

Title: The National Archives' User Forum

Date: 23rd November 2017

Location: Talks Room

Attendees (Staff)

Lee Oliver (LO) Head of Venue Management and Services (chair)

Tom Gregan (TG) Head of Document Services

David Priest (DP) Document Production Coordination Manager

Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) Director of Public Engagement

Catherine Hill (CH) PA to Caroline Ottaway-Searle (notes)

Attendees (Users)

Graham Woolgar (GW)

Phil Lamb (PL)

John Seaman (JS)

Chris Eley (CE)

David Matthews (DM)

Pauline Eismark (PE)

Anne Samson (AS)

1. LO welcomed all to the meeting and apologised for the late publication of the agenda on the website.

2. Matters Arising - August meeting notes

Item 2.3 – insufficient power points for laptops around the open reading room – more computers will soon be removed from Research and Enquiries so this will free up more desks with power points.

3. User Advisory Group (UAG) update – Anne Samson, on-site personal interest delegate

3.1 AS said that the proposed changes to the document ordering process had been discussed at UAG before implementation and the Group had been satisfied with the proposals. The reduced ordering hours had been accepted. The Group was also satisfied with TNA's report of their dealings with local archive issues.

3.2 GW stated that he was not happy that UAG were satisfied with the changes to the document ordering process.

3.3 AS replied that UAG had challenged TNA, but accepted the rationale behind the proposal.

3.4 DM and GW challenged AS on the process by which UAG had accepted the changes. GW felt that the UAG representatives should have discussed the changes with their communities prior to feeding back to TNA.

3.5 AS responded that GW should have bought his concerns to her.

3.6 DM stated that he felt that UAG was too close to TNA management and therefore he could not see the point of UAG.

4. Change to document ordering hours from 1 January 2018

DP gave a presentation on the changes to the document ordering process which can be found [here](#).

4.1 DM asked about bulk orders. DP replied that bulk orders will be reviewed in 2018 – the intention is to increase the number of records that can be bulk ordered.

4.2 GW questioned whether TNA's budget might have had some influence on the changes. LO replied that TNA had been open in the past about the impact of the flat cash settlement from government and the digital challenge. DP stated that the aim is to run the best service possible with the resources available.

5. Change to self-service scanning and printing facilities from 11 December 2017

DP gave a presentation on the changes to the scanning and printing which can be found [here](#).

5.1 DP said that TNA had received 12 complaints about self-service equipment removal. However the changes should be understood in the light of usage trend data.

5.2 TNA will introduce a new document download tool, which will be usable w/c 27 November. For two weeks it will run in tandem with the old system. TNA appreciates that there may be some people who prefer paper, but overall the benefits to the majority of users are greater. To date 56 members of staff have been trained in the new system and there will be a crib sheet produced for users.

5.3 GW said that TNA is to be commended for allowing and enabling the use of digital cameras for free.

6. 40th anniversary of the Public Record Office – short film

The Blue Peter 1977 film was shown.

7. Open Discussion

LO listed some other points for information:

7.1 In January 2018 there will be a change to the guest wifi and users will have to register with an email address.

7.2 From 1 January 2018 the enquiry desks in the Research & Enquiries Room and the Map Room will close at 5pm on Tuesday and Thursday as enquiries after that time are negligible.

7.3 Meet The Keeper was postponed in May due to the election and was on Twitter only in October due to illness. The next Meet the Keeper is expected to be in May 2018.

7.4 At the next User Forum in February representatives from Hanslope Park will come and talk about records management activity at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. This will be the sole agenda item.

Questions

7.5 AS raised the issue of lack of charging points for devices. DP responded that TNA had kept some spare chargers but they tended to go missing. AS felt that adaptors for the plugs would help as currently the sockets are the wrong way around to take some chargers.

7.6 DM raised the issue of MH106 records not being available digitally. LO replied that this was because it was realised some time ago that under current rules they should all be closed as they

contain personal and medical data. It was discussed with ICO several years ago and, guided by them, it was decided that as the records had been available to view on site for over 30 years it would not make sense to re-close them all, but this is not the same as releasing them on the internet.

7.7 CE asked for an update on the MoD charging for access to AIR 81's that have yet to be transferred. LO said that he was waiting for a reply from colleagues on this subject and the written answer would be included in the notes of this meeting.

Post meeting note:

Since 2014 there have been four transfers from MoD of AIR 81 to TNA. The last one available on TNA Discovery on 30/06/2017.

Currently transferred to TNA are 3329 pieces, the majority of which are open. If you would like a review of a closed file or extract, you can submit an FOI request via our online contact form, by post or through our online catalogue, Discovery. For more information on how to submit an FOI request, please see our website: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/freedom-of-information/making-a-freedom-of-information-request/>

Please be assured that TNA are working extensively with MOD to ensure compliance with Public Records Act; during the transition from 30 years to 20 years TNA are publishing data on the volume and transfer status of the records held by those bodies that transfer to us on our website. TNA are resourced to accommodate MOD transfers and whilst TNA allow for a period of 60 working days to complete the processing of newly transferred records before release on Discovery, TNA always aim for less.

Those RAF casualty packs that have yet to be transferred to The National Archives by MOD fall within the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for MOD to publish information held.

TNA understand that subject to certain conditions, information in these RAF casualty packs is available on request from members of the public under MOD's publication scheme. Section 19 (Publication scheme) of the Freedom of Information Act allows MOD to specify what information is, or is intended to be, available to the public free of charge or on payment.

Should you wish to understand MODs timetable for preparing selected public records for transfer to TNA; their delivery plan is available on the GOV.UK website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transfer-of-mod-records-to-the-national-archives-reports-2016>

8. Date of next meeting (FCO special): Wednesday 28 February 2018, 12:30.