Title: User Advisory Group

Date of Meeting: 14 March 2017

Location: The National Archives, Kew

Attendees:

Staff
Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) – Director of Public Engagement (Chair)
Lee Oliver (LMO) – Head of Quality and Excellence Department
John Sheridan (JS) - Digital Director (for item 5 only)
Gary Thorpe (GT) – Licensing Manager (for item 4 only)
Dean Hanlon (DH) – Licensing Projects Coordinator (for item 4 only)
Foluke Abiona (FA) – Accessibility and User Engagement Manager, Quality and Excellence Department
Joanna Robinson (JCR) – Customer Support Officer (Minutes), Quality and Excellence Department

Delegates
Geoff Monks (GM) – Academic Users
Nell Darby (ND) – Online Users
Margaret O’Sullivan (MO’S) – County/External Archives
Carol Beardmore (CB) – County/External Archives
Kristina Bedford (KB) – Map Room Users
Adam Chambers (AC) – Map Room Users
Anne Samson (AS) – On site Personal Interest Users
David Shiels (DS) – Early Academic Career Researchers
Jacqui Kirk (JK) – Independent Researchers
Howard Llewellyn (HL) – Equality and Diversity
Camilla von Massenbach (CvM) – Online Family Historians
Francis Howcutt (FH) – Family History Societies

Apologies
Martin Farr (MF) - Academic Users
Nigel Browne-Davies (NBD) – Equality and Diversity
Sarah Pearson (SP) – On site Personal Interest Users

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<th>Item</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Minutes, Introducing new delegate, Matters Arising and general updates</td>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>COS welcomed all to the meeting. She introduced CvM to the group. CvM spoke briefly to the group about her experience within archives, and explained that she is a trustee and chairman of Free UK Genealogy, the charity behind FreeBMD, FreeREG, and FreeCEN. She also spoke about her interest in the development of open access data.</td>
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| 1.2 | (Item 1.1) HL asked what Jo Pugh’s PhD thesis was. CB asked if Jo would be willing to come to UAG and speak about his thesis. COS said we could ask Jo about this.  
**Post-meeting note: The title of Jo Pugh’s thesis award is ‘Archives and audiences: interacting with records in the virtual space’, and the ultimate title of the thesis is likely to be ‘Information journeys in archives’. Jo has said it is likely he will be attending a future UAG to talk about Manage Your Collections, and would be happy to speak to delegates then.** |
| 1.3 | (1.7) COS said UAG delegates KB, AS and AC, now have stands available to them to place on their desks when working onsite, to identify them as UAG representatives. KB said the stands are perfect. |
| 1.4 | (3.4) JK asked if there is a date set for delegates to give feedback on the Manage Your Collections programme. COS said there is not but she will get in touch with Kate Wheeler. |
| 1.5 | (4.1) HL asked what the white paper is that was referred to in the item, and if it is something which TNA is under pressure to adhere to. COS said this is the [Culture White Paper](#) from the Department for Culture Media and Sport, which covers cultural institutions' role in education. She said TNA’s values are aligned with the themes of the White Paper; however we are not under pressure to adhere to the paper. |
| 1.6 | (Item 5.2) HL asked if a reader has a specific document reference to a request, do they still have to pay the initial £8.24 fee? He gave the example of someone wishing to order multiple inventories, which he said can be of greatly differing lengths and therefore it would be expensive to pay the fee each time on top of ordering copies of the documents. LO said the price reflects the effort involved in finding the documents, identifying the appropriate copying process, and then counting the number of pages. He suggested an alternative would be to order the originals and photograph them which is free of charge. COS added that TNA has 200 kilometres of shelving, and the record copying pages on the website have a video to show what is involved in retrieving a document for copying. LO said that the price will be coming down on 1 April, and will continue to reflect the policy of cost recovery. |
| 1.7 | (6.6) HL asked if the security rules are going to be published. |
| 1.8 | LO said the rules had not changed since the new changes to what can be brought into the Start Here area, but are now focused on what 'can' be brought into the reading rooms rather than on what 'can't'. |
|   | (8.5) LO advised delegates that he had spoken to Audrey Collins about this; she  

advised that there are a number of genealogy related events on Twitter, some of which are better than others.

