

Title: The National Archives' User Forum

Date: 21 January 2016

Location: Conference Room A

Attendees (staff):

Lee Oliver (LMO), Head of Public Services Development (Chair)
Emma Markiewicz (EM), Head of Advice and Records Knowledge
Valerie Johnson (VJ), Director of Research and Collections
Tom Gregan (TG), Head of Document Services
David Priest (DP), Production Co-ordination Manager
Katy Mair (KM), Principal Records Specialist (Early Modern)
Hannah Crumme (HC), Shakespeare Researcher
Jess Nelson (JN), Head of Collections (Medieval, Early Modern, Maps and Legal)
Joanne Butler (JB), Information Management Consultant
Chris Mumby (CM), Head of Digitisation Services
Foluke Abiona (FA), Customer Intelligence Manager
Mark Jones (MJ), Customer Intelligence Assistant (Minutes)

Attendees (users):

Joyce Hoad (JH); Ruma Chopra (RC); Paul Stewart (PS); Anne Samson (AS); Massowia Haywood (MH); James C Young (JCY); Ciaran Farrell (CF); Jeff Jefford (JJ); David Matthew (DM); Graham Woolgar (GW); John Seamen (JS); Richard P Bateson (RB)

Item		Action
1	Welcome - Lee Oliver, Head of Public Services Development Unit	
2	Matters arising – November Meeting Notes	
2.1	(Item 2.8 11/15) LMO confirmed that Baroness Neville-Rolfe is the Minister responsible for The National Archives. Baroness Neville-Rolfe is a Minister at both the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and at the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS).	
2.2	(Item 5.8 11/15) LMO advised that the proposed review of unanswered User Forum queries would be deferred to a later date.	

3	<p>Introduction of Val Johnson – Director of Research and Collections</p>	
3.1	<p>VJ introduced herself as the new Director of Research and Collections and talked about TNA's plans for the research and collections directorate. As Director of Research and Collections, VJ is responsible for supporting and coordinating innovative research, conservation and cataloguing programmes that use our collections and enhance access.</p> <p>She explained that we are running an online survey to find out more about the needs of academics and researchers and the ways in which we might work more closely with the academic and scholarly communities, and to help inform the development of our services. She invited attendees of the User Forum to take part in the survey.</p> <p>3.2 GW queried the role of Cataloguing and Collection Care within the structure of the research and collections directorate. What is their role within the team? Do they take the initiative to say 'here is a class of records where the cataloguing could be improved if you did 'x'.'</p> <p>VJ explained that they set the cataloguing strategy and oversee the standards and quality of the cataloguing generally. She added that they also do some actual cataloguing of records, and that they work with the Discovery team to ensure that catalogue data is successfully uploaded to Discovery. VJ advised that Collection Care refers to what is probably more commonly known as 'Conservation'.</p> <p>VJ mentioned there is a Cataloguing Panel, to which suggestions may be submitted (via Discovery) for making improvements to the online catalogue.</p>	
4	<p>New Fees Order and Record Copying changes – Dave Priest, Production Co-ordination Manager</p>	
4.1	<p>DP provided an overview of the new Record Copying business model. You can find out more about the changes to our record copying service here.</p> <p>4.2 DM queried how secure the payment system is.</p> <p>DP explained that TNA uses Worldpay, a widely used payment service provider. He added that we do not see any of the payment details - we simply receive the money.</p> <p>4.3 RB stated that he does not use the Record Copying service anymore because he has previously been disappointed with the quality of the images produced.</p> <p>DP explained that all of the new equipment will produce both paper and digital copies. He highlighted the benefits of the manipulation which can now be done with digital images.</p> <p>4.4 It was queried whether there is any way of installing a polarising filter on the cameras to improving the lighting and, ultimately, the quality of the images produced.</p>	

