



FORUM ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Date: Tuesday 8th May 2018

Time: 13.30 - 16.00

Venue: The National Archives

Chair: Dr Elizabeth Lomas

Minutes: Ailsa Vigrass

Members:

Ms Jeannette Strickland
Ms Helen Forde

Non-members:

Mr Jeff James, Chief Executive and Keeper, The National Archives
Dr Valerie Johnson, Director of Research & Collections, The National Archives
Ms Anna Sexton, Head of Research and Interim Head of Archive Sector
Development, The National Archives
Mr Philip Gale, Head of Standards & Improvements, The National Archives
Mr Sam Whaley, Head of Chief Executive and Keeper's Office, The National
Archives
Ms Anne Hardy, Secretary to Advisory Council, The National Archives

	Welcome and Introductions
	In the absence of the Master of the Rolls, the Deputy Chair, Dr Lomas, took the Chair. Dr Lomas welcomed members to the twentieth meeting of the Forum on Historical Manuscripts and Academic Research. Apologies were received from Ms Hilary Bauer and Ms Lesley Ferguson.
1.	Minutes and Matters Arising
1.1	The Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 29 June 2017, were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record of discussion and decisions taken.

Matters Arising:**5. Collections at Risk**

- 1.2 Mr Gale updated members. Following a consultative meeting held on 29 September to consider 'Understanding Collections at Risk Report' by Caroline Williams, which was commissioned by The National Archives, a Collections at Risk Steering Group was established which held its inaugural meeting on the 25 January. The group consists of representatives from the archives sector who will work with The National Archives to develop steps to better manage the risks and challenges faced by vulnerable collections. The initial actions agreed are to map the current crisis management arrangements across the archives sector, co-ordination of existing sources of guidance and exploration of the feasibility an emergency contingency fund for collections under immediate threat. Mr Gale is attending a meeting on 23 May with the Friends of the National Archives Council when possible contributions to this fund by them will be explored. Challenges to the group include ensuring that organisations outside London are sufficiently represented and engaging with the academic community who often have intelligence of vulnerable collections beyond the usual archival networks and consequently an academic event is being planned for later in the year. Dr Sexton will support the committee's work by connecting it with the academic network of the Research Department. The next meeting is scheduled for 21 June.
- 1.3 The Deputy Chair asked whether the risk related elements of The National Archives' strategic vision had been updated to reflect these developments whilst retaining the granular focus on topics such as philanthropy. Dr Johnson advised that the strategy is captured in the 'Archives Unlocked' vision and action plan which was launched as government policy in March 2017 by Matt Hancock, then Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy. This item was discussed further under item 4, paper 3 below.
- Action: Dr Lomas requested that the updated vision is seen by Ms Hilary Bauer and Mr Lesley Ferguson.
- 1.4 A member asked if the Business Archives Council was represented on the group. Mr Gale confirmed that Mr Richard Wiltshire is a member. Mr James advised that he and Dr Johnson also meet regularly with the Chair, Mr Mike Anson.
- 1.5 Mr James commended the creation of a contingency fund and asked which organisation would manage it; Mr Gale advised that the British Records Association was currently being considered.
- 1.6 **7. HMRC Conditional Exemption Review**
- Mr Gale updated members. The review is nearing completion and the revised procedures will be finalised with HMRC in 2018-19. The outcomes include:
- The institution of certificates of completion to improve the monitoring of owner's undertakings
 - Confidential sharing of valuations with The National Archives to ensure the undertakings are proportionate to the collection's value
 - Revised guidance for archivists and claimants about the scheme; and
 - Specific guidance and a tool in 'Your Collection' (MYC) will be developed for private owners on how to upload their catalogues to Discovery.

