



## FORUM ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

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**Date:** Thursday 21 October 2021  
**Time:** 11.00 - 14.00  
**Venue:** Virtual Meeting  
**Chair:** Professor Leon Litvack, Deputy Chair  
**Minutes:** Elana Kudelka, Governance Coordinator  
**Members:** Prof Leon Litvack (LL), Deputy Chair  
Dr Helen Forde (HF)  
Dr Jeannette Strickland (JSt)  
Ms Adele Redhead (AR), Independent Forum Member (Pending Reappointment)  
Ms Jenny Shaw (JSh), Independent Forum Member (Pending Reappointment)

### **Others in attendance:**

#### The National Archives (TNA)

Mr Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper (ex officio)  
Dr Valerie Johnson (VJ) Director of Research and Collections  
Dr Emma Markiewicz (EM) Head of Archives Sector Development  
Mr Terry McGuinness (TMG) Judicial Office  
Mr Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office  
Ms Pip Willcox (PW) Head of Research

Ms Asha Bagayat (AB) Head of Governance  
Ms Elana Kudelka (EK) Governance Coordinator

### **1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

- 1.1 The Deputy Chair welcomed members and other attendees to the meeting and reminded the members that this was an informal meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence were received from the Master of the Rolls (Chair) and Isabel Saunders (Advisory Council Secretary).
- 1.3 AR declared an interest in items 4 and 6 and noted she lectures at the University of Glasgow and some of her work touched on aspects presented in items 4 and 6. PW and LL noted their involvement with the panel and application process discussed in item 6. JS stated that she had submitted a funding application, referenced in item 6.

### **2. Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021 were noted subject to amendments proposed at the meeting.
- 2.2 The Action Log was noted. AB provided an update on action number 55, noting that members will receive a briefing on The National Archives' document ordering service at its next meeting. JJ asked for the comments column for action 56 to be updated.

### **3. Keeper and Historical Manuscripts Commissioner's (HMC) Update**

- 3.1 JJ introduced the paper and provided an update on the changes that had taken place since the paper was submitted. These changes included an enhanced service at Kew, accommodating more readers and visitors, the steady progression of the Parliamentary Archives project and confirmation that Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay had been provided with a written briefing and invitation to visit Kew. JJ invited questions from the members.
- 3.2 Members were provided with further details on the Mercers' Livery Company partnership.  
**Action:** JJ to ask the Head of Business Development to provide a note on the project for circulation to Forum members along with the meeting minutes.
- 3.3 Members were provided with more details about The National Archives' partnership with the Swedish School and its onsite location at Kew.
- 3.4 Members congratulated The National Archives on all the digital initiatives which had been carried out over the course of the pandemic.
- 3.5 Members thanked JJ for his recognition of the Forum and its work in his report.

### **4. Archives Sector Update**

- 4.1 EM introduced the report providing an update on The National Archives' sector leadership work and invited questions and comments. EM updated members that since the report, the Records at Risk fund launch date has been confirmed for 1 November.
- 4.2 Members asked for more details on the Library and Archive Assessment Strategy. EM stated that at present, The National Archives were working with Arts Council England to bring together key strategic partners from the public libraries and local authority archives sectors to identify the benefits to users and communities of the service they provide, and how this could be quantified and measured. This piece of work was due to be delivered in November. By the end of the project a high level set of ideas, which could be rolled out across the sector more generally, and used as an advocacy tool, would be available. EM confirmed that the outputs from this project would be shared at the next Forum meeting.
- 4.3 Members asked VJ for further information on the Cultural Assets Fund. VJ responded that the Cultural Assets Fund Panel had met once, with meeting proceedings being confidential. VJ noted that applicants were judged based on being of national importance, being nationally outstanding and being seen to have been directly impacted as a result of Covid-19. VJ asked members if they felt that the sector was aware of the Fund, and if more could be done in terms of communicating the existence of this fund to the wider archive sector; members offered to help support this.
- 4.5 Members noted the update.