CB commented that TNA has to be careful of what associations are made on social media.

(8.6) LO said that the ‘Meet the Keeper’ event will now be held in May. He said it will have the same format as before, with an onsite session with Jeff James in the restaurant, but that the online event will be separate and follow afterwards.

ND asked if UAG members can continue to be sent the printed TNA events brochure.

LO agreed that they could.

COS spoke about the UAG recruitment process. There are currently two vacant posts: Student Users representative and Independent Researchers representative. MO’S and ND will be stepping down from their respective roles as County/External Archives representative and Online Users representative in June which will leave two more vacancies. COS said we have learnt lessons from previous issues we had with the timing of the recruitment process. She then introduced FA to explain more about the current recruitment schedule to delegates.

FA said the recruitment campaign will be launched this week, with posters in the building and an advertisement on the website, as well as an advertisement going out to those on the main TNA e-newsletter mailing list. It will also be sent out to those on the ASD newsletter and Research e-newsletter mailing list. The campaign is due to run for three weeks with a deadline of 7 April; applications will be sifted through from 10 April with successful and unsuccessful applicants notified at the latest by 19 April. We hope the new delegates will then be able to attend the June 2017 UAG meeting.

JK said that as her term was also near its end, it might be a good idea to keep note of reserve candidates. She added that she hopes to be able to recruit some candidates herself at the Who Do You Think You Are? Live 2017 event in April.

COS said where we can we do keep a list of possible representatives in reserve.

COS thanked MO’S and ND for their input to UAG during their tenure, and thanked them for the tremendous contribution they have made to the group.

2. UAG: Overall Effectiveness

2.1 COS thanked delegates for participating in the UAG: Overall Effectiveness survey. She said the feedback has shown that UAG is going well on the whole, and fulfilling its purpose. She said that three themes had been drawn from the survey results, themes which we want to utilise to build on the positive comments received, but also use to act on the challenges highlighted in the feedback. She said that previously, we had an ‘ad hoc’ approach to gathering feedback from delegates, but that we now want to start taking a more methodical approach.

COS said we are using the SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities Aspirations and Results) method to facilitate this new approach. She explained that SOAR builds on aspirations and gives a constructive way to move forward, and will enable us to make better use of the resources and the strengths we have within UAG. She
explained that for this part of the meeting, delegates would be divided into three
groups, with subsets of questions within the following three themes, to discuss
their thoughts and bring them back to the whole group.

2.2 LO thanked delegates for their feedback and explained more about the themes
developed from the survey results.

1) **Theme 1 – New UAG delegates, and ways of working.** This theme asks how
delegates interact with and support each other, how UAG works together, and
what was most helpful to new delegates when ‘learning the ropes’. LO said several
survey comments emphasised that it can take around three years to get used to
being a UAG delegate.

2) **Theme 2 – Networking, and representing a community.** This theme asked
what opportunities and networks there are in delegates’ user communities, what
can be learnt from them, and how delegates can best represent their user
communities for UAG. LO noted there were comments in the survey that there had
been instances in the past where UAG delegates represented themselves, rather
than their user community.

3) **Theme 3 – Early engagement with strategic issues.** This theme asks what
work - positive examples there are of how UAG engages early with TNA strategic
decision making, how UAG can be more involved with strategic issues, and what
that would look like. It also asks what UAG should do about representing different
user communities with regards to operational issues. LO said there were survey
comments which emphasised the importance to delegates of giving earlier,
strategic input to TNA decision making.

**Feedback from discussion**

**Theme 3 ‘Early engagement with strategic issues’ discussion group**
This group consisted of CB, HL, AC and FH

2.3 AC said that the group:
- discussed the perception that there is a ‘top down’ attitude from TNA
  which needs to change.
- felt that TNA could work on tapping into the expertise of regional archivists
  and academics.
- would like to see an attempt to make a list of users who are hard to
  capture – developing mailing lists and compiling lists of twitter users, and
  using TNA as a way to communicate with hard to reach groups in order to
  ensure that different user communities are represented.
- suggested the possibility of a prominent UAG contact page so people can
  easily find out how to make contact with UAG representatives.
- suggested a UAG blog.
- suggested onsite boxes specifically for TNA users to drop messages for
  the UAG representatives.
- discussed the importance of delegates communicating with each other
  more outside the meetings, and also more communication between
  delegates and TNA staff.

