

PUBLIC
RECORD
OFFICE

The National Archives



BEYOND THE PRO

PLACES OF DEPOSIT BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 2002

**The National Archives:
PRO and HMC functions to come together**

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PRO and HMC functions to come together



Following the recommendations of the independent review on the Historical Manuscripts Commission undertaken during 2000-01 by Sir Geoffrey Chipperfield, the government has announced that it is bringing together the functions of the Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission in a single new organisation to be named the National Archives. This body will report to the Lord Chancellor.

The Historical Manuscripts Commission's role is an advisory one. It includes inspection services and involves the maintenance of the National Register of Archives (NRA). The HMC specialises in inspecting and maintaining the standards of private archives.

Sarah Tyacke, Keeper of Public Records, has made the following announcement on the merger: 'I am very pleased for the PRO – and for our new HMC colleagues – that we will be realising the vision of a National Archives. We will be better able to provide a more effective and efficient service as we will be combining – and further developing and improving – our two organisations' expertise to both public and private archives'.

The coming together of the two bodies is expected to be a gradual process spread over at least this financial year and the next. The changeover will happen formally in April 2003 but some practical details still remain to be worked out. It is expected that the HMC functions and its 25 staff will transfer to the PRO building at Kew within the next 18 months.

The Keeper and staff at the PRO hope that the merging of functions will appear to be seamless to our public places of deposit and private archival customers. We request your encouragement, support and trust as we progress into this ambitious new venture which will involve major changes for our staff and for colleagues at the HMC.

The National Archives vision...

The National Archives will maintain the quality of advice and policy making for government owners of private archives and will provide consolidated national leadership for the sector. It will offer more efficient delivery of all services and better value for money. In particular:

- There will be a single lead body to take forward the Government Policy on Archives and the associated Action Plan, working with other bodies such as Re-source: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries.
- The full range of services that the PRO and HMC offer to all our stakeholders and users will be maintained and, where possible, improved. We will be developing a single regime for inspecting archive repositories.
- Our heritage of historic records, in both public and private hands, will be better managed, safeguarded and promoted under single leadership.
- Users will have improved access, via the internet, to information about both public and private records, consolidating the work of the National Register of Archives and recent PRO initiatives such as our on-line catalogue, PROCAT and Access to Archives (A2A).
- Policy and problem-solving across the whole archives sector will be better co-ordinated and will be especially important in critical areas such as coping with new technology and in helping to implement and monitor new information legislation such as the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.

The report by Sir Geoffrey Chipperfield can be located on the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) website at www.culture.gov.uk. You can find out more information about the HMC at www.hmc.gov.uk; including an article on the Chipperfield Report in *HMC Newsletter* Issue no 5, Summer 2002. If any staff at places of deposit for public records have any queries about the forthcoming merger please direct them to Steven Jones (Head of Archive Inspection Services Unit) - see contact details at the end of this bulletin.

Aspiring to improved access

Many of the Archivists and staff in Places of Deposit (PoDs) for public records will be aware of the existence of the Draft *Standard for Access to Archives – A Working Document* published in February 2000 that identifies best practice principles for the provision of access facilities and services to 2005 and beyond. This working document provided some important first steps towards identifying principal areas that contribute towards high quality and inclusive archival access services. The issues addressed in this document were: aims and objectives for access; equity in the provision of services; communication and openness; responsiveness; effectiveness and efficiency; service management; staff participation and responsibilities; user responsibilities; service information; access to services; access to content; services for new researchers; on-site delivery service and remote delivery service. The Public Service Quality Group have now proposed that this Draft paper should be developed towards full British standard status. If the standard is finally accepted as a full British standard it is likely to be adopted by the Archive Inspection Services Unit (or its successor body) as the basis for its inspection criteria of access facilities in PoDs for public records. Consequently, AISU is very pleased to hear of any

news from the PoD community where access services have been developed with best practice principles in mind. If your Archive has recently undergone improvements to its facilities and services we would like to hear from you. Please contact Rod Ward-Horner – see contact details at the end of this Bulletin – so that we can arrange to publicise your achievements. Don't keep it to yourselves, trumpet it out loud and clear so that we can all share ideas and aspire to provide the best for our research communities and users.

In this context, this month's *Bulletin* features a distinct Access theme: articles by Stephen Walton (Curator of the Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum) on the new improved 'Dome' Reading Room; David Hay (Archivist, BT Group Archives) on BT's 'Connected Earth' virtual museum, a piece by Susan Healy on FOI Publication Schemes, Archives and Finding Aids and our own Catherine Redfern who reports on the London Museums, Archives and Libraries event on Social Inclusion and Access to mention a few. If you would like a copy of the Draft *Standard on Access to Archives* please contact Rod Ward-Horner – see contact details at the end of the Bulletin.