2.	Head of Archives Sector Development (ASD) – Recruitment Update
2.1	Dr Johnson updated members. In April Ms Isobel Hunter left The National Archives to assume the post of Chief Executive of the Society of Chief Librarians. The Head of ASD is a key role so steps were taken promptly to fill the vacancy.
2.2	The recruitment campaign attracted a strong field of candidates from which four individuals were selected for interview. Two candidates have been short-listed for second interview and Dr Johnson expects that an appointment will be made from these. Action. Dr Johnson to update the Forum will be updated when the appointment is confirmed.
2.3	Dr Sexton has been appointed as the Interim Head of ASD. Dr Sexton is a former archivist with direct experience of running an archive service at Peterborough. Dr Sexton remarked that she is looking forward to strengthening the links between Research and ASD during her time in post.
2.4	Members commended the speed of the campaign.
3	HMC Anniversary Conference Proposal
3.1	Dr Johnson advised that the 150 th anniversary of the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) will fall on 2 April 2019 and The National Archives would like to mark the anniversary of the granting of the Royal Warrant. The members were asked for their views.
3.2	Members felt that an exhibition with the V&A would showcase archives to the wider cultural sector, demonstrating the value and diversity of archives and raising public engagement. Professor Bill Sherman, the V&A Head of Research who would have been the lead for this, has recently moved to the Warburg Institute so a bid would need to be made. Mr James felt that the British Library could be considered as an alternative venue; however options are still being explored and it is unlikely that an exhibition can be planned in time for this anniversary
3.3	Dr Johnson agreed that a conference could be more easily achieved in time for the anniversary. This could celebrate and showcase TNA's research, the achievements of the HMC and outline a future direction for fulfilling the warrant. The BRA has expressed interest in either publishing a paper for the conference; Dr Johnson is meeting Dr Julia Sheppard to discuss at the end of May. Consideration is also being given to the publication of a 'State of the Nation' report on independent archives.
3.4	Members asked what target audience was envisaged as this would have a bearing on the speakers and suggested that the speeches should be general enough to appeal to a wider base. Dr Johnson felt that there is a significant audience of archivists and historians interested to see the prosecution of the warrant and to have an understanding of why 150 years of HMC's work is of value to the nation.
3.5	The Deputy Chair reminded the forum that the conference would be competing with other events for 2019 and suggested an all parliamentary event could be held at Westminster to supplement a conference. This could incorporate an exhibition of selected documents. Previous events held at Syon House for private owners have engaged the historical houses and independent archives community and she encouraged TNA to consider the event's legacy. She also suggested that the grants for the Manorial Documents Register

	could be showcased to demonstrate what new research has been prompted by this new data source. A related film could be created for TNA's website.
3.6	Mr Gale suggested that a theme could be the changing interpretation of Royal Warrant and its growing inclusivity, moving from a focus on the archives of great landed families, ecclesiastical corporations and medieval boroughs towards a much wider range of archives embracing businesses, charities and social groups, showing how archives are evolving to reflect the society they serve, with an emphasis on human rights, corporate archives and campaign groups.
3.7	Members felt this approach would draw in a wider audience. Mr Gale suggested a narrative of cultural pluralism would facilitate satellite events to add momentum to the commemoration while referencing it to 'Archives Unlocked' as the latest expression of the HMC Royal Warrant.
3.8	Mr James suggested there were three distinct target groups: subject matter experts, private owners and parliament. The legacy of the event should be enduring and visible. Planning should focus on the year of the anniversary rather than April. The BRA is interested in publishing conference papers and may want to consider producing a special anniversary journal. HMC regularly report to The Crown with the last submission being twenty years ago; the anniversary is an opportunity to produce a milestone 'State of the Nation' paper. Members felt that this could tie in with risk management by highlighting gaps in provision.
3.9	Mr James advised that timings would need to be considered as would The National Archives' resources. Public consultation would also be needed.
3.10	The Deputy Chair stressed that the BRA should ensure that any articles they publish are accessible and that there is a hard copy available which members may purchase or to access on-line. Action: Dr Johnson to follow up with the BRA on these points.
3.11	Members thought that the event could be billed as a year of celebration starting in April with the satellite events. Action. Dr Johnson to revert to the forum with an updated version to include target audience and list of activities. The programme should be realistic and opportunity should be provided for the forum to comment.
4.	Archives Sector Development
4.1	<u>Archives Unlocked Year 1 Update</u> Dr Johnson updated the forum. The action plan included in the 'Archives Unlocked' pack focuses on three themes, i.e.: 1. Developing the digital capacity of the archives sector and increasing discoverability of the archive 2. Building the sector's resilience in meeting financial and workforce challenges 3. Demonstrating the impact of archives by developing audiences and using data and evidence

