Title: The National Archives' User Forum

Date: 20 May 2015

Location: Talks Room

Attendees (staff):

Lee Oliver (LMO) Head of Public Services Development (Chair); Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) Director of Public Engagement; Helen Pye-Smith (HP-S) Head of Library and Deployment Services; Stephen Hall (SH) Manager of Records & Information Management Services; Kay Oakley (KO) Customer Research Manager; Richard Groocock (RG) Operations, Storage and Contract Liaison Manager; David Priest (DP) Production Co-ordination Manager; Sue South (SS) Operations Manager; Foluke Abiona (FA) Customer Intelligence Manager; Emily McIntyre (EMc) Customer Intelligence Officer (Minutes).

Attendees (users):

John Seaman; David Matthew; Roger Whitworth; G. Berg; James C. Young; Graham Woolgar (GW); Victorine Martineau.

1. LMO welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Matters Arising - April 2015 User Forum minutes.

2.1 (Item 3.2 04/15) Q. I have been in contact with the Treasury and Advisory Council via email, regarding the plan for Treasury's record transfers. I understand that the Treasury will apply for a 12 month backlog, and the Advisory Council are awaiting a decision, as Treasury say 18 months. Can you give a time scale?

A. LMO said he cannot comment on this.

2.2 (Item 4.3 04/15) Q. Amendment to previous User Forum minutes, misspelling snowpike should be Snopake.

2.3 (Item 4.4 04/15) Q. Has the blind spot issue in the car park been dealt with?

A. LMO said convex mirrors and speed humps have been installed, along with the bend being remarked. These are temporary measures, until the new gates and entrance are installed.

2.4 (Item 4.5 04/15) Q. Amendment to previous User Forum minutes, misspelling 97 should be 197.

3. Feedback on March 2015 UAG meeting- Graham Woolgar, onsite personal interest delegate.

GW states that this is his viewpoint and not that of TNA or the User Advisory Group.

3.1 (Item 1.4 03/15) Royal Navy cards, there was a discrepancy between the original planned release, and the records that should be due for release. At the January 2011 UAG, the minutes state that Chris Mumby said to ask the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

Request sent to MOD, replied saying there was no reason why the overlooked records should not be included in the release.

Simon Marsh, from the MOD, who was responsible for the cards, has agreed what should be made available and digitised. They are currently on target for July 2015 for the majority of the set.

3.2 (Item 1.6 03/15) There still have not been any updates on what advanced information is known of what records will be transferred to TNA. GW asks if there is anything anyone wants to add to this statement?

A. This would be helpful, as Treasury have a 2-3 year wait and then another year for Iron Mountain, even though checking Discovery allows you to know what has been updated, not everything is there. The annual press release event now only includes the Cabinet Office and the Prime Minister's Office, different to how it was done previously.

At the December 2014 UAG, GW asked for plans for transfers to be published. Answer was that, as this would be for 250 bodies that transfer to TNA, it is not feasible.

GW said there must be lists and so made an FOI request to MOD and received a 'prep and delivery 2015 spread sheet', a copy can be requested from GW.

At the Special User Forum, March 2015 GW told to ask the MOD as TNA did not know.

GW says that TNA must know about this information, it does not matter if it is published.

3.3 (Item 2 03/15) Reorganisation of TNA, GW feels that the director level focus will be lost due to the changes as well as the loss of Jeff James' Director of Operations and Services role.

A. COS replied stating that even though there is no Operations Director anymore, alignment of directors responsibilities coincides with the audiences they serve and that the same service will be provided.

3.4 (Item 2.2 03/15) Q. Any feedback on Information Management Assessment (IMA) programme?

A. LMO stated that TNA have completed the IMA for the Department for Work and Pensions in March, Home Office in June and later this year we have IMA's timetabled for HM Treasury in September and Department for Education in November. We will have then done all of the top 20 departments by the end of 2015, and the first cycle of re-assessments has already begun.

3.5 (Item 2.5 03/15) With regards the Naval General Service Medal Records, GW was told to ask MOD. This contradicts an answer given previously.

Q. GW asks if anyone would like to add to this?

A. DM said that Treasury records are being recorded, however inventory is not detailed enough. The last Keeper, Oliver Morley, said the Treasury possibly was going to do an inventory.

GW states that the Public Records Act includes the duty to supervise the selection of records.

Navy records have disappeared, the MOD do not know where they have gone, is this because IMA's do not have Records Management knowledge?

3.6 (Item 5 03/15) GW states Operation War Diary includes large amounts of tagging of selected information from the documents which was pleasing and surprising to find out.

3.7 (Item 6.3 03/15) Q. GW asks about the general initiative, it has no time frame. What is taking the time?

A. LMO answers that the technology is not in place currently.

Q. GW asks about the improvements to the Wi-Fi and IT.

A. LMO answers that it all fits into the plan for developing services over the next 5 years and that TNA is currently in talks and negotiations with potential suppliers.

Q. GW asks how long this will take?

A. LMO answers that he is not currently in a position to confirm how long it will take.

3.8 (Item 6.9 03/15) GW mentions that a few years after launching Discovery no help was in place, this has increased now, but in his experience he plays around with Discovery and gets the Discovery team to add any amendments. GW suggests that if Discovery is not as comprehensive as it should be or if areas are missing, let TNA know.

3.9 (Item 6.11 03/15) Q. GW asks User Forum if they like the random arrangement of Discovery, along with the need to do 2 or 3 searches extra to re-categorise entries.

A. You can not see whether a file is closed/open/in transfer. There needs to be more time scale periods, as there are too many records in the year bracket 1950+, it needs dividing up like the other previous periods.

3.10 Q. UAG attendance questioned, as 4 delegates were unable to attend the one in March 2015.

A. LMO/COS answered stating that there are rules in place for consistent absences, but these have not been breached as it has not been persistent.

4. Helen Pye-Smith, Head of Library and Deployment Services stated that the revised [Libraries Collections Policy](#) is now available online.

4.1 This contains the framework for the acquisitions policy for the library.

5. Open Discussion.

5.1 Q. The printer has been printing 2 pages; 1 with printed material, the other blank, when printing from Findmypast. Some computers have instructions for printing others do not. There is a need for more of these signs.

A. LMO answered that he will take this away and that if this happens in the future, to go to the Red Desk for a replacement copy and they will also show you how to print out.

5.2 Q. Can BT 382 be indexed like BT 372?

A. LMO stated it is a very large series.

Q. Can you use crowdsourcing?

A. LMO answered that due to Data Protection issues TNA do not produce the originals, so this is not possible.

Q. Are the National Insurance numbers and finger prints really any use now?

A. LMO answered, yes. NI numbers can be used for fraud, and are classed as personal data that requires protection. Time and technology has moved on and they would not now have come to TNA as open documents.

5.3 Q. Within Discovery there are the additional individual archives catalogues. Are they updated?

A. LMO answered that the information within Discovery is based on the A2A catalogue data, so some information is out of date. TNA are currently developing the means to allow archives to update their own data into Discovery. TNA are also involved in a [cataloguing grant scheme](#) to provide individual archives with resources to improve their catalogues.

5.4 Q. The new arrangement of security barriers leading to the reading room, mean one of them sometimes fails to work when swiping on exit. What was the reason for the change?

A. LMO states that this is a trial arrangement, so security have a 360 degree view to improve security practice. He will look into the issue regarding the barrier (B).

Next meeting: Thursday 16 July 2015, 12:30-13:45