



THE LORD CHANCELLOR'S
FORUM ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND
ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Date: Friday 13th June 2014
Time: 12.30 – 4.00pm
Venue: The Ministry of Justice, Petty France
Chair: Master of the Rolls, Lord Dyson
Minutes: Trish Humphries

Members:

Dr Clive Field
Dr Bendor Grosvenor
Dr Ian Mortimer
Dr Christopher Ridgway
Professor Michael Moss

Non-members:

Dr Norman James, Senior Manager (Private Archives),
The National Archives
Mr Nick Kingsley, Head of Archives Sector Development,
The National Archives
Dr Valerie Johnson, Head of Research, The National Archives
Mr Clem Brohier, Acting Chief Executive, The National Archives
Ms Beth Watson, Advisory Council Secretariat

	Welcome and Introductions
	Lord Dyson welcomed members to the thirteenth meeting of the Lord Chancellor's Forum on Historical Manuscripts and Academic Research Apologies for absence were received from Dr Elizabeth Lomas and Mr Clive Cheesman.
1.	Minutes and Matters Arising
	The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 th March 2014 were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record of discussions and decisions taken.
1.1	1.2 Triennial Review

	Mr Brohier advised that the Triennial Review report had been officially signed off and recruitment for new members was underway. Members agreed that it was unfortunate that so many members had reached the end of their term of appointment at the same time and noted that a graduated approach would have been preferable. Two members of the Advisory Council will join the Forum later in the year to replace Dr Field and Professor Moss, who were attending their final Forum meeting, as their term of membership would be expiring at the end of the month.
1.2	<i>4. Future Objectives and Priorities for the Private Archives Team</i> Mr Kingsley advised that, following the presentation at the previous meeting, the team were hoping to take forward a survey on philanthropic archives and would be preparing an internal funding bid. Any future offering in relation to philanthropic archives would, however, be subject to the agreement of The National Archives Executive Team. With regard to consideration of Science and Technology Archives, it was felt that this would need a more specialised approach and it was hoped that a member of staff with some experience in the area would be able to undertake some preliminary investigation.
2.	Index of Manuscripts of Daily Life – Proposal
2.1	Following discussion at the previous meeting regarding the difficulty of using manuscripts and papers which reflect the day to day lives of ordinary people, Dr Mortimer presented a proposal for consideration.
2.2	The paper outlined the problems faced by researchers owing to the lack of appropriate indexing and suggested that consideration be given to an indexing project with the aim to raise the profile of these documents and make them easier to find.
2.3	Dr Mortimer advised that Dr James and Mr Kingsley had seen the proposal and had made a number of valuable comments.
2.4	Members agreed that there were some problems with indexing methods, but felt that much of the information is available through other search tools. It was felt that a fundamental challenge to the way cataloguing is carried out would not be realistic, especially with the huge volume of modern collections.
2.5	Alternative methods of finding and improving access to these records was discussed, including crowdsourcing, or volunteer projects.
2.6	Mr Kingsley felt that it was important to draw a distinction between resource discovery and record descriptions. Editing content on the National Register of Archives would not be possible because the content is not owned by The National Archives, therefore any project would need to have the input of other repositories. He further suggested that there might be a case for the academic community to lead such a project.
2.7	Dr Grosvenor expressed concern about the practicality of asking The National Archives to lead or fund work on these documents.
2.8	The value of using volunteers was acknowledged and, following discussion, it was agreed that Dr Mortimer investigate the possibility of setting up a local pilot study and seeking funding for a cataloguing project, which might be more likely if the project had an academic lead.

2.9	Dr Mortimer and Mr Kingsley will take the proposal forward and keep Forum members apprised.
2.10	Mr Kingsley suggested that the new version of Discovery, The National Archives' online catalogue would be more easily searchable, and it was agreed to include a presentation on Discovery at the next meeting.
3.	Update on Export Stop Meeting with Christopher Wright
3.1	Dr Field outlined the background to the recent meeting with Christopher Wright, Chairman of the Documents Working Party.
3.2	A note of the meeting, attended by Dr James, Dr Field and Dr Grosvenor had been produced and circulated to the members. Dr Field advised that he felt it had been a useful meeting and had provided an opportunity to fully express the concerns expressed by Forum members.
3.3	Dr Field advised that one of the main points raised, relating to the anonymity of the Champion appointed to engage interested institutions which might purchase export-stopped material, had been discussed. It was acknowledged that it would not be appropriate to openly name the Champion during the process, but a request to name them afterwards had been rejected on procedural grounds. However, the Arts Council had advised that it was possible for anyone with legitimate concern to contact the Secretary, who would pass that concern on to the Champion. Therefore if The National Archives, or the Forum have concerns in a future case, they could make discreet interventions behind the scenes.
3.4	It had also been agreed that future press releases will not be bundled up together and that any relevant releases will be sent to the Forum Secretary for circulation. This would provide an opportunity for possible contacts or institutions to be forwarded.
3.5	Dr Field further advised that Arts Council England had agreed to ensure that the status of each case will be regularly updated on their website.
3.6	It was noted that a very small proportion of manuscripts have export licences withheld and there was some concern that experts are not referring enough material to the reviewing committee for examination.
3.7	Forum members were concerned about the possibility that not all manuscript or archival cases potentially meeting the Waverley criteria are referred to the reviewing committee. Mr Kingsley advised that he would be meeting with representatives from the British Library and agreed to raise this issue with them.
4.	Acceptance in Lieu
	Members reviewed and discussed papers relating to two Acceptance in Lieu cases which had been circulated prior to the meeting and Dr James provided a brief update. Following discussion, members endorsed the proposed recommendations.