'Dome' Reading Room at the Imperial War Museum

On the evening of the 26 June this year the Imperial War Museum's Departments of Documents and Printed Books hosted a relatively modest but well-attended party in the IWM's Lambeth Road 'headquarters', the occasion being the refurbishment of the two departments' shared public reference facilities there. Countless professional historians, students, family historians, journalists and many other kinds of researcher know the reading room simply as 'the Dome', for that is essentially what it is: the dome which sits atop the former Bethlem Royal Hospital building on Lambeth Road and which housed the chapel of 'Bedlam' before that institution moved out and the current occupier moved in. Inevitably, the transition from lunatic asylum to war museum (between 1930 and 1936) provides an endless fund of ironic observation along the lines of 'well, not much change there then!', but museum staff take this in their stride and (mostly) maintain a diplomatic silence on the matter. Once in the reading room, visitors have access to the Museum's vast collections of books, journals, printed ephemera, personal diaries, letters and other documents relating to most, if not all, aspects of 20th-century conflict, for which the IWM is internationally renowned.



The 'Dome' has been in fairly constant use as a reading room since the mid-1960s, an occupancy interrupted in its infancy by an arson attack in 1968 which necessitated a total refurbishment, completed in 1975. The former chapel (which still boasts a very impressive plaque listing the Ten Commandments) was then left in peace until late last year, when it was decided that it really did need a new coat of paint and an improvement in the reading facilities. A generous grant from the Friends of the Imperial War Museum enabled the installation of new computer terminals and lap-top outlets, amongst other improvements, and there is also enhanced provision for disabled readers. Visitors to the reading room can now consult the



electronic catalogues of the Departments of Documents and Printed Books as well as those of the IWM's other collecting departments (many of which are not located in the main building but in the nearby All Saints Annexe – another former hospital), as well as the database of the National Inventory of War Memorials, recently transferred to the care of the Department of Printed Books. The generosity of the Friends also means that small groups of school pupils, family historians and other users can now be better accommodated than before.

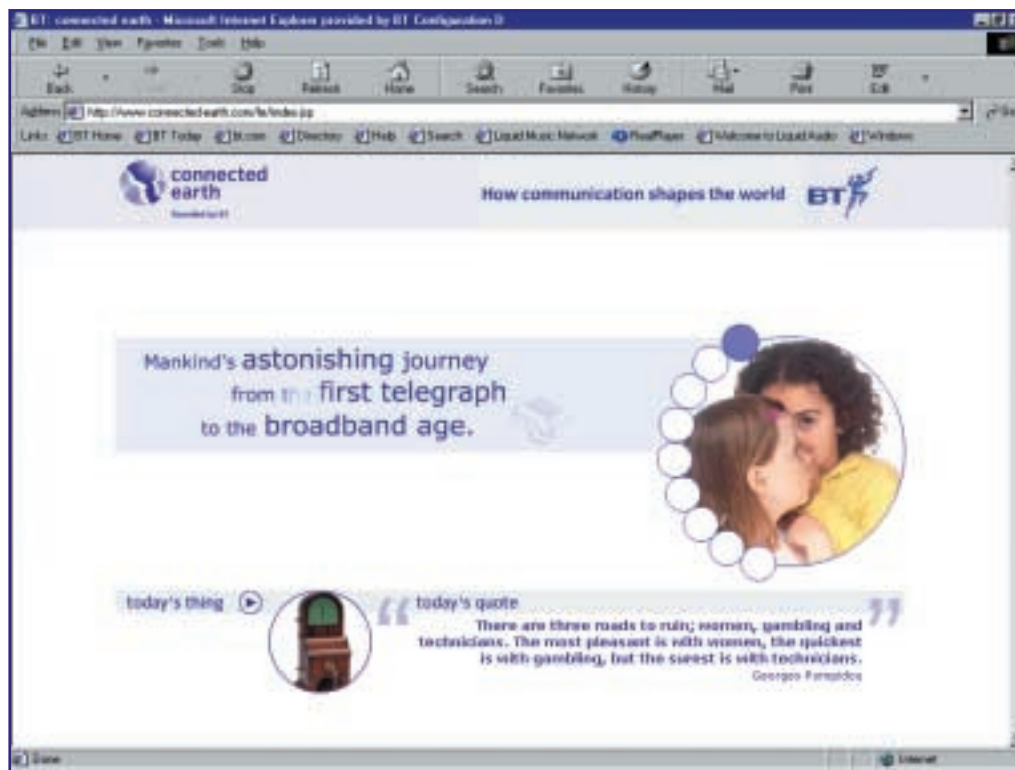
The reading room remains a fairly small place which can quickly fill up in the summer months; a prior appointment is, therefore, strongly recommended, so that staff can reserve a seat and, where appropriate, prepare materials in advance. There is a large collection of reference books and other published sources immediately to hand in the reading room itself, although most of the Department of Printed Books' holdings have to be retrieved from closed stores, as do the manuscripts and unpublished papers in the care of the Department of Documents.

