



National liaison and support

Interdepartmental Archives Committee

In December 1999 the Lord Chancellor published the first ever official statement of policy on archives in the *Government Policy on Archives* [Cm 4516].

Since then the UK Inter-Departmental Archives Committee (IDAC), chaired by the Keeper of Public Records with representatives from government departments and the leading archive bodies, has developed a detailed and comprehensive Action Plan.

The Plan, published in September 2002, provides the archives sector with a work programme of professional activity over the next three to four years, which will be achieved on an entirely voluntary basis. The National Archives will monitor progress on specific action points and evaluate how far the six main objectives in the main policy document are being attained.

The six main objectives in the Government Policy on Archives are:

Objective 1: To ensure that access to archives, in the most useful and convenient way, is offered to all the nation's citizens and to other users

Nick Kingsley, Chair of the National Council on Archives, seen here (right) with the Keeper, Sarah Tyacke, and Bruno Derrick from The National Archives

The archives and records management communities

At The National Archives, we are committed to developing partnerships with others in the archival and records management communities, bringing our rich national holdings to wide public notice and creating easier access for all.

We also seek to coordinate our efforts and resources with those of other archivists in the UK. By working together we can achieve even more, for the benefit of all archive users.

Increasingly, our work has gained an international dimension as we tap into the experience of archival colleagues around the world.

Here we focus on:

- National liaison and support
- Our international role
- Working with other archival organisations.

Objective 2: To enable the educational sector at all levels to have proper access to the nation's archival resources, so that national educational needs are met

Objective 3: To ensure that public institutions, at local, regional and national level, select, preserve and manage their current records and their archives, regardless of medium, in accordance with the relevant legislative requirements, guidance and agreed professional standards

Objective 4: To encourage private organisations and individuals to manage their records effectively, to preserve their historical archives and wherever possible to facilitate public access to them

Objective 5: To enable the archive sector to prepare for the processing of increasing quantities of electronic data

Objective 6: To add maximum value to the information resource held by the archive sector.

Archives Task Force

The Action Plan forms the general context to the current work of the Archives Task Force currently being led by Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, in which we are taking part enthusiastically.

The Task Force has been set up to develop a "coherent set of strategies" for archives and to report by autumn 2003. Its findings will have an effect on

the development of our own policies and services in the coming years.

We expect that the Task Force will complement the formation of The National Archives by further developing the already flourishing archives structures in the regions and by pointing the way forward to more partnership between archives, libraries and museums, especially in the light of the emerging national archives network.

The driving force for any recommendations is likely to be wider public access to archives, particularly online. There will need to be underpinning programmes on, for example, cataloguing, preservation, education and interpretation using archives, and the education, training and development of the work force.

At the same time The National Archives is pursuing legislation within government to deal with issues, for example, about e-records, records management in central and local government and the wider public sector and the role of archives services. Any recommendation will go out to public consultation in due course.

The National Council on Archives

During the year we agreed to part fund, along with Resource, a two-year policy and development officer post for the National Council on Archives (NCA), in recognition of NCA's important role as an independent advocate for the archives community.

The new post directly supports delivery of the 15 wide-ranging targets for the NCA outlined in the Government Policy on Archives Action Plan in partnership with The National Archives, Resource, the Society of Archivists and others.

The post-holder is co-ordinating efforts for Archive Awareness Month (September 2003), has organised the NCA 2003 conference around the theme of social inclusion and is supporting plans to develop methodologies to prioritise cataloguing and conservation backlogs. The post-holder will also co-ordinate NCA's response to the Archives Task Force.

National Archives representatives attended NCA's Westminster event *Changing the Future of our Past*, sponsored by Sir Patrick Cormack MP (who chairs the Parliamentary All-Party Arts and Heritage Group). This event promoted archives as a vibrant sector, with UK wide record offices carrying out vital work to ensure the preservation of and access to archives. It was a first stage in a continuing programme of briefings about the archives sector for members of both Houses of Parliament.

We have continued to support the work of the Regional Archives Councils in England and the Archives Council Wales (Cyngor Archifau Cymru) for which we act as national observers.

Our close involvement with archivists across the UK has been strengthened through our



Sir Patrick Cormack MP (second from right) at the National Council on Archives event at Westminster in which we took part

engagement with groups such as the Health Archives Group. We have been able to share with the Group our experience and knowledge of issues ranging from the application of the Freedom of Information Act to the safekeeping of archival materials.

We have also helped the NCA's Public Service Quality Group to develop national performance indicators for archives and a national standard for access to archives, and to review the relevance of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy statistics for archives.

In November, we hosted the Group's 7th annual NCA Public Services Quality Forum, *Auditing for Quality*. The 95 delegates looked at best practice in service delivery for archives and local studies libraries and the use of methods for measuring and monitoring performance.

The National Archives and stakeholders

In preparation for becoming The National Archives in April 2003, we sought stakeholders' views on the role of the new organisation and what they would like to see from it.

In November 2002, representatives from the archival, museum, arts and education sectors attended a meeting hosted by the Royal Historical Society, in which the Keeper of Public Records and the Secretary of the HMC set out their vision for The National Archives and invited comments.



Our new quarterly newsletter for the archival community, *ArchiVISTA!*, keeps archivists and records managers up to date with developments.