2.4 GM said he liked the idea of a facility for academics to be able to talk to users of
TNA, for example on a blog spot.
2.5 CB said there would need to be some training in place for this. She said UAG could collaborate on this and work on different aspects, such as legal aspects, and have a designated moderator.

2.6 COS asked if they would want this to be hosted on the UAG page.

AC said they would. He added that they want this kind of facility to be something that is very visible – not something that users need to look for.

2.7 HL asked if this could be sent through on the suggestion list.

COS said it could, and that it would be useful to have this. She suggested that delegates might spend time in this meeting and before the next one developing these ideas.

**Theme 2 ‘Networking, and representing a community’ discussion group**

This group consisted of DS, KB, AS, and CvM

2.8 The group had discussed the need to build strong relationships and networks with existing societies and groups. They suggested that delegates could pool their mailing lists and in conjunction with TNA develop bespoke mailers, as well as utilising Facebook and Twitter. They spoke about the importance of reaching out to organisations and archives that may feel isolated or are difficult to reach, and how to identify more groups and societies to contact and seek their views.

2.9 CvM said that the group had a positive experience of engaging with TNA. They had discussed issues around the availability of online representatives and agreed that a lot of work would need to be done outside UAG meetings.

2.10 HL said the group only meet four times a year, but there is a lot of information that delegates need to be able to communicate with each other about.

2.11 COS said that we are aware the delegates give up their time to come and attend the meetings, for which TNA is very grateful.

2.12 AS said that academics at TNA work with the volunteer team, which works well and helps the delivery of projects running here.

2.13 CvM said engaging early with issues is vitally important. She said that the Great Wharton Project is an example of what happens when delegates have not been able to engage with projects at an early stage, and is an example of how not to do things.

2.14 MO’S said that Great Wharton was very illustrative of a project focussing on the means of a project, and not the end product.

2.15 AS said sometimes UAG delegates were not aware of fellow delegates’ strengths. Added to this, she said that TNA staff don’t seem to be aware that UAG delegates have strengths which TNA staff can draw on. She added that if TNA staff believe the UAG is akin to the User Forum, and has a similar purpose, they will have no way of understanding the strengths of UAG delegates.

2.16 HL suggested that the UAG agenda should be published at an earlier date so that delegates are able to prepare more fully for the meeting.

COS suggested that we could make an annual skeleton agenda available to delegates.
AS suggested that it would be useful to know what part of the business plan is going to be focused on at any particular time.

CvM said that licensing is a strategic issue which TNA should get more involved in.

CB said that global history is going to be a major area of interest.

CvM said efforts need to be made to ensure communication is made with groups who are not already represented at UAG.

COS said that time for strategic questions has previously been taken up with what might be considered personal or operational issues, which are now being handled more effectively outside the meetings.

AS suggested that perhaps operational issues can be emailed and dealt with between meetings, and a basic minute included in the next meeting minutes.

Theme 1 – New UAG delegates, and ways of working
This group consisted of GM, MO’S, JK, ND, and FH.

JK said apart from CvM all the delegates had served for quite a long time, and had all agreed that when they started in UAG it was quite a challenge. She added that the group has changed a lot since its inception.

JK said she had initiated the delegates’ packs, which has been helpful, but which the group agrees needs expanding. She said it currently covers administrative matters and it needs to include more information about the wider role of UAG delegates. Suggestions for the pack include short bios of delegates, details on the organisational structure of TNA, and an emphasis given that UAG delegates are representing a community, not themselves or their particular concerns.

COS asked what they had found helpful and what other apparatus we can offer as support.

JK said that delegates need to support themselves. The group thought it would be better to scrap the official pre-meet and instead delegates could meet up for coffee beforehand. JK said they had met with each other in the restaurant that morning and found that was a useful opportunity to get to know each other, something which is quite difficult for delegates to find opportunities to do.

