

Memorandum of understanding between The National Archives and Research Libraries UK (RLUK)

1. Introduction

1.1 The memorandum of understanding (MoU) maintains a formal framework for co-operation between Research Libraries UK (RLUK) and The National Archives following the signature of a MoU covering the period 2014-2016. It sets out the role of each organisation and explains how they will work together to achieve their shared goals over the period 2017-2020.

1.2 Its aims are to:

- 1.2.1 Facilitate contact and discussion on matters of common interest, particularly by sharing knowledge, information, expertise and best practice;
- 1.2.2 Set out the basis on which the organisations will co-operate in respect to achieving their corporate aims and responsibilities;
- 1.2.3 Provide a framework for co-operation in identifying shared strategic aims and ambitions.

1.3 The MoU is published on both organisations' websites. It will be reviewed every two years and more frequently if required by developments in The National Archives' and RLUK's respective sectors and amongst their stakeholders.

1.4 The MoU is not legally binding and is a non-contractual agreement between the two organisations.

2. Overview of RLUK's role and responsibilities

Research Libraries UK (RLUK) is a consortium of 37 of the largest research organisations in the UK and Ireland, including the three UK national libraries. Founded in 1983, RLUK has directly and indirectly sponsored some of the major free online UK resources in support of research, including Copac, the de facto UK Union Catalogue. RLUK's mission is to work with its members and partners, nationally and internationally, to shape and to realise the vision of the modern research library. RLUK is a registered and incorporated charity.

3. Overview of The National Archives' roles and responsibilities

The National Archives is the official archive of the UK Government and the national archive for England and Wales. It preserves, protects, and provides access to over 1,000 years of history and its collections stretch from medieval parchments to contemporary digital records. It is the official publisher of the UK government and is the leadership body for the archives sector in England, working with more than 2,000 archives of all shapes and sizes.

In 2015, The National Archives' launched its four year, audience-based strategy, [Archives Inspire](#). *Archives Inspire* recognises the academic community and archives sector as two of The National Archives' four key audiences, alongside

the public and government. It recognises the need for The National Archives to continually refine its offer to its academic audience and reinvigorate its ability to deliver ground breaking inter-disciplinary research, whilst continuing to build on its strengths as archive sector leader through the development and launch of a pioneering strategic vision for the archives sector, [Archives Unlocked](#). The National Archives is committed to working in partnership when delivering its strategic aims to ensure the widest possible benefit to the archival and academic communities.

4. General co-operation

- 4.1. The National Archives and RLUK recognise that they have complementary expertise and overlapping interests, especially in relation to The National Archives' archive sector leadership responsibilities and its status as an Independent Research Organisation (IRO), and RLUK's role as the leading consortium of the research library community. Both organisations are committed to supporting current and future researchers and to support the principles of open access. The National Archives and RLUK will endeavour to co-operate and work together to achieve these aims. They will share knowledge, expertise, best practice and intelligence in relation to matters of mutual interest, and if there is overlap in a particular area, seek to collaborate formally.
- 4.2. The organisations are committed to the principle of good communication with each other, especially when one organisation's work may have some bearing on the responsibilities or remit of the other. Both The National Archives and RLUK will seek to alert each other as soon as practical to relevant developments within their respective sectors.
- 4.3. The National Archives and RLUK will actively support one another in the development of their strategic plans and policies and provide commentary and advice from their respective sectors and organisations when appropriate.
- 4.4. Senior members of staff from The National Archives and RLUK will meet on an annual basis to discuss matters of mutual interest and the operation of this MoU. These meetings will be underpinned by regular liaison between their officials on a quarterly basis or as and when required.
- 4.5. The organisations will ensure that it is clear who the appropriate contacts are for particular matters and that contact details are kept up to date.

5. Promoting collaboration

- 5.1. The encouragement of greater collaboration between archives and the wider heritage, cultural, and academic sectors sits at the heart of the Government's vision for archives, Archives Unlocked, and The National Archives' [Academic Engagement and Research Roadmap](#). The National Archives and RLUK will encourage cross-sector collaboration between their respective stakeholders, explore the nature of collective opportunities, and examine tangible solutions to joint challenges.

5.2. The National Archives and RLUK agree to encourage enhanced collaboration between the archive, Unique and Distinct Collections (UDC) and academic sectors, whether through knowledge sharing, highlighting opportunities to their stakeholders, and facilitating opportunities to encourage enhanced collaboration. Primarily this will be through their joint organisation and facilitation of the [Discovering Collections, Discovering Communities](#) conference series, the [Higher Education Archives Programme](#), and joint research and guidance where appropriate.

6. Sharing best practice

The National Archives and RLUK agree to share best practice to their stakeholders in areas of mutual interest through case studies, publications, and dissemination of video content arising from the DCDC conference series. Both organisations agree to actively develop the latter as a major cross-sector resource through the continued development of the conference series website (www.dcdcconference.com).

7. Sharing skills and knowledge

The National Archives and RLUK will actively encourage the sharing of knowledge and experience between their respective organisations and stakeholders. They agree to examine the creation of formal routes for targeted knowledge exchange between The National Archives and RLUK members, as well as convening regular round-tables and workshops to foster discussion and debate surrounding shared challenges and opportunities more widely.

8. Identifying joint research agendas

The National Archives and RLUK agree to actively investigate areas of joint research when it fits with their corporate priorities and areas of mutual interest. They will seek to commission research jointly and engage with their respective communities in its creation to ensure maximum applicability and visibility.

9. Articulating the academic and cultural impact of archives

The National Archives and RLUK will co-operate to raise the profile of archival and UDC collections, and explore the ways in which their economic and cultural impact within society can be recorded and measured. Both parties will examine ways of establishing formal frameworks of research to demonstrate the impact that collections can have on research, wherever they are held.

10. Build networks of collaboration amongst like-minded stakeholders

The National Archives and RLUK will actively look to engage with third parties and like-minded stakeholders to enhance the reach and scope of their joint activities and collaboration. Where appropriate, they will look to broaden the range and variety of organisations involved in joint initiatives to maximise their impact and visibility, whilst ensuring cost effectiveness for all parties.

11. Engaging with key national and international stakeholders to understand policy directions for archival research in all disciplines

The process of allocating research funding and the collecting and building up of archival repositories in digital and analogue forms is crucially linked. RLUK and The National Archives will look to engage with members of the national and international research community to understand and influence policy directions, communicate these to their respective stakeholders, and examine collaborative ways of taking advantage of these for mutual benefit.

12. Cementing co-operation and partnership

The National Archives and RLUK both agree to actively explore means of cementing future co-operation through the establishment of formal frameworks for sustainable co-operation.

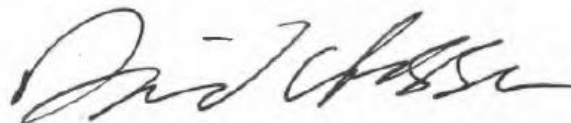
13. Agreement

The National Archives and RLUK agree to enter into the spirit and word of this MoU and to review this after two years or at a moment required by developments.



On behalf of The National Archives

Jeff James, Chief Executive and Keeper



On behalf of Research Libraries UK

David Prosser, Executive Director