4.2	In response to Dr Lomas' prior request for information on achievements, Dr Johnson advised that, under the 'Digital' agenda, the National Archives had won HLF funding for a trainee programme 'Bridging the Digital Gap' for 24 new digital technicians. A Digital Action Learning Set is being created to share knowledge and learning and a MoU has been established with Jisc to underpin future work on digital skills.
4.3	The forum discussed the scoping work undertaken in partnership with Jisc to establish the digital capacity in the sector. The Deputy Chair advised that feedback from the sector on the consultants leading the interviews had not been positive as they appeared to lack both technical and sector knowledge. The feeling amongst interviewees was that this had diminished the impact of the work. Dr Johnson and Dr Sexton thanked the Deputy Chair as they had been unaware of this feedback.
4.4	The Deputy Chair commented that the work of the Digital Capacity Challenge Panel will be key to address the burning issue in the UK sector, i.e. the need for practical guidance on digitisation techniques and methodologies. Dr Johnson advised that this had been a key discussion at the 'Archives Unlocked Board' inaugural meeting in April.
4.5	Under 'Resilience' Dr Johnson advised that Ms Kate Wheeler had led on the securing of an award from the Pilgrim Trust and another from the Wolfson Foundation to support the work of 'Archives Revealed'. This funding programme supports changes to increase transparency and greater diversity in cataloguing. A new grants scheme for 'testbed' funding has been developed to support innovation share the results of new ideas. Dr Lomas advised that sector feedback indicated that smaller scoping grants were seen as more helpful and encouraged greater exploration and creativity. Action: Dr Johnson will feed this back for capture in the programme.
4.6	Mr James advised that it may be difficult for The National Archives to sustain the current level of support under the Archives Revealed programme after the end of the current three year cycle. The Pilgrim Trust agrees with The National Archive's view that the programme should be self-sustaining. The Deputy Chair commented that The National Archives should inform the Forum of the work it is no longer able to undertake to include competition for workforce with the increasing demand for digital curation from business.
4.7	Mr James also advised that existing funding is being repurposed with The National Archives leveraging other grant giving bodies and setting up a charitable arm for the sector. So far it has been possible to balance these but it will be harder to justify when meeting the requirements of the Public Record Act. An increase in business rates is requiring The National Archives to balance its responsibilities to the sector and to its work. Partnering with organisations such as Jisc helps to make funding work harder.
4.8	The Deputy Chair recommended that The National Archives documents these challenges to evidence the sector's environmental pressures and felt that there has been patchy progress in the sector which is not reflected in the priorities. Mr James advised that the new corporate strategy, the successor to 'Archives Inspire' will be an opportunity to explore the sector's challenges; in the meantime the focus was on addressing challenges through partnership with the sector.
4.9	Dr Johnson advised that The National Archives were working on joint research with RLUK and Jisc on the impact priorities to show how archives were valued by different communities and to strengthen archives' abilities to measure impact on wellbeing. The Deputy Chair commended the work.

4.10	Dr Sexton advised that the Archives Unlocked Board was focusing on two key areas; workforce development and the digital capacity strategies. The Board members include the Finance and Digital Directors and external stakeholders include the Digital Preservation Coalition and ARA. In relation to workforce development, the stakeholder's feedback has been that the work to date provides a useful starting point but they want to hear The National Archives' views more clearly in both data interpretation and in drawing out key issues. The digital capacity strategy is less developed at this stage and will need a clearer diagnosis of where the sector is positioned. The landscape will underpin the strategy and what the sector's requirements from The National Archives are. More is to be done on The National Archive's role and how to broker advice to build confidence practically. <u>Research and Academic Liaison</u>
4.11	Dr Sexton updated the Forum. Last July five research priorities for The National Archives were articulated as laid out in paper 4. These will underpin all the Research activities in a coherent way. Two supporting initiatives have been launched; a professional fellowship scheme to provide the opportunity for staff to apply for time to work to work towards defined research outputs and the creation of an onsite centre to support research and act as a focal hub. This facility will be launched externally in July – feedback from staff has been that they value both the quiet and collaborative spaces.
4.12	A number of key initiatives are underway as part of the digital research programme; an annual digital lecture and a series of digital experimentation workshops with academic partners on areas of joint interest. These have included a workshop with the Cambridge Digital Humanities Network and a Machine Learning Hackathon led by Mr Mark Bell.
4.13	Initiatives to raise The National Archive's profile have included a research feed on Twitter aimed at academic audiences and the creation of a Research prospectus designed to attract new research partners. Last summer the first academic lecture series was hosted consisting of a discussion of the theme of 'Secrets and Lies' which attracted over 450 delegates. This year the theme will be 'Mapping Movement: People, Place and Power'.
4.14	The 'Discovering Collections Discovering Communities' conference in November last year was very successful with feedback from delegates showing that 97% would recommend the event to a colleague. The 2018-19 conference will be held in Birmingham.
4.15	Dr Sexton advised that part of her team's role is to focuses on increasing Research funding. As such she was pleased to advise that an AHRC award has been made to Dr Paul Carter as co-investigator in 'In Their Own Write: Contesting the New Poor Law 1834-1900' and to The National Archives as primary partner in a twenty year project to sort and catalogue the Prize Papers as part of a major project to showcase them.
4.16	The Deputy Chair asked whether The National Archives has a bid under each of the Research priorities. Dr Sexton advised that the ARCHANGEL project cuts across several priorities. Projects are actively being scoped including work led by Dr Simon Waddington under the theme of 'Risk, uncertainty and trust' which is informed by his work on the PERICLES project. Under 'Openness, access and use', The Friends of The National Archives are supporting work on PROB11 (Prerogative Court of Canterbury: Will Registers) and a research bid on handwritten text recognition is planned. The Research team is focusing on raising the visibility of research initiatives through the Big Ideas seminars and podcasts have a key role to play. The Deputy Chair agreed that the Big Ideas talks and associated podcasts on The National Archives' website have been of