### **5. Archives Sector Reopening Data**

- 5.1 EM introduced the paper providing an overview of archive reopening data across the country over late summer 2021, and invited questions.
- 5.2 Members asked for clarity about whether the information produced in this paper would be published or circulated more widely. EM and VJ noted that the paper would not be published in its current format due to data protection regulations. However, the information collected would be disseminated on a regional level through visits and discussion with archives. EM highlighted that a main finding of the research was that reopening plans were centred on staff well-being.
- 5.3 Members noted that as reopening was often based on benchmarking with nearby archives, a regional focus might not have as much impact as was hoped for. EM confirmed she would ask for reopening plans from archives in order to determine what archival services might look like in the coming months.
- 5.4 Members asked for clarification about where advice could be found on the quarantining periods for records. EM confirmed that while The National Archives had not published anything specific on this topic, it had shared its own approach as well as directing people towards existing published research.
- 5.5 Members noted the update.

## **6. Update on Research and Academic Engagement**

- 6.1 PW introduced the report and provided an update on The National Archives' research funding. There had been five successful Towards a National Collection Discovery Projects (TaNC), including two with The National Archives' involvement. It was noted that this year's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) Award students had started, and that the next round of the CDP scheme had been launched for two studentships starting in 2022.
- 6.2 PW noted that The National Archives was currently recruiting for a number of new roles and was delighted that the new Head of Grants and Funding would be starting on 1 November.
- 6.3 PW provided a summary of the Engaging with Cultural and Heritage Organisations in a Covid World workshop.
- 6.4 Members noted the update.

## **7. Manorial Documents Register Advisory Panel Update**

- 7.1 The Deputy Chair provided a brief summary of his work on the Manorial Documents Register Advisory Panel. He noted plans for the Manorial Document Register 2022 conference were progressing well and that The National Archives had put out a call for papers. He also noted that the planned reception at the Royal Courts of Justice had been confirmed for 29 June 2022 and the guest list was in development. In addition, a paper on the future of the Manorial Documents Advisory Panel was currently with The National Archives.
- 7.2 Members asked if the Advisory Panel had a role in promoting, developing and advocating for specialist archival skills, or if these were a matter for professional student bodies. Members discussed the current offer of modules available and noted that during the pandemic, such classes had been run successfully online.
- 7.3 The Forum noted the update.

## **8. Strategic Priorities**

- 8.1 Members received a paper proposing strategic priorities for 2022.

- 8.2 The Deputy Chair noted this report arose from discussions with the Master of the Rolls and colleagues at The National Archives about setting out strategic priorities and developing an annual cycle of business in the coming year.
- 8.3 VJ raised that point 6.6 on the paper needed to be updated to reflect that The National Archives, in collaboration with the Master of the Roll's office, would be leading the organisation of the Manorial conference and reception next year.
- 8.4 Members discussed the value of having external speakers attending Forum meetings and welcomed input from The National Archives for suggestions on this. Members noted that perhaps a 15 minute time slot would be too short if individuals were travelling in for meetings. Consequently, members discussed the possibility of hybrid meetings and external speakers joining remotely.

**Action:** AB to provide an update about running hybrid meetings from Kew by the end of November.

- 8.5 Members endorsed the paper and endorsed preparations to be made for the January meeting. Members also passed on their thanks to Isabel Saunders.

## **9. Any Other Business**

- 9.1 Members noted that there was one Advisory Council member and one independent member vacancy on the Forum and sought clarity on the process for recruiting to them.

**Action:** AB to pick this up with Isabel Saunders and provide an update out-of-committee.

- 9.2 The Deputy Chair provided an update about his recent discussion with consultants, Activist group, who had been invited by The National Archives to examine sector leadership. Members discussed ideas around the archiving of collections in the wake of Covid-19 and noted that the Archives of Northern Ireland had already begun to collect records connected to the pandemic.

- 9.3 The Deputy Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their work.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 12:35.

**Date of next meeting:** 24 January 2022