JK said they thought a ‘behind the scenes’ tour for UAG members would not only be a useful way for them to get to know TNA but could also be used as a team-building exercise.

ND suggested that it is far more useful for delegates to get the opportunity to participate in workshops like this today, rather than being ‘talked at’ about what is already happening or has happened at TNA. She said having practical tasks and group work makes participants feel valued and also helps them understand why things are being done, not just how they are being done.

HL suggested that tours of TNA for delegates would be extremely useful in helping delegates understand what different departments are up against.

JK said there is a two way process that needs to happen – in addition to delegates understanding more about TNA, staff need to be able to get to know UAG delegates. She said that it often feels that staff members who come to speak to
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<td>2.30</td>
<td>GM said that any opportunity for team building would be good. He also said he</td>
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<td>would advocate for delegates to be in some way matched with staff members</td>
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<td>within similar disciplines to promote another line of communication.</td>
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<td>2.31</td>
<td>CB said that many UAG delegates are academics with skills and specialities that</td>
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<td>could be utilised in new ways, and that there could be new opportunities to be</td>
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<td>discovered that have not yet been thought of – she said there are many ways TNA</td>
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<td>can exploit the skills that delegates have.</td>
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<td>2.32</td>
<td>JK then said that previously UAG had not been able to work that closely as a</td>
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<td>group or interact as much as they would have liked as they were all extremely</td>
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<td>busy.</td>
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<td>2.33</td>
<td>COS asked how TNA can help the group to communicate with each other more.</td>
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<td>AS said that she and JK have made a link with each other via Twitter. She</td>
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<td>suggested that delegates have a twitter account each, and follow and support</td>
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<td>each other that way. She said it would also help them to cross reference issues.</td>
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<td>JK said that delegates do need to meet as colleagues in order to build their</td>
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<td>relationships.</td>
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<td>COS said they can use the UAG group meetings as an opportunity for discussion.</td>
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<td>2.34</td>
<td>JK then spoke about how UAG can evaluate its success. She said it is difficult to</td>
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<td>think of a particularly effective measure. She suggested that attendance of the</td>
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<td>meetings was one way, or by recording how many delegate submitted items have</td>
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<td>been implemented.</td>
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<td>2.35</td>
<td>MO’S said she thought that the particularly high attendance record of UAG</td>
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<td>delegates could be a good measure of how successful the group is.</td>
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<td>2.36</td>
<td>CB said that as a new UAG delegate she felt the meetings could get bogged down</td>
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<td>with cataloguing and digitisation matters, the full context new delegates may not</td>
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<td>be able to understand. She said it would be really helpful if someone could explain to delegates the context when matters of this kind are addressed. She also said it would be good if we could remember that UAG delegates have a variety of skills, so explanations of this kind could be very helpful to a variety of delegates.</td>
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<td>2.37</td>
<td>GM asked if Jeff James, the Keeper, would be able to attend UAG on a regular</td>
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<td>basis. He said it would be good if he is reminded of UAG and what it is doing.</td>
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<td>COS said Jeff would be keen to be more involved and keep up with UAG.</td>
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<td>2.38</td>
<td>ND praised FA’s work on behalf of UAG, and other delegates added their</td>
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<td>appreciation of FA’s unfailing helpfulness and her administration of the group.</td>
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### 3 Reading Room changes

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<td>3.1</td>
<td>LO said that TNA is still in the midst of construction. He said we are grateful for the continued tolerance of the public while work is carried out. The work should be finished in mid-May, and the first scheduled event is for 6 June 2017. This event will be a day for TNA volunteers.</td>
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### 3.2
AS asked if there could be arrows directing readers to the enquiry desk.
LO said that her point was noted.

### 4 Delegate submitted items:

#### 4.1 Ancestry/Fold 3 update
GT said he and DH had come to address JK’s comments about Fold3, Ancestry’s military website, on which Ancestry has now made certain military records available. JK and GT had corresponded about JK’s concerns that whereas users had previously been able to access certain military series, including WO 97 and WO 120, via Ancestry subscription, they were now unable to and instead were prompted by Ancestry to sign up to Fold3 in order to view these documents.