The 'Dome' reading room is open Mondays – Fridays, and offers a more restricted service on Saturdays, between 10am and 5pm. Prospective research visitors can make an appointment with reading room staff by telephoning 020 7416 5344, or they can contact staff in the two departments directly on 020 7416 5342 (Printed Books) and 020 7416 5221/5222/5223 (Documents).

Stephen Walton, Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum



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1. The writer Iain McEwan (author of *Atonement*) speaking at the launch of the refurbished 'Dome' Reading Room.
 2. John Snow (journalist and broadcaster) amongst the guests at the launch.
 3. The new computer facilities at the IWM, where readers can consult the electronic catalogues.
 4. Specially designed desks and computer terminals for researchers with disabilities
 5. Stephen Walton (Curator of the Department of Documents, left) and Rod Suddaby (IWM Keeper of Department of Documents) in the newly refurbished 'Dome' Reading Room.
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Connected Earth: BT's heritage project

For many years BT was unique as a public limited company in directly funding and managing a 'place of deposit' to discharge its statutory obligations under the Public Records Acts (Alliance & Leicester plc now have similar obligations for the records of Girobank, its previously state-owned commercial banking business). The Acts apply to BT records created up to the date of the company's privatisation in 1984, and also to those of its predecessors – the state owned Post Office Telecommunications business and the private telegraph and telephone companies the Post Office took over during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

These responsibilities are undertaken within the company on its behalf by BT Group Archives, a BSI 5454 accredited repository with public access and a fully functional business archive. BT Group Archives has recently been playing a major part in BT's new ground breaking heritage project, the Connected Earth Museum on the Internet. This initiative is another example of BT safeguarding and providing wider access to its heritage, which includes collections of national significance in that the archives and artefacts together reflect the development of telecommunications services in the UK from their very beginning.



The Right Hon. Tessa Jowell MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, officially launched Connected Earth at the BT Tower in London on 11 April. The event, hosted by BT Chairman Sir Christopher Bland, offered the first view of the Connected Earth website, and involved leading figures from the heritage sector. The event also included a panel debate on the future of modern collections, chaired by Lord Evans of Temple-Guiting, chairman of Resource, The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries.

Connected Earth went live in mid-June, and delivers telecommunications history in two ways – virtually through a new web-based museum (www.connected-earth.com), and physically by major new exhibitions and galleries being created by eight partner museums around the country, featuring objects from BT's extensive heritage collection. When completed, Connected Earth will represent a £6 million investment by BT in the future of telecommunications heritage, making it accessible across the world and preserved for future generations.

Appropriately, Connected Earth uses the very latest communications technology to bring to life the communications technologies of the last two centuries. This multi-media, database-driven website is underpinned by a sophisticated content management system which will provide easy access to the wealth of information via a range of interactive navigation tools to millions of people in the UK, as well as around the world.

Connected Earth will be one of the largest virtual museums in existence. At launch, the database already held several hundred pages of information and images. During the course of 2002 this will continue to build to approaching 2,000 pages. Hundreds of objects in the BT heritage collection have been especially photographed, and thousands of documents, pictures and illustrations scanned from the BT Group Archives collections.

The site includes pictures of artefacts, oral or written reminiscences from people who used to work in the industry, film clips, and simple explanations of how things work. There are numerous interactives, including games and puzzles, and also a substantial educational content, with material developed specifically for primary and secondary stages of the national curriculum.

David Hay, Head of BT Group Archives

For further information visit the Connected Earth site, or contact David Hay, Head of BT Group Archives (david.a.hay@bt.com).

FOI Publication Schemes, Archives and Finding Aids

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to set out some of the issues archives offices will need to consider when constructing entries in their authority's publication scheme to cover the archives they hold and the finding aids describing those archives. This is not as straightforward as it might seem and I hope to identify some potential pitfalls and suggest ways of overcoming or circumventing them.

Why include these entries in publication schemes?

Why do archives offices need to include such entries in their authority's publication scheme? Well, the simple answer to that is if they do not include an entry for their archives, they may not be able to claim the exemption at section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (hereafter referred to as the s 21 exemption). The entry for finding aids can support the entry for archives and also help meet FOI obligations in its own right – I shall explain this below.

The FOI Act gives members of the public two key rights:

- the right to be told whether specified information is held – s 1(1)(a) – this is the duty to confirm or deny information is held
- the right to be provided with that information – s 1(1)(b) – this is the duty to supply the information

However those rights are subject to exemptions and, for archives offices, one of the most important exemptions is the s 21 exemption. Section 21 says that if information is 'reasonably accessible', an authority need not comply with section 1. It goes on to say that information is to be taken to be reasonably accessible if the authority is obliged under other legislation to provide it or if it is made available in accordance with the authority's publication scheme.

