



## FORUM ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

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**Date:** Friday 20 January 2023  
**Time:** 13.00 - 16.00  
**Venue:** The National Archives  
**Chair:** Professor Leon Litvack (LL), Deputy Chair  
**Minutes:** Isabel Saunders, Senior Governance Coordinator and Secretary to the Advisory Council  
**Members:** Dr Nigel Fletcher (NF)  
Dr Helen Forde (HF)  
Dr Adele Redhead (AR), Independent Forum Member (via VC)  
Ms Jenny Shaw (JSh), Independent Forum Member (via VC)  
Dr Jeannette Strickland (JSt) (via VC)

### **Others in attendance:**

#### The National Archives (TNA)

Head of Governance  
Head of Archive and Research Grants  
Head of Archives Sector Funding  
Mr Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper (  
Dr Valerie Johnson (VJ) Director of Research and Collections  
Dr Tina Morton (TM) Head of Archives Sector Development  
Sector Development Manager  
Mr Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office  
Dr Pip Willcox (PW) Head of Research

#### External Attendees

Mr Tim Crumplin (TC) Head Research Archivist, Alfred Gillett Archive Trust

#### Observers

Strategic Partnerships Manager

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

- 1.1 The Deputy Chair welcomed members and other attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Master of the Rolls and submitted apologies for absence.
- 1.3 VJ declared she had been appointed as an external examiner on a Liverpool University archiving course.  
NF declared he had been appointed as a trustee of the Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust and Archive.

PW declared she was a board member of the John Rylands Institute.

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

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record subject to amendments proposed at the meeting.

### Matters Arising

- 2.2 Members discussed the options for their first meeting held outside of The National Archives and agreed a priority list for the options.
- 2.3 Members discussed the proposed inclusion of private archives as a strategic priority.
- 2.4 Members closed items 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 of the action log.

**Action:** IS to amend and upload the approved minutes and to update the action log.

**Action:** IS to liaise with external meeting venues to organise the Autumn Forum meeting.

**Action:** IS to add an item on private archive access as a strategic priority.

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

- 3.1 PW introduced the paper and invited questions from members.
- 3.2 Members were pleased to see the ongoing work on Beyond 2022.
- 3.3 Members asked about the results of the early career fellowships. PW noted this was a pilot scheme, however there had been significant interest at this early level and it was hoped this would transfer into serious application.
- 3.4 Members highlighted the Artificial Intelligence for Government Knowledge and Information Managers session, which The National Archives had recently run, and asked if it would be possible for the Forum to receive this presentation.
- 3.5 Members noted the update.

**Action:** PW and IS to supply the AI for GKIM presentation for the Forum.

## **4. The Alfred Gillett Trust's Funding Experience**

- 4.1 Mr Tim Crumplin, Head Research Archivist at the Alfred Gillett Archive Trust, joined the meeting to discuss the archive's experience of applying for and receiving funding from the Covid-19 Archives at Risk Fund, as well as discussing how the funding had been used and the key learning points from the ongoing work. He highlighted:
- 4.1.1 The history of the archive, the archival collection, and the conditions which the material had been held in previously.
- 4.1.2 The impact of the Covid-19 lockdown on the collection, staffing and the original project plan.
- 4.1.3 The archive's first experience of engaging with The National Archives, applying for funding for the project, and the timing of application and receipt of funding.
- 4.1.4 How the funding was used for refrigerated units as opposed to shipping containers as originally planned.

- 4.1.5 The utility and superiority, particularly in price and environmental control features, of these units compared with shipping containers.
- 4.1.6 The future for the archive, beyond the initial funding, because of the work undertaken.

- 4.2 Members asked more about the usage of the archive before the covid-19 pandemic. Mr Crumplin noted the usage before relocation and restoration had been lower; the plan to move the records was in anticipation of restoration to increase viewership and coincide with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of Clark's. Mr Crumplin noted how invaluable the funding had been in achieving this.
- 4.3 PW asked Mr Crumplin if the archive would consider approaching a university to organise a doctoral partnership based on the archives. Mr Crumplin noted there had been reasonable academic interest in the collection before Covid-19; whilst this had diminished, he was keen to increase collaboration with academia.
- 4.4 Members asked what action the archive took to renovate the refrigerated units to make them suitable for the records. Mr Crumplin responded that had they purchased shipping units, they would have required retrofitting of insulation; however as these were refrigerated units, they already included appropriate insulation and there were existing trunking and drainage holes to aid in the installation of electrification, lighting, air conditioning and dehumidifiers. The units themselves were much cheaper than similar-sized shipping containers and as so few renovations were required were much cheaper to bring into service. Members encouraged Mr Crumplin to write up his experience in using these units as it would be valuable to the wider sector.
- 4.5 Members encouraged Mr Crumplin that to apply for accredited status. TM noted that The National Archives that regional networks could support organisations of any size to apply for accredited status.
- 4.6 JJ asked what the plan would be for the units after project completion. Mr Crumplin responded they would remain useful in case of any issues in the record's permanent home; however the hope was to also use the units as exhibition and outreach spaces.
- 4.7 Members thanks Mr Crumplin for his thoughts and Mr Crumplin left the meeting.