GT explained that any images or transcriptions that were previously available to view on Ancestry remain available on Ancestry, and it is only newly licensed and published content where the images are only available on Fold3. No databases, images or transcriptions have been removed from Ancestry in favour of Fold3 and there is no suggestion that will be the case. In cases such as WO 116, this was only ever available on Ancestry as an index, with the images and transcription on Fold3 from the outset.

GT then explained that of WO 97 and WO 120, some images had been published on Ancestry, and these are still available to view there. From 13 October 2016, Ancestry UK decided to upload all new military records to their military specific website, Fold3. He said the Ancestry index directs you to the Fold3 portal, where you can view the images for a fee. GT said The National Archives’ agreement with Ancestry allows them to make content available on Fold3, in the same way that any new online publisher who we had licensed material to would provide access via their specific website.

#### 4.2 JK said it feels like people are aggrieved by not being able to access material they previously had access to. She said TNA’s reputation is suffering because it is being associated with the negative feelings towards Ancestry.

#### 4.3 KB said she had received a lot of negative feedback from people who believed they were unable to view previously accessible material at TNA. She said she had feedback from someone who had come to TNA specifically to view military records on Ancestry and had been unable to do so, rather being instructed to pay for a license fee on the on-site terminal first.

#### 4.4 AS said she had photographs of documents she could previously see but which she is now unable to access.

In answer to the three previous points, GT said images TNA has licenced to Ancestry should be free to access at TNA. He was concerned to hear that people have been having difficulty viewing digitised documents onsite, and asked that users inform him what record series they have problems with. He re-iterated that no content had ben removed from Ancestry but said that if the perception is that people are being treated unfairly, Ancestry need to look at their communication to their customers to address this –TNA will talk to Ancestry about this matter. He added that TNA has only received two complaints about this matter; however he said an explanation that access to images of some military records was available via Fold3 rather than Ancestry would be appropriate.

*Post-meeting note: Please note that access to Fold3 is available in TNA Reading*
4.5 JK suggested that something is put in the research guides about how to access these series on Fold3. She added that when you are directed to view the documents on Fold3, you are not actually able to view them, and are not given clues as to how you can but are requested to sign up to Fold3.

DH said he would investigate this issue.

*Post-meeting note: DH tested and confirmed on 17 March 2017 that direct access to all TNA records on Fold3 is functioning correctly via Ancestry index search.*

4.6 JK asked what is going to happen to the WWI Service records – many archives and libraries are very worried about losing access to these.

GT said Ancestry will not be removing these from the Ancestry website. He continued that the records are also available on Fold3 but that are no plans for them to be removed from the Ancestry site.

4.7 CvM asked if GT knew if information is available about how users can find records on other sites.

GT said we can suggest to Ancestry that they can make clear to users that some records available on Fold3 are also available on Ancestry so that their existing subscribers are aware. However he said it is unlikely that Ancestry would wish to make users aware that there are other non-affiliated websites available which may hold the same material.

DH said that in future all military record series licensed to Ancestry will go to Fold3 but the indexes will still be available on Ancestry. He pointed out that if Fold3 were a separate site to Ancestry, users would have to subscribe to it anyway.

4.8 JK said that the previous incarnation of Fold3 was not of much use as it dealt with mainly American records.

DH agreed that it previously held mainly American records, but said it is now expanding to give access to more international records, including Australian and British.

DH then gave a demonstration of how to use Fold3.

4.9 JK commented that the process was very different to the search process on Ancestry.

4.10 CB asked how much control TNA has over how much licensed partners charge users.

GT replied that there is a contracted minimum entry level spend. He said TNA are talking to Ancestry about introducing a pay per view service on Fold3. If Ancestry wished to review their subscription fees they will talk to TNA but pointed out that they are a business and need to balance their profit with what they can expect users to be prepared to pay, and that it would not be in their interests to raise subscription rates hugely.

4.11 AS said that FO 371 on Adam Matthew’s site cannot be downloaded at TNA. She said when you try to access it gives a message saying ‘Visit Adam Matthew’. You
need to view each image and photograph it, rather than download the file, which is time-consuming.