The logic therefore is that an archives office seeking to avoid doing research in response to every FOI request for information will need to be in a position to claim the s 21 exemption and to do so must include a suitable entry in its authority's publication scheme. Note that it may not be possible to claim the exemption for every request for information – the term 'reasonably accessible' can be expected to apply only to archives that are catalogued and open for research – but probably to a substantial majority of such requests.

I should add that FOIA rights of access and exemptions do not apply until January 2005 – until then, for public record holdings, the criteria for extended closure described in the PRO's Access Manual will apply – so it is a matter of providing now for the future.

The archives entry

Let us look first at the entry for the archives. How this is framed will depend on a number of factors particular to each archives office. I will illustrate this by explaining how the PRO's scheme entries have been formulated.

Our concern has been to ensure that our entry is logical, intelligible, and does not commit us inadvertently to releasing closed records – remember that release of information promised in a publication scheme is a statutory obligation. Although the majority of the PRO's archival holdings are open, some are not and our scheme entry therefore must avoid committing us to releasing records that are closed, currently under the Public Records Act and in future by the application of FOI exemptions.

An entry for the archives we hold must be hedged around in some way therefore. There are at least three ways in which this can be achieved:

- By defining and describing the class as 'archives other than those closed in accordance with section 5(1) of the Public Records Act'. From January 2005 this would become 'archives other than those covered by an FOI exemption or an exception in the Environmental Information Regulations'. On the face of it this is the simplest option but it may present problems once FOI is fully implemented. The present Commissioner has indicated she does not want generic exemption statements and expects to see specific exemptions identified. However, it is likely that a wide range of exemptions will apply to the archives, probably more than can be included in a single scheme entry. This option is not recommended.
- By limiting the class to 'archives other than those noted in the finding aids as closed'. This simplifies the entry for the archives but will work only if finding aids indicate the open/closed status of each item (or each series if they have a common status) and, possibly, the exemption. This is the option PRO has adopted.
- By defining and describing the class as 'archives other than those closed in accordance with section 5(1) of the Public Records Act' (from January 2005 this would become 'archives other than those covered by an FOI exemption or an exception in the Environmental Information Regulations'). To this could be added 'the exemptions applying to specific collections [fonds] are identified in the finding aids.' The collection level description would then identify the exemptions applying to that collection. This is the compromise option: a smaller range of exemptions can be expected to apply to each collection than to the whole holdings, which makes it more specific than the first option, but it would be slightly less onerous to apply than the second option if the information is not already included in detailed catalogues.

I would welcome suggestions of further options.

The entry should also make it clear what is provided free and what must be paid for. So, for example, access to original or microfilm records in a searchroom might be free but copies supplied only on payment of a charge. If this is not specified in the scheme it may be difficult to impose charges. It would be sensible to include also an indication of the scale of the charge in order to comply with the requirement in the Environmental Information Regulations for a schedule of charges to be made available. Note that the FOI Fees Regulations will not apply to provision of information through a publication scheme.

The finding aids entry

One reason for including an entry for finding aids in a publication scheme has been provided above. The second reason arises from the duty to confirm or deny information is held (s 1(1)(a)). It could be argued that provision of detailed finding aids to the archives goes some way towards meeting this duty, if we assume that the s 21 exemption can be claimed on the basis of probability rather than certainty (it is not entirely clear how claiming the s 21 exemption sits with s 17, which specifies what you must tell applicants when claiming an exemption).

How should the entry for finding aids be framed? Here the main complicating factor is that descriptions of some closed records may themselves be closed because they reveal the information the closure is designed to protect. This will usually be where the catalogue description contains personal information that should not be disclosed, either because it would cause substantial damage or distress or because there is a statutory prohibition, eg, the names of victims of rape and many other sexual offences cannot be disclosed under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 and the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992.

The PRO's entry refers explicitly to PROCAT, our publicly accessible catalogue. It does not, therefore, include descriptions held outside PROCAT because they reveal information that should not be placed in the public domain for the reasons given above. By this means we have avoided a commitment to provide information that should not be disclosed. Archives offices should consider whether they need to specify that only publicly accessible finding aids are covered by their scheme entry.

This entry too should make it clear what is available free (e.g., on-line and on-site access) and what must be charged for (e.g. photocopies).



Conclusion

It has not been possible to provide a 'one size fits all' model entry for archives office. I hope, however, that this article has alerted places of deposit to some of the issues involved in constructing suitable publication scheme entries for archives and finding aids. I should make it clear that I have not yet sought the Information Commissioner's views on all this. Please get in touch with me if you want to discuss any issues further: my email address is susan.healy@pro.gov.uk.