	a high standard. Dr Lomas also highlighted the synergy between the 'Records DNA' research network and the 'Rethinking the Record' research priority.
4.17	Mr James advised that a recent Twitter posting by Oldenburg University on the Prize Papers had attracted a lot of interest; the public imagination has been captured by the idea of the unopened pouches. He and Dr Johnson are working on a related article for the UKSG journal 'Insights'. The Deputy Chair concluded the above points to the strengthening of The National Archive's vision. <u>Archive Sector – Update and Current Issues across the Sector</u>
4.18	Dr Sexton and Dr Johnson updated the Forum on three recent cases.
4.19	Dr Johnson advised that ASD is working with the Local Government Association to ensure that their website contains information on council's statutory duties with regard to archives. Mr James said that ASD has been largely successful in working to keep services open by reaching out to support services. Mr Gale reminded the Forum that The National Archives website contains legislative advice for Places of Deposit and what is permissive and what is enforceable.
5.	Annual Report
	<u>Advisory Council and Forum Annual Report</u>
5.1	Action: attendees were invited to comment on the report outside the meeting.
5.2	Mr Whaley updated the Forum on the Advisory Council Membership. The Forum usually operates with 7 members split between 4 members of the Advisory Council and 3 independent members appointed directly to the Forum. Since summer of 2017, there have been no independent members of the Forum, these members' terms having expired. The DCMS Public Appointments team has primarily focused on recruiting new members to the Council but The National Archives has been in discussion with them about options for filling the independent vacancies for the Forum. In the interim, the Master of the Rolls agreed that 5 members of the Council could serve on the Forum.
5.3	Working with DCMS, The National Archives has secured agreement from ministers that recruitment of independent members to the Forum does not need to be carried out as a public appointment in line with OCPA rules. The recruitment process can therefore be delegated to TNA to conduct with suitable candidates put forward for ministerial approval. This simplification of the process should enable recruitment from a broader field. The new Secretary, Ms Anne Hardy, will take this forward as a priority. Members requested that diversity in the appointments is a focus.
5.4	Mr James advised that there are around fifty Arm's Length Bodies whose recruitments are made under public appointments rules and which require approval from the Prime Minister's office. Now Forum recruitment can be managed directly by The National Archives and move ahead. Mr James noted the Deputy Chair's observation that Forum members will not be paid although this is being requested by Council members.
5.5	Dr Lomas requested that there is not such a lengthy gap before the next meeting as has been just experienced.

5.6	Members asked what the length of appointment would be. Mr Whaley confirmed that appointments made to the Council are for 3-4 years duration and The National Archives would expect Forum appointments to be approved on a similar basis; Dr Lomas added that for the Council this can be renewed subject to a maximum of 9 years.
6	Any Other Business
6.1	<u>Grenville Papers (PRO30/8)</u> Mr Gale updated the Forum on the sale of the Grenville Papers (PRO30/8) which are privately owned and were deposited with The National Archives in 1928 and 1938. The owner has now exercised his legal right to sell and the papers will be relocated to the British Library, ensuring both that the integrity of the collection and continuing public access for researchers is maintained. Members was pleased to note that the documents would continue to be available for public use and had been saved for the nation.
6.2	<u>Current Acceptance in Lieu cases</u> Mr Gale briefly reported on the current Acceptance in Lieu (AIL) cases previously circulated to the members of the Forum. The Forum agreed that the recommendations appear to be sensible.
6.3	There being no further business, the meeting was closed.