AC) - Map Room Users
Nigel Browne-Davies (NBD) – Equality and Diversity
Carol Beardmore (CB) - County/External Archives
Howard Llewellyn (HL) - Equality and Diversity
Camilla von Massenbach (CvM) - Online Family Historians
Francis Howcutt (FH) - Family History Societies
Geoff Monks (GM) - Academic Users
Martin Farr (MF) - Academic Users

Apologies
Angela Graham (AG) - County/External Archives
David Shiels (DS) - Early Academic Careers Researchers
Stephen Daglish (SD) - On line Users
1 Minutes, matters arising and general updates

1.1 Angela Graham did attend the last meeting on 6th March. The minutes on the website will be amended to show this.

1.2 COS thanked the UAG members for their condolences following the unexpected death of Foluke Abiona in March.

1.3 The matter of a more tailored video for new readers is still outstanding. LO will follow up. HL observed that there were sometimes long queues at reader registration and he asked if there was a more streamlined way of renewing a ticket, e.g. by phone. LO replied that this was not possible as TNA still needs to see valid ID. The British Library and other archives also have similar systems and it is good practice.

1.4 KB reminded LO to reinstate the State Papers on Line notices near the Reading Room computers.

1.5 HL asked if a paper beforehand explaining why changes are necessary would have been a better way of conveying information at a recent User Forum meeting. LO replied that he felt explaining in person was more effective than paper.

1.6 LO said there was no update on the Cornwall Record Office moving date.

1.7 KB said that feedback from users was very positive on the advanced orders citation print out.

2 Recruitment – COS

2.1 Recruitment was discussed. Some members of the group are due to step down in the coming months and TNA will conduct a recruitment campaign for new members. COS asked if the group would benefit from a schools representative.

2.2 CB thought that this was a good idea and that TNA should think in terms of an educational trust/education outreach organisation, which would have wider reach (e.g the Brilliant Club or Sutton Trust). She suggested COS speak to David Jones at the Brilliant Club.

2.4 CB observed that the first term of the academic year is busy and so TNA should consider conducting two rounds, to attract different types of Users at different times. It was decided to conduct one round in July for new independent users and on site users for a September start, and another in the New Year for academic users.

3 Volunteering Policy - Roger Kershaw – Head of Strategic Operation and Volunteers for CEE

3.1 TNA has had volunteers on site and off for the past 25 years. Currently TNA has 130 on site volunteers and approximately 300 – 450 off site. There are 25-30 on site projects involving cataloguing and preservation tasks.

3.3 In 2012, TNA created the User Participation Governance Board, which continues to help promote volunteering. There has been a refresh of the volunteering policy and it was published on the TNA website in April 2018. The refreshed policy addresses four areas for enhanced volunteering opportunities.
3.4 TNA aims to improve flexibility for volunteers with smaller, bite-sized opportunities. Currently it takes 8 weeks to obtain security clearance, which is an obstacle to accommodating people who may only have a short window of time available. The TNA IT department is looking at developing on an online platform, for volunteer interaction, similar to one created by the Library and Archives of Canada.

3.5 TNA wants to build a more diverse group of volunteers (lower age groups and other ethnicities are underrepresented) by offering a broader programme of activities.

3.6 TNA will put volunteers at the heart of the business by acting on the feedback of the annual survey; developing volunteers’ skills, building an internet platform, publishing blogs devoted to volunteers and committing to National Volunteers’ week. TNA has also repackaged the in-house staff magazine for staff and volunteers.

3.7 TNA will extend volunteering to all parts of the business, with a culture shift to use volunteers more widely. This will include an accurate volunteers’ skills audit and an external range of activities volunteers support.

3.8 JK asked how TNA aims to recruit younger volunteers in the 30-40’s age group. RK replied that TNA will extend the range of things it asks volunteers to do, e.g. What’s On events and Open House. TNA is mindful of issues around safeguarding and is also working with the Education Department around appropriate policies. TNA will also identify activities that people can do online, potentially attractive to people with caring responsibilities.

3.9 CvM suggested a general accreditation programme that will show that volunteers are qualified to volunteer generally. AC felt that this would be good for “professional volunteers”, but not for ‘sporadic’ volunteers.