	DP agreed that this is something which could be explored.	DP
4.5	<p>AS noted, in terms of knowing what is inside a document when you are requesting a copy, that it is often very difficult to know exactly what a document contains due to poor catalogue descriptions.</p> <p>LMO advised that such instances may qualify more as a research query, which would not ordinarily be undertaken by the Record Copying team. DP acknowledged, however, that this was an issue. He said that under the new system Record Copying would spend more time looking into such requests.</p>	
4.6	<p>AS requested that a distinction be more clearly made in the fees order between public copying and corporate copying.</p> <p>LMO advised that the fees order must be laid out in a certain way and that it may not be possible for that to be changed. He added, however, that her suggestion would be considered.</p>	LMO
5	Change to frequency of User Forum – Lee Oliver, Head of Public Services Development	
5.1	<p>LMO announced that from the new financial year (i.e. from April 2016), the frequency of the User Forum meetings will be reduced to once a quarter, rather than twice a quarter. It is hoped that this will improve attendance figures and will result in fuller, more inviting agendas.</p>	
5.2	<p>It was queried whether each meeting will therefore run for a longer amount of time.</p> <p>LMO explained that they would not – they will run for the same amount of time as they do now.</p>	
5.3	<p>GW suggested that improving the content of the meetings might improve attendance. He noted that special User Forum meetings, such as when the Keeper recently came to talk about TNA's new four year strategy, were significantly better attended than regular Forum meetings. He added that details about the User Forum need to be more visible on TNA's website.</p> <p>LMO advised that details about forthcoming User Forum meetings are now being included on TNA's Eventbrite page, under the What's On section of the website, and demonstrated their appearance on the homepage of the website.</p>	
5.4	<p>DM suggested that the drop in attendance may reflect a sense of dissatisfaction with getting things changed. Some people may feel that no real action is actually taken, so it is therefore not worth their while attending.</p> <p>LMO explained that there really are some things that we cannot do anything about. He added, however, that it is still good to have the Forum so that issues may be raised, even if we cannot always fix them.</p>	
5.5	<p>It was suggested that it is no longer correct to describe the User Forum as 'a forum' – attendees are now talked at and merely allowed to make the odd</p>	

	<p>comment.</p> <p>LMO pointed out that an Open Discussion item is included on each User Forum agenda.</p>	
6	<p>Shakespeare Exhibition update – Katy Mair, Principal Records Specialist (Early Modern), and Hannah Crumme, Shakespeare Researcher, ARK</p>	
6.1	<p>KM and HC provided an overview of TNA's plans to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. They explained that we will be holding an exhibition, in collaboration with King's College London, at Somerset House from 3 February 2016 to 29 May 2016, showcasing the gems of the National Archives' collection relating to the playwright. The exhibition is entitled <i>By Me, William Shakespeare: A Life in Writing</i>. It will explore the social impact of his plays, the birth of the Globe Theatre, and will include a retelling of the story of his will. You can find out more about the exhibition here and can book tickets to attend here.</p> <p>They also explained that TNA have contributed two documents to the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC for their exhibition <i>Shakespeare, Life of an Icon</i>. You can read more about the documents we have loaned the Folger on their new website, Shakespeare Documented.</p>	
6.2	<p>It was queried whether the documents included in <i>By Me, William Shakespeare</i> will be available to view digitally (with transcriptions) once the exhibition has finished.</p> <p>KM explained that the documents are available to view on the <i>By Me, William Shakespeare</i> website. HC confirmed that the website will still be accessible after the exhibition has ended.</p>	
7	<p>February User Forum – presentation and discussion led by MoD records management team</p>	
7.1	<p>LMO explained that the MoD records branch recently approached TNA with a view to finding a way of engaging with TNA's users about how MoD prioritise their legacy collection, which includes service records. The February User Forum will therefore be given over in its entirety to the MoD and will be run by MoD staff. About two weeks before the meeting is held, the MoD will publish a brief note setting out what they are trying to achieve and the issues which they intend to discuss.</p>	
8	<p>Open discussion</p>	
8.1	<p>DM stated that he was taken aback by the lack of releases in December 2015 from the Cabinet Office. He noted that it is files relating to security and economic areas which are most noticeably missing. He queried whether, when these files are released, TNA will be holding a press event.</p> <p>LMO confirmed that TNA will continue to publicise the release of records. He</p>	

	<p>explained that files are now being released in a different manner. Records are now coming in to TNA in more frequent, smaller (sometimes themed) blocks, rather than in the form of annual big bulk releases.</p>	
8.2	<p>AS commended the Centenary Stitches Exhibition, currently located in the first floor open reading room at TNA. She queried whether visitors are allowed to take photographs of the exhibition.</p> <p>LMO advised that visitors are not currently allowed to take photographs of the exhibition. He explained, however, that discussions are taking place with Security about whether this might be a possibility in the future.</p>	
8.3	<p>GW queried whether the relocated desks (displaced by the new first floor exhibition space) are all going to have power supplied to them.</p> <p>LMO advised that he would look into that.</p>	LMO
8.4	<p>It was queried whether any more lamps will be provided in the Map Room.</p> <p>LMO explained that we bought 4 more lamps this year and that it is unlikely that we will be buying any more.</p>	
8.5	<p>RB queried whether anything is going to be done about 'out of order' lockers.</p> <p>LMO explained that the lockers become 'out of order' when people fail to return the keys, and that there is a significant cost involved in replacing the locks and keys. He assured RB that we are monitoring the situation.</p> <p>It was pointed out that the British Library has started to install lockers with code/keypad locks, rather than keys. It was suggested that this might be something worth exploring.</p>	
9	<p>Date of next meeting: Tuesday 16 February 2016, 15:15-16:30</p>	