
Memorandum of understanding between The National Archives and Arts Council England

Introduction

This memorandum of understanding establishes a framework for cooperation between The National Archives and Arts Council England (ACE). It describes areas of shared interest and activity and commits the two organisations to work together for the benefit of the public and the wider cultural and archives sector.

Background

Following the transfer of functions from the former Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), both The National Archives and ACE have new responsibilities. The National Archives has taken on an expanded leadership role for the archives sector, while ACE is now responsible for museums and libraries and for national programme like Acceptance in Lieu, Accreditation, the Government Indemnity Scheme which include Archives as well as museums and libraries.

The National Archives and ACE believe that the two bodies can and should work together for the benefit both of cultural institutions and the people who use them, particularly given the frequently overlapping local responsibilities for museums, libraries and archives. The National Archives and ACE are committed to identifying opportunities to work together on existing and new key initiatives.

The National Archives

The National Archives is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice. It is the official archive of the UK government and for England and Wales. The National Archives also performs the functions of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, locating and reporting on privately held records, and it fulfils statutory functions and obligations in relation to the approval of places of deposit for public records under the Public Records Act 1958.

With effect from 1 October 2011 The National Archives took on a range of responsibilities from the MLA, specifically:

- the leadership role for the archives sector
- a policy, information and advice role for government
- strategic engagement, helping archive services and their parent bodies to respond to Government policy and to develop in ways that strengthen and reinforce the national network of archive provision.

The National Archives has retained its role in the Acceptance in Lieu (AIL) scheme, as previously described in the legal agreement between the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the MLA.

The National Archives' business plan for 2011-2015, *For the Record. For Good.* sets out five strategic priorities:

- we will redefine and collect the future record, transparently and seamlessly
- we will innovate to ensure optimal physical and digital preservation
- we will widen our funding base to generate more support in tough times
- we will be agile and confident, trusted and efficient
- we will provide a record that is more open, inclusive and used than ever before

Published in 2010, *Archives for the 21st Century: In Action*¹ was developed by The National Archives and the MLA and describes the action needed to deliver Government policy on archives, which sets out five recommendations:

- Develop bigger and better services in partnership - working towards increased sustainability within the sector
- Strengthen leadership and form a responsive, skilled workforce
- Co-ordinate the response to the growing challenge of managing digital information, so that it is accessible now and remains discoverable in the future
- Create comprehensive online access for archive discovery through catalogues and to digitised archive content by citizens at a time and place that suits them
- Encourage active participation in cultural and learning partnerships that promote a sense of identity and place within the community

Arts Council England

Arts Council England (ACE) is the national development agency for the arts in England. It is a non-departmental public body attached to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). It works to get great art to everyone by championing, developing and investing in artistic experiences that enrich people's lives, supporting a range of artistic activities from theatre to music, literature to dance, photography to digital art and carnival to crafts.

With effect from 1 October 2011, ACE assumed the following responsibilities from the MLA:

- Libraries development and improvement
- Renaissance in the regions funding programme for regional museum and museums development, and Accreditation
- Cross domain activities, e.g. Designation and the PRISM Fund
- A number of statutory cultural property functions that the MLA carried out on behalf of DCMS: Acceptance in Lieu, Export Licensing and the administration of the Government Indemnity Scheme and associated security advice
- A number of MLA-initiated programmes relating to the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games

ACE's strategic framework for the arts, *Achieving great art for everyone*, was published in 2010 and it sets out five 10-year goals for the arts:

- Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated
- More people experience and are inspired by the arts
- The arts are sustainable, resilient and innovative
- The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled
- Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts

¹ A refreshed version of this document is due to be issued in 2012.

In 2011, ACE published a companion framework, *Culture Knowledge and Understanding: Great Museums and Libraries for Everyone*, setting out complementary 10-year goals for museums and libraries:

- Goal 1: Excellence is thriving and celebrated in museums and libraries
- Goal 2: More people experience and are inspired by museums and libraries
- Goal 3: Museums and libraries are sustainable, resilient and innovative
- Goal 4: The leadership and workforce in museums and libraries are diverse and highly skilled.
- Goal 5: Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of museums and libraries.

Key areas of shared interest

The National Archives and ACE recognise that though their roles and responsibilities differ, the strategic priorities and goals of the two bodies reflect areas of shared interest, including (but not limited to):

- Widening and improving access for all to information, collections and cultural experiences
- Promoting models of service that are sustainable, innovative and operate in line with best practice
- Responding to and anticipating the challenges and opportunities presented by new digital technologies
- Developing the skills and diversity of the sector's leadership and workforce
- Building new communities and partnerships, nationally and locally, to engage with, shape, enrich and deliver integrated services for users

Working together

To pursue these areas of shared interest, The National Archives and ACE will:

- Work together on initiatives like Accreditation, Acceptance in Lieu, the Documents Working Party for the Reviewing Committee, PRISM and ACE/V&A purchase fund which impact on archives and access to archives and which form part of the remit of both organisations.
- Look for opportunities where it would be more cost effective and in the better interests of service users for the two bodies to work together
- Share with each other learning from across the cultural and archives sector to support innovation and build excellence

Frequency of contact

Officials of The National Archives and ACE will meet regularly and at least once each quarter to review progress, share intelligence and discuss operational issues and emerging strategic initiatives.

The Chief Executive and Keeper, The National Archives and the Chief Executive of ACE will meet at least once a year to discuss strategic direction, review progress and agree shared priorities for the year to come.

Reviewing this memorandum of understanding

This memorandum of understanding will be reviewed in one year's time and thereafter at three yearly intervals.

Signed on

13 February 2012

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'O Morley', with a small dot at the end.

Oliver Morley
Chief Executive and Keeper
The National Archives

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A Davey', with a long diagonal stroke at the end.

Alan Davey
Chief Executive
Arts Council England