Susan Healy
Head of Information Legislation Unit
Public Record Office

Social inclusion and access

London Museums Archives and Libraries (LMAL)
'All Together Now' series of events for museum, archive and library staff across London. 19 April 2002

Did you know that 8.6 million people consider themselves to be disabled and that 1 in 4 families have a disabled member? That 1.97 million adults have a visual impairment, 1.2 million have a learning disability, and 8.4 million use a hearing aid? That 300 different languages are spoken in Greater London?

These are just some of the things I learned when I attended the London Museums, Archives and Libraries (LMAL) event on Social Inclusion and Access in April. The day was part of a series of free events organised by LMAL for the three domains in London, which covered various topics including social inclusion, ICT, lifelong learning, audience development, and access.

Social Inclusion and Access can sometimes seem like the latest fashionable buzz-words, but as these statistics show, they affect a very large section of society and should concern us all. In the end, social inclusion and access are really about removing basic inequalities and reducing the barriers that prevent people enjoying and utilising the collections in our care.

The day began with an introduction to each of the domains in London. Emma Halsall, Archives Development Officer at LARC, presented some interesting statistics on the archive sector. Referring to the results of the PSQG Survey of Visitors 2001, she explained that 44% of archive users were 60 or older, and 35% were between 45 and 59. An amazing 93% of archive users were of 'British ethnicity.'

John Vincent from the Social Exclusion Planning Network introduced the concept of Social Inclusion, saying that we should try to look beyond the official Government definition of the socially excluded, as it does not include other socially excluded people such as asylum seekers, refugees, or lesbians/gay men. He commented that social exclusion cannot be solved simply by obtaining more money, or even by improving physical access. Rather, there needs to be a deep, fundamental cultural change to all parts of the service. He also raised the question of how this issue can be 'mainstreamed' – in other words, how can we get all staff interested and involved? How can we raise awareness of the issues?

He identified several current problems:

- Social inclusion work is currently dependent on project money but there needs to be more of a long-term strategy and focus.
- It is currently too 'buildings'-focused and dependent on on-site work. We need to develop outreach as well.
- The various professions need to look at themselves and ask whether they are inclusive. (For example, there is only one black chief librarian, and the UCL Archive course has not had a black UK student for the last 8 years). This could be addressed by improving training and entry into the profession, for example by making more use of GCSE work experience placements.

Caroline Lang, Access Advisor at Resource spoke next, giving an introduction to Access. She explained that the two basic principles were that collections and services must **relate** to everyone, and be **accessible to everyone**. She spoke about how a 'social' model of disability has come to replace a 'medical' one. For example, a medical view of disability would emphasise the individual's problem: 'she cannot access the building because she is disabled' whereas the social model takes a different approach: 'she cannot access the building because it is not accessible.'

When we think of accessibility we usually immediately think of physical access, and wheelchairs in particular. But less than 5% of disabled people use wheelchairs, and barriers to access can also be:

- sensory as well as physical (is the information available in a different format?)
- intellectual (do you need extensive background knowledge to understand it? is the language easily understandable?)
- cultural (does the collection reflect everyone? is the information marketed to everyone?)
- attitudinal
- financial

After lunch, various case studies were presented from the three domains. First, three case studies were given on social inclusion projects.

Rachel Tranter, curator of the Orleans House Gallery, spoke about a project to work with young people who had been excluded from education. Working with local Pupil Referral Units and in partnership with larger Galleries, the Orleans staff were able to involve vulnerable young people with rewarding art projects. She presented useful tips and advice from her own experience, such as the discovery that young people can be intimidated by the grand-looking Orleans building itself. She also emphasised that personal relationships are key to the success of any project.

Shiraz Durrani from Merton Library & Heritage Service spoke next, about Merton's strategic approach to meeting the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. He stressed that it is important to find out what people's needs really are, instead of assuming you know what their needs are. Resources are certainly necessary, he said, but it is most important to ensure that they are used in the right way. To be successful, services need to have a vision for social inclusion, and it is important to have effective leadership and a useful outreach strategy. Most importantly, the service must be accountable, transparent, and it should involve and empower both staff and the community it serves in the process of change by consultation and feedback.

Finally, **Carol Tulloch** of the Archives & Museum of Black Heritage (AMBH), described the partnership 'Day of Record' event between AMBH and the V&A. The annual event took the title of 'Nails, Weaves and Naturals: hairstyles and nail art of Black Britain.' The event included an exhibition featuring archive photographs of hairstyles and nail art throughout history, and members of the public were encouraged to come along to have their own fantastic creations photographed and recorded. A resulting exhibition was sent to local hairdressers during Black History Month, and photographs appeared on the V&A website.

Next, we heard from services which had aimed to improve their provisions for access.