5.	Manuscripts and Men: Exhibition Proposal
5.1	At the meeting in October 2013 Dr Ridgway had brought members' attention to a national manuscript exhibition which had been held at the National Portrait Gallery in 1969 to mark the centenary of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. 2019 will see the 50 th anniversary of the exhibition and Dr Ridgway had raised the possibility of staging a new exhibition at that time. Any such exhibition would re-define the significance of archives in private collections in the digital 21 st century. Dr Ridgway had agreed to explore the possibility and present a more detailed paper for discussion.
5.2	This paper had been circulated to members and Dr Ridgway asked for views on whether consideration should be given to a new exhibition.
5.3	Members felt that the proposal certainly merited further consideration, although there was some concern about funding and whether the focus might be too limited. It was agreed that any such exhibition should see The National Archives taking a major role, and that Forum members should also be involved. It was felt that one of the major national institutions would be best placed to host such an exhibition, and would therefore probably take the lead.
5.4	Mr Brohier advised that before The National Archives could commit to supporting any proposal, he would need to consult with his Executive Team and consider what support might be available, but would do that before the next meeting.
6.	Archives for the Future
6.1	Professor Moss outlined the background for this discussion and advised that it had been felt there should be an opportunity to discuss the problems currently facing archival institutions and consider how archives of the future might look.
6.2	He advised that funding cuts throughout the UK are starting to have a significant impact and many local archives can no longer fund cataloguing projects. Data Protection regulations also cause issues as more material needs to be kept closed and it can be difficult to justify the expense of keeping closed material for such long periods.
6.3	Visitor numbers at many archives and institutions are falling now that more material is available online, and there are issues surrounding the transfer from paper to digital, which will affect both public and private archives.
6.4	Mr Kingsley advised that the Archives for the 21 st Century document is likely to be refreshed following the next general election, and will take on board many of the issues raised. In preparation, there would be discussions with a number of authorities and the current action plan will be reviewed.
6.5	Dr Grosvenor suggested that thought should be given to how the sector might influence government to provide additional funds, or to consider how services could adapt to the financial challenges ahead.
6.6	Better co-ordination of volunteers was discussed and Dr James advised that he was already involved in looking at a national training framework for volunteers. Dr Johnson felt that more work could be done in encouraging institutions to look for alternative funding.

6.7	Dr Lomas was unable to attend the meeting, but had forwarded a number of comments, and it was suggested that she be asked to produce a more detailed paper for further consideration.
7.	EU General Data Protection Regulations
7.1	Mr Malcolm Todd, Public Records and Information Policy Manager at The National Archives, joined the meeting to update members on the proposed EU Data Protection Regulations.
7.2	A first draft of the regulations has been produced, which will apply across all the countries. A twin track approach is being adopted, with consultation on the proposed text and discussion by elected representatives taking place. Mr Todd advised that the legislation is extremely complex, with approximately 240 pages.
7.3	The right to be forgotten clause has caused some controversy and there is felt to be a lack of appreciation for the fact that archival research depends on traces of human activity being in the record.
7.4	Forum members were advised that The National Archives has worked closely with the Ministry of Justice, who had been very understanding in taking on board the points made about issues raised by the UK archive sector.
7.5	At the time of the meeting, Mr Todd advised that a number of issues were still to be resolved, including a definition of the sector which would make a distinction between commercial and business archives and records management. There are also issues around private and local archives keeping personal data. In the UK, personal records are closed until the death of the individual but other member states have differing regulations.
7.6	Mr Kingsley advised that at present the parliament text provides for archives which have a statutory basis having some level of protection. This really only applies to The National Archives.
7.7	The Chair thanked Mr Todd for his update.
8.	Any Other Business
8.1	<i>Research and Academic Liaison Update</i> A report on the work of the Research and Academic Liaison team had been circulated to members and Dr Johnson provided an update on some of the issues. Plans are underway for the annual Gerald Aylmer seminar and possible themes are being explored. Dr Johnson asked whether any members would be willing to join the panel for this year's Research Awards. The Academic Engagement Strategy has been drafted and will be considered by The National Archives' Executive Team at the end of June, following which it will be

	circulated to members. The Chair thanked Dr Johnson for the informative report, and members again commended the team for the amount of work being undertaken.
8.2	<i>Archives Sector Development Update</i> An update on the work of the Archives Sector Development team had been circulated to members, and Mr Kingsley provided updates on some of the activities. Forum members noted that this was the last meeting Dr Field and Professor Moss would be attending, as their tenure on the Advisory Council was ending. Thanks and appreciation were expressed to both for their tireless efforts on behalf of the Forum over the last three years.
	There being no further business, the meeting was closed.