

**Title: The National Archives' User Forum**

**Date: 20 August 2014**

**Location: Talks Room**

**Attendees (staff):**

Lee Oliver (LMO) Head of Public Services Development (Chair); Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper; Caroline Ottaway-Searle (COS) Director of Public Services and Human Resources; Tom Gregan (TG) Head of Document Services; Julia Jones (JJo) Head of Information Management and Practice; Emma Bayne (EB) Head of Systems Development; Jonathan Cates (JC) Collections Information and Systems Manager; Helen Pye-Smith (HPS) Head of Business Support and Library Services; David Priest (DP) Production Co-ordination Manager; Janet Dempsey (JMD) Principle Records Specialist – Maritime; Foluke Abiona (FA) Customer Intelligence Officer; Joanna Robinson (JCR) Customer Intelligence Assistant (Minutes).

**1. LMO welcomed all to the meeting.**

**2. Introducing new Chief Executive/Keeper, and Annual Accounts - Jeff James.**

2.1 JJ introduced himself to the User Forum. He explained that he has been away from TNA for about a year, and returned to take up the role of CEO on 29 July 2014. He commended Clem Brohier's leadership during his time as Acting CEO. JJ then summarised the contents of the annual report.

The accession rate of the previous 12 months has doubled where we have begun to implement the 20 year rule. We have now accessioned records from the 2012 Olympics. The work to implement the 20 year rule for records transferring to places of deposit is continuing.

JJ then gave some production statistics from the last 12 months including: 670,000 original records have been delivered to readers at Kew; TNA staff have answered 38,000 telephone enquiries; and TNA's online records were downloaded more than 202 million times.

He said we are now in the final year of the 2011-2015 business plan and are planning for the next four year period.

JJ then spoke about the development of Discovery 2 and the launch of FWW100. He said TNA's digitisation programme continues. This includes WO 95, BT Design Registers, and 60,000 Naval service records.

JJ said that TNA's income generation activities have totalled £10 million. However, whatever the outcome of the next general election, TNA is likely to face further budgetary pressures. TNA will continue to value and prioritise working with

volunteers and commercial partners. He said that TNA's work is augmented by our partners in the wider archival sector. TNA has a vital role in providing guidance to the sector in order to champion the value of archives.

Further information can be found in [TNA's Annual Report](#).

2.2 Q. Some government departments including the Home Office and Treasury have been lacking in commitment to, and accuracy in, releasing files.

A. JJo said that record transfer reports put the spotlight on what should have been done in certain cases. This focus unfortunately led to resources being taken away from the normal annual releases. She said that TNA has put pressure on departments to deliver.

2.3 Q. There are a large number of series not listed in the catalogue, and inconsistencies with Treasury records. They should be chronological. It seems that Treasury is not familiar with its own records.

A. JJo said that she is confident in current HMT management. She suggested that discussion of this issue is continued outside of the meeting.

2.4 Q. (Item 6.4 30/07 Executive Team meeting) In the Executive Team meeting minutes COS said a key question of staff turnover analysis is whether we have lost a large number of individuals that we would wish to keep. The Director of Technology, David Thomas, has recently retired. Do you have anyone for this key role?

A. We are currently looking at candidates for an interim period. We will be setting out our priorities for the role shortly, and will then look to who should take over the position permanently. We will make an announcement on the matter soon. We monitor staff turnover and endeavour to maintain a healthy balance.

2.5 Q. I attended a recent event, where the speakers included the former Chief Historian of the FCO, Gill Bennett, and several TNA staff. The event was very good.

A. Thank you. You can find details of all our events on our [events page](#) on the website.

### **3. Matters Arising**

3.1 (Item 2.1 17/07) Q. GW said he has been told that there are 900 pieces within ADM 358 that will not be added until January; surely there are descriptions of these pieces.