Through newsletters, other publicity and specific events, The National Archives will seek during 2003 to invite comments from all its stakeholders and users, with particular emphasis on the integration of advice services and the further development of guidance in electronic record keeping and preservation.

Supporting the regions

The archives sector has been one of the main recipients of the over £135 million of lottery funding awarded since 1994 to documentary heritage projects. We have played a key part in enabling archives around the country to take advantage of these opportunities by jointly funding the post of the Archive Lottery Adviser along with Resource and (until January 2003) the Society of Archivists.

The Archive Lottery Service is available to anyone who works with archives and wishes to gain more insight into current funding opportunities and to maximise their chances of success.

The Archive Lottery Adviser offers advice and support on how to take projects forward and during the year practical support has been given through project development consultations, workshops on how to apply for funding and reviews of draft bids.

Archive Inspection Service

Almost a third of the UK Government's public records selected for permanent preservation is held in the 234 recognised "places of deposit" in England and Wales. The majority are run by local authority archive services, while others include museums, universities, hospitals and other specialised bodies.

We inspect each place of deposit at least once every five years, to ensure that acceptable standards of storage and access to public records are being maintained. In 2002/03, we carried out 50 inspection visits throughout the UK, taking in local authority record offices, specialist repositories and scientific places of deposit such as the British Antarctic Survey.

These inspection visits are an opportunity for us to offer guidance on wider issues relating to public records and archives. In particular, we have been able to provide assistance, guidance and training on the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and other recent information legislation, helping to ensure that public bodies are able to comply with the Act's requirements.

Our record office inspection work enables us to maintain close relations with professional, regional and government bodies. We participate in initiatives designed to foster co-operation and understanding of archival issues at local, regional and national levels.

The records management community

Conferences (such as our annual Records Management in Government conference – see *page 14*), seminars and publications contribute to the good working relationship we enjoy with the central government records management community.

The National Archives also fosters relationships with departments through the Records Management Advisory Group, which allows us to exchange views with senior records managers on policy initiatives. The Records Management Liaison Group, meeting in London and the North West, keeps practitioners up to date on operational procedures and processes. Contact is also mediated by the Association of Departmental Records Officers.

We also maintain a solid relationship with non-governmental organisations and have delivered presentations at conferences organised by the British Records Association, the Society of Archivists and the International Council on Archives. Our quarterly bulletin, *Records Management News*, keeps the records management community up to date with news, views and comment.

Records Management Advisory Service

This year we began planning for the formal extension to local government, from April 2003, of our (e-) records management advisory service to central government. This is very much

in response to demand as local public authorities strive to meet the business needs of (e-) local government, including satisfying the 2005 target for e-government transactions, the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act.

As The National Archives, we will offer a more co-ordinated approach to central and local government and support the development of (e-) records management across local government. We will liaise closely with key stakeholders in the local government field.

Our international role



Through our continuing involvement with the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the European Union National Archivists Group, we play a full role in the international archive community. We also benefit from sharing knowledge and experience with other national archives, especially in the field of managing electronic records.

We are a founding member of the new DLM Network European Economic Interest Group. This aims to provide an effective forum for European national archives to share their expertise

on electronic records management development. At the DLM Forum 2002 in Barcelona, we gave presentations on functional requirements and sustainability of electronic records.

The Keeper of Public Records attended the ICA CITRA meeting in Marseille in November. She was accompanied by another staff member acting in his capacity as Honorary Secretary of the Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers (ACARM).

For many years we have welcomed colleagues from abroad on placements at the Public Record Office in Kew, in order to share experience and best practice. In the coming year The National Archives will place these arrangements on a more formal footing as part of its international strategy.

General records management training has been given to staff of the Estonian National Archives as part of their contract with a private consulting company.

Standards for archival description

This year we have continued to support the development of Encoded Archival Description (EAD), the international data structure standard for archival description.

In August 2002 one of our staff, representing the UK and Ireland, attended an EAD Working Group meeting held as part of the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting in Birmingham, Alabama. At this meeting the Group, which is the international body that develops and maintains the standard, unveiled the revised second edition known as EAD 2002.

A staff member was also active in the development of best practice guidelines for the use of EAD as part of an international advisory group convened by the Research Libraries Group.

Safeguarding photographs in Europe

The second stage of the SEPIA (Safeguarding European

Photographic Images for Access) project is now in its third and final year. Funded by the European Commission, SEPIA is led by the European Commission on Preservation and Access in Amsterdam. Besides The National Archives and the British Library, its partners and associated partners are in Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Spain and Sweden.

The project has mounted a virtual exhibition on the Internet of photographs held in participating institutions on the theme "Constructing Europe", to which we contributed images on transport.

Working with other archival organisations

Access to Archives (A2A)

Access to Archives (A2A) is a database containing catalogues describing archives held throughout England and dating from the 10th century to the present day. The A2A programme – whose lead partners are The National Archives (PRO and HMC) and the British Library – is the English strand of the national archive network for the United Kingdom.

This year saw the start of the second phase of A2A, which involves over 30 A2A content projects. Once again archivists and curators throughout England are working with us and with archives users to provide catalogue content for the A2A database.



Hauser y Menet (photographer)
Sevilla. Plaza de la Constitución, 1891.
Collotype – National Library of Spain