## **5. Archive and Research Grants and Funding Update**

- 5.1 JB introduced the item and produced a presentation for members summarising the ongoing work since the last Forum update. The presentation focused on the future for sector funding and The National Archives' role as part of this. The information for this had been built through much stakeholder engagement. The results of this revealed that whilst some funds were extremely popular and competitive, other funds received very low recognition and as a result were significantly less competitive. The data also highlighted the types of organisations applying for funding, including their size, budget, and the number of applications for funding they make per year. The data showed that The National Archives was viewed positively on approachability and fairness; however, the size of grants available was viewed less favourably. In conclusion to this JB had created five objectives for The National Archives' funding:
  - 5.1.1 To focus on funding what the sector needs
  - 5.1.2 To use its knowledge as a practising archive to inform the funding available
  - 5.1.3 To enable partnerships and facilitate knowledge exchange
  - 5.1.4 To reduce barriers and require the minimum admin possible for applicants
  - 5.1.5 To produce evaluable, sustainable outcomes, evidence, and data
- 5.2 Members highlighted the statistic showing that the average applicant spent thirty-five on an application. They asked how The National Archives planned to assist applicants to expedite the time taken to apply. JH responded it was important to only ask for necessary information,

to ensure any supporting material for applicants was easily accessible, and to provide information to applicants about the process. This had been used for two recent grants which both had complimentary webinars. This was supported by the work of regional networks, who could liaise with these smaller applicants. JB added that previous schemes had been added to or built upon, and so in these cases it was necessary to strip this back to only the necessary elements wherever possible.

- 5.3 Members noted the cataloguing fund was the most popular with applicants; they asked if the projects people were applying for were broad-sweep cataloguing, or more detailed cataloguing work. JH responded this varied, depending often on the scale of the organisation. As a selection marker The National Archives sought to fund projects with significant collections which would open further opportunities.
- 5.4 Members asked what The National Archives was doing to encourage the dissemination of project outcomes. JB highlighted this as an area where The National Archives could improve, this would focus on more late-stage project monitoring as well as creating spaces for people to share their work. This could include showcases or appropriate networks but involved an ongoing discussion on what options were most appropriate.
- 5.5 Members asked how The National Archives assessed whether an applicant organisation was an eligible and recognised archive and whether any archive in receipt of funding was required to provide public access. JH noted they used definitions focusing more on the collection rather than on the archive, and this avoided unnecessary barriers. He also confirmed that the conditions of any grant required public access for 10 years after receipt of the grant.
- 5.6 Members noted the update.

## **6. The National Archives' Work with Insolvency Practitioners**

- 6.1 PT introduced the item and produced a presentation for members summarising The National Archives' work with insolvency practitioners to ensure that collections of worth were not lost following a company's going into administration. She summarised:
  - 6.1.1 The creation of the Crisis Management Team, its composition, and the work it conducts, including the production of guidance
  - 6.1.2 The mindset of insolvency practitioners, including their legal obligation to create capital from assets for creditors, and their concerns regarding data protection legislation.
  - 6.1.3 The example set following the dissolution of Thomas Cook and the precedent this created.
  - 6.1.4 The ongoing dialogue with different insolvency companies and practitioners, and the importance of building these relationships.
  - 6.1.5 The importance of also working with existing businesses on creating formal archives and safeguarding their futures.
- 6.2 Members congratulated The National Archives on its work in this area. Members asked how the team approached conversations with administrators who were concerned about seeking financial value from assets which comprised archives. PT responded that part of the dialogue included emphasising the importance of archives. It was particularly useful where administrator had an interest or background in history as this could help in demonstrating the public good of archives. She also noted that where archives required physical space, and thus costed money to retain this could be helpful if a new home had been found for the records.
- 6.3 Members asked about the process once a collection had been secured and how a new home was identified. PT answered that the Crisis Management Team would contact archive services best placed to take the material in and coordinate with them. TM noted in some

cases, where records were popular, the Team will take expressions of interest for the most appropriate service.

6.4 PT emphasised how much the situation had progressed in recent years and that as the Team had more successes, the wider administrator sector became more aware of best practice and of the work of the team to ensure collections were kept together.

6.5 Members noted the information.

## **7. Archives Sector Update**

7.1 TM introduced the report.

7.2 Members noted the update.

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

8.1 JJ introduced the paper and invited questions from members.

8.2 Members complimented The National Archives on its Treason exhibition and requested the link to the curatorial film be circulated as well as statistics on the viewing figures of the exhibit and video.

8.3 Members asked about the implications of the move from the Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) team at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to the Arts and Libraries team. JJ stated that The National Archives had previously been an anomaly within the ALB team and that moving to the arts and libraries team would allow for more formal sponsorship. Whilst The National Archives would still be particularly unique compared to other bodies reporting to this team it would be possible to use the move to create greater synergies between libraries and the archive sector.

8.4 Members complimented The National Archives on its engagement sessions with those in the galleries, libraries, archives, museums, and academic sectors to see how they were using the remote and hybrid techniques employed during covid-19 as part of their ongoing operations going forward. VJ noted this may be a useful topic for a future Forum meeting.

8.5 Members asked for an update on The National Archives' sector leadership plan. VJ noted that many conversations had taken place, including around specific leadership roles with various organisations. The National Archives was currently building a draft collaborative agreement.

8.6 Members were pleased to note The National Archives use of popular history podcasts to engage a wider audience and asked how this had converted into visits to The National Archives. JJ responses that they had been surprised by the numbers of people who engaged with the podcast and that this had translated into a slight increase in the number of visitors to the exhibit.

8.7 Members noted the update.

**Action:** IS to circulate the link to the Treason curatorial film and relevant statistics.

**Action:** IS to add an item on the use of remote and hybrid technology in the culture sector.

## **9. Skills Audit**

9.1 IS introduced the item and invited questions and comments from members.

9.2 Members confirmed it would be useful to have an item on the relevant legislation governing private archives.

**ACTION:** IS to plan an item on private archive legislation for the Forum.

**10. Any Other Business**

10.1 IS confirmed she would circulate all relevant presentations to members.

**ACTION:** IS to circulate the presentations shown to members at the meeting.

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

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 15.47pm.

**Date of next meeting:** 13 June 2023