A. We can only provide information that MoD has provided us with. JJo said she will speak to Michael Rogers and clarify this matter. *[Post meeting note: Michael Rogers confirmed that the content of the 2<sup>nd</sup> tranche should correspond to Officers, 1941-42, and the piece number range should be 3339 to 3591.]*

3.2 (2.3 17/07) I made an FOI request to have closed HO files opened. It looks like they were redacted at TNA. If a name appears in a newspaper, what is the point of redacting the name in a document?

A. Redaction is carried out in accordance with the FOI Act and guidance issued by the Information Commissioner.

3.3 (2.6 17/07) The requested URLs have been added to the User Forum agenda.

Q. Could the agenda highlight why these links are useful for User Forum attendees to consult?

A. Yes.

3.4 Q. (2.7 17/07) Can you explain what is meant by intellectual property in this case?

A. TNA owns the images. We sell these images to different companies to provide to the public on their websites. Each company creates its own transcription database, which is then the company's intellectual property.

3.5 Q. How does TNA deal with copyright issues?

A. Tim Padfield dealt with copyright until his retirement. TNA still has internal copyright advisers.

3.6 (2.9 17/07) The Extraordinary User Forum was extremely useful and covered many different fields. Fifteen months have passed since it was held. Could we have an agenda item for the October User Forum for a discussion about a further Extraordinary User Forum?

A. Yes, we can discuss this at the October User Forum. Please send questions relating to this subject in advance for the discussion.

#### **4. EB and JC gave an update on Discovery 2.**

4.1 EB advised attendees that the updated version of Discovery will go live on 1 September 2014. JC explained that the new Discovery will incorporate data from National Register of Archives (NRA), Access to Archives (A2A), Directory of Archives (Archon) and the Manorial Documents Register (MDR). He said the old version of Discovery will close around the end of September, but the old A2A, NRA, Archon, and MDR will remain for a little longer. JC encouraged attendees to use the new version. EB said we are keen to receive further feedback on the new Discovery.

4.2 Q. The loss of the MDR is catastrophic.

A. JC said it will not be lost. MDR will close, but the capacity to search MDR entries will be available within Discovery.

4.3 Q. Treasury series are difficult to find unless you know exactly what you are looking for. Subject tags would be helpful. Will these be available by September?

A. Tags will not be available by September, but we will be adding them as soon as possible. Email enquiries to [Discovery, our catalogue](#) for specific advice.

4.4 Q. Will the new Discovery be called Discovery 2, or stay as Discovery?

A. The name will still be Discovery; Discovery 2 was to differentiate the updated version from the original, while it was being created.

4.5 Q. Is there a user guide for Discovery? The help guides are not actually very useful.

A. The guides are being updated, and there will be a FAQs list which should assist users.

## **5. Update on the June 2014 User Advisory Group Meeting Graham Woolgar, User Advisory Group delegate.**

5.1 (Item 1.3 06/14) GW said he had asked for clarification on LMO's point about the benefits of TNA using commercial partners. LMO had explained that commercial partners often have more sales than TNA and are therefore more profitable. GW suggested this could be rectified by TNA promoting the services they can provide.

LMO said while we can charge for services such as copying, and Digital Downloads from Discovery, regulations prevent TNA making a profit or a loss on these services. We are able to receive royalties from use of our images by commercial partners as this is not covered by the same regulations

5.2 (5.1 06/14) The information about the 1915 crew lists as set out in the minutes was difficult to understand. The main information is that the crew lists were distributed to different institutions; TNA took 10% of the overall lists, which included 10% of the 1915 lists. The remaining 90% were offered to other institutions. The National Maritime Museum took the remaining lists with the year ending in 5 (10% of the overall lists.) Various local archives picked out lists linked to their area (another 10%) and the remaining 70% went to the Maritime History Archive in Canada. The whole 1915 collection is jointly held by just TNA and NMM, which will make it easier to index crew lists for that year. Crew lists often have an individual's previous ship, which provides a useful avenue for further research. The NMM lists will be held in BT 400, and should be completed next year.