Sophie Perkins from London's Transport Museum talked about the development of an Access Group which was established by the Museum to look at issues of intellectual and physical access, audit existing services, and become a source of expertise for the rest of the Museum. The group contained members from different areas of the Museum in order to spread awareness of the issues within different sections. The Museum obtained a grant for British Sign Language, and began to offer visually impaired tours around the Museum, handling sessions and touch tours. The RNIB and RNID provided training. The tours are now embedded into the Museum programme and have been very successful. An Access Guide has now been produced, and 50% of staff have now been on disability awareness training.

Sonia Rasbery then talked about her experiences of developing an Access Policy for the Consignia Museum and Archive. A working party was established and an action plan was developed to make sure the policy was put into action. She explained that the first difficulty was defining terms: what exactly do we really mean by "access"? This was particularly an issue as Museum and Archive staff tended to have different interpretations and priorities.

To finish the day, **Adie Scott** and **Rachel Hasted** from Croydon talked about the development of an Access Guide for Croydon Clocktower, which contains a library, cinema, café, shop, galleries, museum and archive. As 22% of the population of Croydon are from ethnic minorities and 12% of the population have disabilities, social inclusion and access are key issues for Croydon. First, audits of the Clocktower were completed as part of Best Value, and these showed that they were underachieving in attracting disabled people. Particular problems were identified such as a lack of information, poor signage, a lack of phones (and phones at the wrong height!), problems with the ticket desk and a general lack of communication with people with disabilities. An Access Advisory Group was established with staff from all sectors. Stakeholders from the local community were invited, and staff worked closely with the voluntary sector who were invaluable for providing specialised skills and knowledge. The Access Guide was completed, and advice was taken on layout, content, font size and even type of paper. It is available in Braille, tape format, online, and it was promoted through the local talking newspaper.

Catherine Redfern, Archive Inspection Services Unit, Public Record Office

Resources

Here is just a small selection of some of useful publications and resources on social inclusion and access. Although many of them are aimed at Museums, Galleries and Libraries, many of the principles and ideas are of relevance to Archives.

Facts and statistics

- The Disability Discrimination Act applies to 1.5 million people
- 82% of disabled people were not born with their disability
- Less than 5% of disabled people use a wheelchair
- 75% of visually impaired people can read large print
- By 2021 more than 1/3 of the population will be over 65 - and many impairments are age-related.



Useful publications

Draft National Standard for Access to Archives
www.pro.gov.uk/archives/psqg/National_Standard_Summary.htm

Centres for Social Change - DCMS
www.culture.gov.uk/heritage/social_change.html

Taking Part: An Audit of Social Inclusion work in Archives - NCA
www.nca.archives.org/reports.htm

Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All: Co-operating Across the Sectors to Tackle Social Exclusion - DCMS
www.culture.gov.uk/PDF/libraries_archives_for_all.pdf

Developing New Audiences for the Heritage - Research by PLB Consulting Ltd for HLF
www.hlf.org.uk in 'research and consultation' section

Survey of provision for disabled users - SOLON consultants for Resource
www.resource.gov.uk/information/execsummaries/es_solon.asp

Developing an Access Policy - Caroline Lang
www.museums.gov.uk/pdf/education/Dev_Access_Policy.pdf

Case Studies mentioned above

Orleans House Gallery
www.richmond.gov.uk/depts/opps/eal/leisure/arts/orleanshouse

V&A / AMBH Day of Record
www.vam.ac.uk/exploring/contemporary/contemporary_events/day_of_record/

London's Transport Museum Access pages
www.ltmuseum.co.uk/access/

Croydon Clocktower Access Guide
www.croydon.gov.uk/ledept/clocktower/access.htm

Article by Rachel Hasted
www.magda.org.uk/croydon.html

Useful websites

Disability directory
www.resource.gov.uk/information/publications/disdir.pdf

A model for consultation with disabled people
www.resource.gov.uk/information/research/draw00.asp

Library services for visually impaired people: a manual of best practice
www.nlbuk.org/bpm/contens.html

The Adapt Trust
www.adapttrust.co.uk

Museums and Galleries Disability Association
www.magda.org.uk/index.html

Centre for Accessible Environments
www.cae.org.uk

RNIB
www.rnib.org.uk

Government Disability Website
www.disability.gov.uk

National Information Forum
www.nif.org.uk

Worldwide Web Consortium: Web Accessibility Guidelines
www.w3.org/WAI

Centre for Applied and Social Technologies
www.cast.org

AbilityNet
www.abilitynet.co.uk

Plain English Campaign
www.plainenglish.co.uk

National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service
www.nacvs.org.uk

Black History Month October 2002

On behalf of the Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA), my colleague Oku Ekpenyon and I are in the process of collating an events list for October 2002 to advertise and promote the wide range of Black History Month celebrations, events and activities taking place throughout the UK this year.

We are particularly keen to receive details about local history talks, seminars, displays, exhibitions, music and drama performances, book/poetry readings, educational activities and oral history projects, etc. organised by archives/record offices, libraries, museums, schools, colleges and community centres.