GT suggested that it can be accessed through the e-library. He said it should be downloadable. However, he pointed out that it cannot be downloaded and sent to an email address, as this is not part of our agreement with Adam Matthew. Access is available onsite, and images can be printed, but not downloaded to email.

4.12 JK asked if the permission to download differs from company to company. She said you can download and send documents published by Cengage. She added that people want to download images and send them to themselves, so that they can keep and study these documents.

DH said you can download these documents.

AS said you can’t send them however.

GT said that in most cases access was available onsite only – users had the ability to photograph screens or to print out documents. Most online publishers providing access to digitised TNA records onsite do not provide a facility to log in to a personal account and therefore a user would not be able to download the records to that account. In addition at present personal email accounts cannot be logged into from the Reading Room PCs so it would not be possible to send documents to a personal email address. Cengage State Papers offer functionality to email a single page to one’s personal account but not whole items or pieces.

Restaurants issues

4.13 LO said that 21 extra chairs and three tables have been added to the restaurant.

AS suggested that the tables are separated to give more space. She also said that she has noticed that when research groups book the two long tables, they use one only, and don’t necessarily make much use of the second table. She suggested that perhaps they can be allocated the round tables instead.

LO said we will consider this suggestion.

4.14 CB said the glare from the zig-zag lights in the restaurant is too strong, and asked if they can be turned down.

LO said this is possible and we will look into doing so.

User Accessibility issues – location of noticeboard and wheelchair access among library shelves

4.15 AS said people were concerned that business cards were placed too high up in the notice board and therefore difficult for some people to be able to see.

LO said this was noted and we will ensure they are placed at a more easily viewable height.

4.16 HL enquired about how to use the new ‘press button’ lockers.

LO explained these are ‘safe combination’ lockers, where the user keys in a 4 digit code to lock. If the user forgets the code, security can unlock.

4.17 JK asked if there could be a poster explaining how the lockers are to be used. LO
LO said there are already directions on the lockers but we will look into providing further information. He added that the key lockers are being phased out.

4.18 AS asked if the gaps between the library shelves are wide enough for wheelchair users.

LO said that the stacks have 900mm gaps, which is compliant with the standards for wheelchair access.

**TNA attendance at WDYTYA? Live 2017**

4.19 LO said that there will be no TNA stand at WDYTYA? Live this year as we are not reaching any new audiences by attending; the WDYTYA event is largely attended by regulars who attend each year. He said there will however be TNA staff at some of the other stands at the event.

4.20 JK said she would like TNA to be more of a presence in the wider country; at present it is very much a London and South East based institution and she suggested that TNA encourage specialists to get out to other parts of the UK to attend or give talks at regional history festivals. She also said she had an invitation to pass on to TNA for an event at Warwick in 2018.

LO said we do a certain amount of non-South East based events and workshops, however he thanked JK for raising this point.

**TNA and Transport for London**

4.21 AS said she had been asked by a TNA user if TNA could ask Transport for London to introduce a rail stop nearer to the building in order to make access to the archive easier for the elderly and less mobile who travel by tube or overground.

LO said this issue has been raised before. He said Kew Gardens station currently handles 4.2 million passengers a year. With an estimated 40-50,000 of those passengers travelling to TNA by that route per year, TfL would not entertain such a request. He suggested that if the walk from Kew Gardens station is too far, an alternative route is to travel to Richmond station, and then use the R68 bus, which terminates on the perimeter of the TNA site.

5. **TNA’s Digital Strategy**

5.1 JS introduced himself to delegates and explained that he would be giving them an overview of the main themes in TNA's Digital Strategy. He said that the Digital Strategy expands on *Archives Inspire*, TNA’s four year plan for 2015-2019, which says that digital is our biggest challenge. He explained there is a big difference in the capability TNA needs to have between physical and digital records. Physical records are provided in a form that the archives can both preserve and produce to users. Digital records are 0s and 1s and the archives needs to make a sustained engineering effort to have the capability to both preserve and to present digital records.