5.3 Q. This item was very difficult to make sense of and written in a complicated and unhelpful way.

A. It is a complicated subject and it's likely that the minute taker is not familiar with it.

*[Post meeting note: Due to the subject matter's complexity, this item was referred to the subject expert for clarification. She provided the explanation as printed in the UAG 06/14 minutes.]*

5.4 (6.1 06/14) I found a number of documents which had not been included in the digitisation of BT 351 and BT 377; LMO subsequently gave an explanation of this issue. Chris Mumby said steps had been taken to put in stringent quality control. To ensure accuracy, the journey from paper to digitised page will be checked by humans and not only electronic means. I was reassured to hear this.

5.5 JMD commented that all of BT 351 was digitised but 478 names were missed off when uploading to Discovery.

5.6 Q. Have the digitised series been checked for omissions?

A. JMD said we have calculated how many images are on the fiche and how many have been digitally captured, and the numbers correspond satisfactorily.

5.7 (10.7 06/14) GW said that the MoD held a public consultation in 2008 about the transfer of Armed Forces Personnel Records to TNA: records of enlisters in the Home Guard; Royal Navy Service entries up to 1939; records of enlisters in the RAF from 1918 – 1928; and records of soldiers born up to 1895 who served beyond the end of the First World War.

GW said there is no news about the Army Service records. The MoD policy is not to release records whose subjects have a date of birth less than 116 years ago. TNA's policy is not to release records with dates of birth less than 100 years ago. He said it is unclear why this is not the case for the MoD. TNA is negotiating with MoD, but there seems to have been no advance in 6 years. Some of these records may not be released until 2017.

GW said he had put in a FOI request to MoD records of personnel with dates of birth up to 1904. He said these records are valuable to TNA and he hopes that TNA can persuade MoD to open them.

5.8 (7.1 06/14) Q. The 1939 NHS Register has been released, however the 1921 Census will still not be released until 2022. Why is this?

A. LMO said that an FOI request to NHS Information led to the decision that these records were not subject to the 100 years closure that applied to census. However, the post-war medical information cannot be released.

5.9 Q. (7.1 06/14) Caroline Kimbell showed a screenshot of a page of the register, which was similar to the format of the census.

A. LMO said that much of the stationery and techniques of the census were used for creating the national register in 1939.

Q. GW asked how it is ascertained that subjects are deceased?

A. LMO said we work with the General Register Office and perform date-matching.

Q. Are these registers still working documents?

A. LMO said they are not.

Q. Will the NHS still be taking them back?

A. NHS Information will retain the original registers.

5.10 Q. Can the User Forum agenda contain a link to the UAG minutes?

A. Yes.

5.11 Q. (10.5 06/14) What is TNA's responsibility with regard to the usability of The London Gazette?

A. We have a statutory responsibility to ensure the Gazette is published.

Q. Can we have this as a question at the next User Forum?

A. Yes.

A discussion about the London Gazette site followed.

5.12 Q. I am happy with how my UAG delegate represents my archive user community. However, I may lose his representation due to the required four year turnover of representatives. I suggest TNA checks UAG minutes to ascertain which UAG delegates make the most robust efforts on behalf of their members' interests. I suggest such dedicated representatives are then asked to stay on.

A. LMO said this point was duly noted.

## **6. AOB.**

6.1 LMO advised attendees that Security will soon take an audit of locker keys in the public lockers. He requested on behalf of Security that attendees remember not to leave valuables, or items containing valuables, on display in cars. Unfortunately we cannot guarantee the safety of items left in cars in the car park.

6.2 LMO advised attendees that the quiet area at the back of the Library will be changing from the 30 August. The area is underused and we need to utilise the space. All tables and chairs will be removed, with the freed space used for additional library shelving and London Family History Centre film cabinets. The desks around the stacks will stay.

6.3 Q. I have noticed that documents in the document return area in the reading rooms are sometimes clumsily stacked, with volumes placed on top of files, and

sometimes almost falling off tables. I am concerned about the potential damage to documents.

A. DP said that there are notices in the reading room that advise how documents should be treated and stacked when returned. However, we will look into this matter.

**Next meeting: Thursday 16 October 2014, 12:30-13:45**