



Press Release

15 February 2007

The National Archives project wins £800,000 grant to digitise UK Cabinet papers 1917 - 1975

The National Archives has won a major grant from the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), the UK funding council devoted to supporting pioneering information technology programmes in education.

The grant of nearly £800,000 will be available to The National Archives over the next two years for a new project, British Governance in the 20th Century. The award will fund the creation of online resources and information for researchers, students and teachers to illustrate how British governments dealt with the major events of the twentieth century. This will involve digitising over 500,000 papers from the Cabinet, including the minutes and memoranda of Cabinet itself from the First World War to the late 1970s. The project will only involve historic papers, from files that are already open at The National Archives and are over 30 years old. Funding will begin in March 2007.

Examples of the Cabinet Papers which will be digitised include:

- The War Cabinet Meeting of 27 May 1940 where Winston Churchill sanctioned the withdrawal of the British Expeditionary Force to the coast for evacuation.
- The War Cabinet Meeting of 23 September 1940 where Churchill approved the creation of the George Cross and George Medal.
- Edward Heath's Cabinet Meeting of 9 Feb 1971, which included a statement that renewed disorder in Northern Ireland was being deliberately created by the militant wing of the IRA.

Over the past five years The National Archives has embarked on an ambitious and successful programme to digitise over 90 per cent of the most popular documents in its largely paper-based collection. It is aiming to digitise over 100 million pages by 2012. These range from Domesday Book (now available digitally at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/domesday), through to the censuses, prisoner of war records, ancient petitions, war service and medal records. Working with commercial partners such as ancestorsonboard.com and ancestry.co.uk, The National Archives has made records such as lists of emigrating passengers and the 1841-1891 censuses available for research. The National Archives has also launched a digitisation-on-demand programme which makes the majority of its collection accessible to researchers from anywhere across the globe.

Competition for JISC grants was fierce, with 49 different bids from 120 partner institutions. The grants are given for the digitisation of major resources which are of national importance. The JISC programme represents a total investment of nearly £22 million in the digitisation of high-quality online content in a wide range of media, including sound, film, images, journals, newspapers, maps, theses, pamphlets and cartoons.

Notes for editors:

The National Archives is a government department; and also an executive agency of the Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs. Over 600 staff work in Kew, in Norwich, at Admiralty Arch in central London and at the Family Records Centre in Islington. www.nationalarchives.gov.uk. The National Archives brings together the Public Record Office, Historical Manuscripts Commission, the Office of Public Sector Information and Her Majesty's Stationery Office. See also www.opsi.gov.uk

The National Archives is at the heart of information policy – setting standards and supporting innovation in information and records management across the UK, and providing a practical framework of best practice for opening up and encouraging the re-use of public sector information. This work helps inform today's decisions and ensure that they become tomorrow's permanent record. The National Archives is also the UK government's official archive, containing 900 years of history from Domesday Book to the present, with records ranging from parchment and paper scrolls through to recently created digital files and archived websites. Increasingly, these records are being put online, making them universally accessible.

The vision of The National Archives is to:

- Lead and transform information management
- Guarantee the survival of today's information for tomorrow
- Bring history to life for everyone

JISC – the Joint Information Systems Committee – is a joint committee of the UK further and higher education funding bodies and is responsible for supporting the innovative use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, teaching, and research. It is best known for providing the JANET network, a range of support, content and advisory services, and a portfolio of high-quality resources. Information about JISC, its services and programmes can be found at www.jisc.ac.uk/, or contact Philip Pothen on 020 7848 2935 or p.pothen@jisc.ac.uk.

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