He said our current approach to digital archiving borrowed ideas from our traditional approach as an archive of paper records, for example we currently catalogue digital records in the same way as we always have the paper record. This is what he called a ‘first generation digital archive’. TNA’s Digital Strategy has the ambition for TNA to become a ‘second generation digital archive’ which...
develops new archival practices which are designed for digital records.

He explained that the Digital Strategy sets out four types of value that the digital archive can offer to its users:

Preservation: this involves keeping digital records over time (by creating and checking them) and actively managing the capability to produce digital records.

Context: this involves capturing information about the record, who created it, when, why and how it was used. An important idea in the strategy is about how we manage uncertainty in the information we have about digital records.

Presentation: this involves providing access to digital records, accepting that producing a record and publishing a record are very different things to do. Digital archives need to manage a variety of publishing risks (copyright, defamation etc.) and will need to control how it produces records in relation to managing those risks. That means that on site access continues to be very important for digital records.

Enable Use: this involves helping researchers to compute over large numbers of digital records. Historical research is increasingly embracing data science and we need to enable research across large parts of the whole collection of digital information. There are significant issues with enabling use that we need to work through including legal constraints but also ethical and public acceptability considerations.

JS said the opportunities were immense. The new digital era is a game changer for archives and requires us to develop new archival practices.

5.2 CvM asked if TNA gets to define what we receive.

JS said departments are responsible for appraisal and selection of public records but we do have influence through the guidance and the training we provide. The Advisory Council on Public Records, an independent group that advises the Secretary of State under the Public Records Act, provides advice and oversight around the decision making. The shift to digital does impact the decision making around appraisal and selection. Born Digital means we need to develop thinking around what has historical value. For example Google Docs stores information about every change, each key stroke, as a document is created. It also stores information about who accessed the document and when. There is a question about how much of this information forms part of the record.

5.3 CB said that as it is now, 3-5% of the record is selected to be kept. Not all paper documents have been kept, so what is the outlook for the future – will we be limiting the preservation of digital documents?

JS said that Sir Hilary Jenkinson, the archival theorist, was concerned not to clutter archives with too much ‘stuff’. JS said that with digital archives it is not the volume that is the important consideration but the amount of variation within each record. If you have different data in different bytes, you need to have different ways to preserve the information.

5.4 CB asked how information in different formats can be maintained, for example old Apple documents can not be opened in more recent versions of programmes. Microsoft’s OneNote is more transferrable, but what will happen if Google Docs becomes extinct in ten years time? She suggested that JS talks with Melanie Beale at Loughborough University, who is looking at the possibilities for
preservation of metadata.

JS said it would be great to make the connection between TNA and other institutions about the digital record.

There followed a discussion on the work being carried out in universities and institutions on these matters.

5.5 HL asked about the problems of data corruption when accessioning digital records.

JS gave an example of emails with a zip file attachment which would not extract properly. As part of the preservation process we manually extracted the data from the attachment, keeping both the broken zip and the extracted content in the Digital Records Infrastructure.

5.6 CvM said that government departments are probably not keeping everything that is emailed. She said if not everything is kept you might lose a lot of important information relating to what is actually being preserved.

JS said we need to accept the levels of uncertainty which come along with making decisions about what records need to be preserved and what records don’t; we also have to work on new ways to make these decisions.

5.7 CB asked if it might be a possibility to have workshops to see what people think should be kept, which could be attended by people who can give a considered view on this, such as political scientists.

COS said the Born Digital era has huge implications for research.

5.8 CvM asked if there is a timeframe for decisions about how the digital record will be preserved.

JS said this is the inflection point; we are going through the transition to digital records now. He said it is an interesting time to be an archivist. Transparency is so important at the moment, and we are moving towards a different era and making decisions now is important. He said we need to find ways to continually mitigate preservation risks to digital records, and emphasised how important it is that we continue to invest in doing this.

5.9 CB said that TNA will need to lead the way as the sector lead – small archives will not find it easy to find funding.

JS agreed.

6. Any other business

6.1 COS invited delegates to submit any further questions they may have about the Digital strategy, or any cataloguing queries, via email.

Next meeting: 20 June 2017, 12:00 – 14:30