3.10 COS requested any other suggestions to be sent to the UAG mailbox.

4. 1921 Census - Chris Mumby (CM) – Head of Commercial Services, and Susannah Baccardax (SBx) – Head of Corporate Programmes

4.1 For genealogists and historians, the 1921 Census for England, Wales and Scotland will be a key source of information to support family or social history research. Since 1801, every household in England and Wales has been required by law to respond to a series of questions about the household and people within it. The result has been the production of an unparalleled source of consistent and comparable information about the population, household characteristics, housing and occupations. The 1921 census is a household census taken in June 1921, and paints a picture of the UK population nearly one hundred years ago. It holds information on every household, vessel, institution and overseas residencies that were part of England and Wales in 1921.

4.2 The 1921 Census of England and Wales is held by the Office for National Statistics and will be permanently preserved by the National Archives. The records are subject to the Statistics and Registration Act. The census records are kept confidential for 100 years before being made available to the public, therefore the earliest publication of these records will be January 2022.
5. Car parking – Paul Davies (PD), Director of Operations and Mark Newman (MN), Head of Estates

5.1 The car park charging scheme has been put on hold while TNA deals with operational issues. The intention is to launch the payment scheme after the 1st July. TNA is still considering whether or not to issue penalty notices. The scheme will be reviewed after 6 months in operation.

5.2 CvM suggested that the car park signage and information on the website should be reinforced.

6. Suffrage Season – Steve Burgess (SB) – Head of Events and Exhibitions

6.1 Events and Exhibitions are both areas growing in ambition and scale. TNA is building a seasonal approach to support events.

6.2 Suffrage Season has showcased TNA records in a deep and detailed story in the exhibition, launched in May. Surveys show that 50% of the audience are new to TNA. TNA showed the film “Suffragette” in May with a document display, collaborated with the National Trust on the “Suffragette City” immersive experience and role play event, and was a finalist for a Medea award for “Suffrage Tales”, a youth project stop motion animation.

6.3 SB took the attendees on a tour of the exhibition.

Action: SB will email CB with the names of the people in the exhibition film.

7. Delegate Submitted Items

7.1 Late night opening.
The initiative was set up to collect data to see if TNA would attract the late night working research community. KB and JK had heard complaints about the 4pm cut off for document ordering. JK observed that readers should be encouraged to plan ahead for their visit but accepted that this was not always possible.
AC asked why it was not possible to queue an order. LO replied that under the DORIS system, when an order is placed the clock start ticking. AS suggested it might help if readers could put what time they expected to be in the building in on the order form. This would prevent advance orders blocking up the system – they could be produced in time but stored somewhere else.

7.2 Upstairs café
AS asked when there would be a drinking water dispenser in the upstairs café. Also she had observed that it often ran out of sandwiches.
LO replied that there were plumbing issues regarding the installation of drinking water and he would feedback the sandwiches issue to the caterer.

7.3 Cleaning of computers and keyboards
LO has fed back to the facilities cleaning team JK’s written comments about dirty and sticky desks and keyboards

7.4 Bag search point at entry to 1st floor reading room
LO has fed back JK’s comments about security at the entry to the reading room to the Security Dept.
7.5 Broken keyboards/mice/bar code readers
LO has fed back JK’s comments about non functioning computers to the IT Dept.

7.6 Operation of blinds on sunny days
JK had relayed the request that staff draw down the window blinds on sunny days LO said that readers should approach staff and ask them draw down the blinds.

7.7 Points of thanks
AC thanked TNA for stocking self-propelling rubberless pencils in the shop.
AS complimented TNA on its involvement in the BBC series “Cunk on Britain” for which Dr Jess Nelson got good reviews.

8. Next meetings

8.1 New Members Induction Day, Tuesday 29th September, 11.00 – 16.00
Members will meet different heads of Departments in the organisation.
Action: COS will send out an organisation chart beforehand.

8.1 User Advisory Group Meeting, Tuesday 2nd October, 12.00 – 14.30
CB asked that LO provide an update on the CARN (County Archive Research Network) ticket replacement project and the new Head of Archives Sector Development.
KB asked for an item on collection care and how manuscripts are preserved.
Any suggestions for agenda items should be sent to the UAG mailbox.