If you are planning to host a Black History Month event this October (or have read about an event taking place in your locality) – which celebrates the diverse histories, life experiences and cultural contributions of Britain's black, Asian and other minority ethnic peoples – please take a few minutes to provide BASA with the following details:

- name/title of the event
- date(s) / when the event is to take place / programme schedule
- venue (incl. full address please)
- time / venue opening hours
- short description about the event(s)
- contact details for further enquiries (preferably specifying a contact name and email address):
- telephone / Fax number for bookings (if applicable)
- URL / website for further information
- any additional information (e.g. costs, access conditions, travel details, etc.).

BASA aims to advertise the events via publications such as BBC History Magazine and the BASA Newsletter, and also via the Internet, from August onwards, so please let us know your plans as soon as possible in order to give your event(s) maximum publicity in the run up to October 2002.

Event details can be sent via email to either Carol Dixon (c.dixon@sta01.ioe.ac.uk) or Oku Ekpenyon (oku_e@hotmail.com) and can also be posted directly to the BASA email discussion list (c/o BASA@jiscmail.ac.uk). Where possible, please use the heading 'BHM 2002' in the subject line of your replies to this email, and include a contact name so that we can reply with requests for further information, if required.

I look forward to hearing from you...

Best wishes

Carol Dixon

NB: The Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA) was established in 1991 to encourage research into the history of black, Asian and other minority ethnic peoples in the UK. Currently based at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (University of London) its membership includes academic researchers, teachers, local historians, students, information managers, community workers and other individuals concerned with uncovering historical information about the longevity of the black and Asian presence in Britain – particularly primary data sourced from archival materials such as parish registers, family and estate papers, government documents, and the archives of political organisations, etc.

Subscription rates

The BASA Newsletter (ISSN: 0969-4722) for the academic year 2002/3 are: £10 for institutions; £8 for individuals/schools/community groups; £5 for students, the retired, low-waged and unemployed people. This membership / subscription fee covers three issues of the newsletter (October 2002, January 2003 and April 2003) and also entitles you to elect BASA's Management Committee at the AGM, contribute to special project work and receive concessionary rates for entry to the Association's annual conference.

Further information

For more about the activities and publications of the Association please write to BASA c/o Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 28 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DS, or contact Marika Sherwood (BASA Secretary): marikas@sas.ac.uk.

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Guidelines for UK Government websites now available

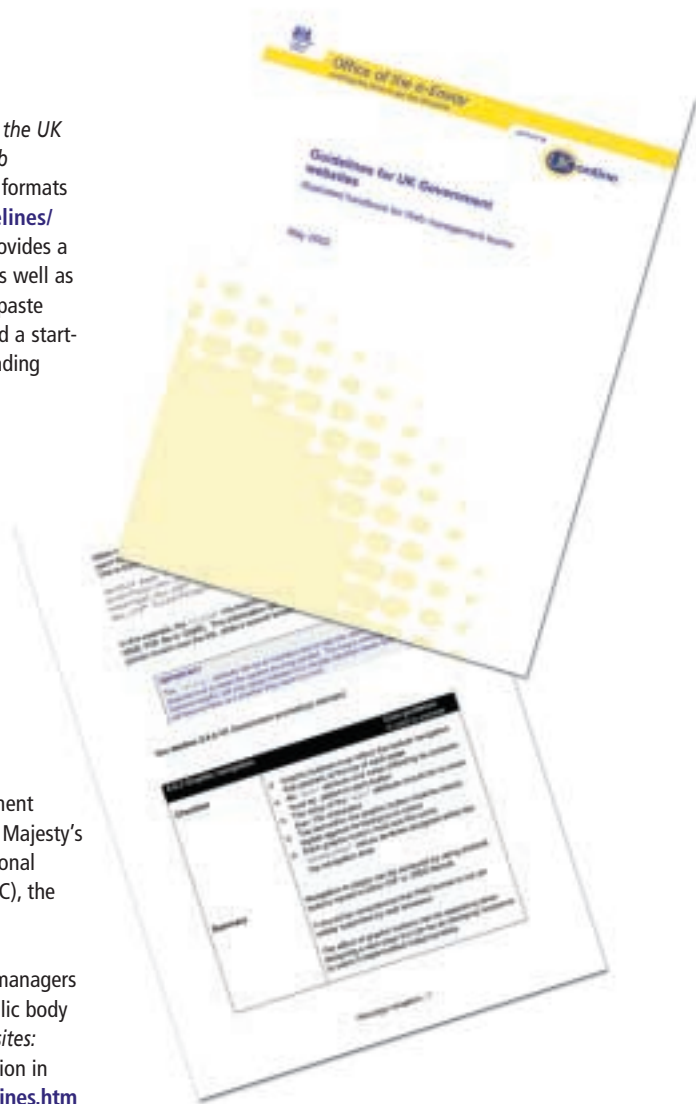
The Office of the e-Envoy has published '*Guidelines for the UK Government websites: an Illustrated Handbook for web management teams*' in May 2002 available in various formats online at: www.iagchampions.gov.uk/publications/guidelines/webguidelines/handbook/handbookindex.htm which provides a comprehensive guide to managing a government website. As well as providing best practice advice the website features cut and paste code, tutorials for staff, checklists to review your website and a start-up kit that provides a template website in the form of Cascading Style Sheets.

The key modules for best practice are:

- building in universal accessibility
- effective website management
- technical details and developments
- creating content
- file storage and structure
- evaluation
- legal issues

Contributors to the Handbook include The Office of Government Commerce, The Office of the Information Commissioner, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, specialist technical experts, The Royal National Institute for the Blind, The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the Public Record Office and many others.

The Handbook specifically targets central government web managers but it is of equal interest to local government and other public body web teams. Additionally, '*Guidelines to UK government websites: Framework for local government*' was released for consultation in July 2002. It is available at www.e-envoy.gov.uk/webguidelines.htm and is available in HTML, PDF and MS Word formats. The consultation is to end on 1 September 2002. Please send any comments on this paper by email to onlinestandards@e-envoy.gsi.gov.uk



HMC new website

The Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) is pleased to announce the launch of its new website www.hmc.gov.uk.

The site has been redesigned by Reading Room Ltd, an award-winning web development company together with HMC staff. Search technology on the National Register of Archives (NRA) was developed in partnership with Sherwood Government. The site complies with Guidelines for UK Government websites version 2 published by the Office of the e-Envoy and meets the standards set by the Royal National Institute for the Blind and W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) to ensure accessibility for the visually impaired.

The website has been taken out of frames to enhance interoperability as the NRA and ARCHON continue to link to the major archival networking initiatives in the UK. Other new features include reconfigured search options and a new FAQs page for the NRA and enhanced subject-based information resources. Archivists, in particular, should find the new ARCHON Portal, which incorporates the popular Archival Research Projects Register, a great help in locating resources, individual projects and general initiatives that relate to the archival profession.

HMC welcomes any comments and feedback on the website. Please contact Hazel Bagworth-Mann hazelb@hmc.gov.uk.

Research Resources in Medical History grants scheme extension

The Wellcome Trust is pleased to announce the extension of the Research Resources in Medical History grants scheme for a further two years. A total of £1 Million will be made available from 2003-04. Preliminary applications to the scheme are invited to be submitted by 1 October 2002.

Research Resources in Medical History aims to support the preservation of materials of interest to medical historians and improve access to these and other medically important collections. The scheme is open to any type of institution in the UK and welcomes proposals that centre upon the following:

- Cataloguing from source materials
- Converting catalogues to electronic format
- Creating new gateways to, or surveys of, collections
- Conservation work to save fragile and damaged materials
- Cataloguing or conservation of important photographic collections
- Projects based on contemporary records
- Digitisation of original materials

For full details of how to apply and for further information about the scheme see: www.bl.uk/concord/medical-about.html or contact:

The Administrator, Research Resources in Medical History,
The British Library, Co-operation and Partnership Programme
(Floor 4, Room 70), 96 Euston Road, London, NW1 2DB

Tel: 0207 412 7052

Fax: 0207 412 7155

Email: medical-history@bl.uk



Return of Western Pacific High Commission archives to Oceania

The end has at last been reached in a long-running saga concerning the archives of the Western Pacific High Commission, the public record body which administered British possessions in the Pacific until the islands achieved independence. The Lord Chancellor has approved the dispatch of these records from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the University of Auckland in New Zealand, where they can be made available to researchers in the region to which they relate. The background to this is as follows. After the closure of the Commission, its records (and a small number of records of the British colonial administrations in Tonga, Pitcairn and the New Hebrides, which the Commission managed) were lodged in the Western Pacific Archives in Suva, Fiji. That archive closed in 1978, at which time the records were returned for safe-keeping to the FCO in the UK, as there was no safe accommodation for them in the region among the successor states.

The PRO assessed the records and determined that, as they were either local in interest, or represented the local end of correspondence with the Colonial Office, they were not required for permanent preservation in the UK. In 1983, the then Lord Chancellor approved the presentation of the archives to the Solomon Islands Government in Honiara, a plan that had the agreement of the other successor states to the Commission. However, no suitable home for the archive could be found or provided in Honiara, and so the matter rested with the records in FCO hands. Years passed.

Eventually, after many years careful negotiation with the interested states, agreement was reached last year that the Commission records should be sent to Auckland where there was good archive accommodation available and where local researchers could access the material more easily. The records have now been crated up and are being sent to Auckland, freeing precious file-store space for FCO's use, and making available again this archive resource nearer its original home.

Howard Davies, Client Management Unit, Public Record Office.

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The National Archives

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