



the national archives

The National Archives

Strategic Plan 2007 to 2008



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Introduction by the Chief Executive

Our 2007/8 plan is the second that I have presented as Chief Executive of The National Archives. In the past year we have launched a new five-year Vision for The National Archives, and this 2007/8 business plan sets out the first steps for realising this. The Vision is our response to a rapidly changing information world and constant technological innovation. It seeks to reposition The National Archives so that we can meet the challenges of the twenty first century and maintain our position as both a leading information policy maker and a key provider of archival information, both nationally and internationally. The key theme for our plans is recognition of the importance of information – information for use, for business accountability, and for the nation's memory. Success in this arena is essential for both us and the United Kingdom as a whole – and only by achieving this can we safeguard the national archival record for the future.

A major enabler of this vision was our merger in October 2006 with the Office of Public Sector Information, under the joint name of The National Archives. This brought together government policy leadership across the whole information management spectrum into one body. The merger created one unified organisation with a strong information management and regulation role across government and the wider public sector, in addition to our role supporting the wider archival sector. This enables us to have a direct influence on the principles and processes of information management, from the first stages of information creation to preservation to reuse, and enabling the widest possible access to government and public sector information of all kinds.

Our Business Plan for 2007/8 sets out how we have defined our priorities for the future. Readers of our previous plans will recognise the objectives relating to our access and advisory roles, but will also see a stronger focus on policy leadership. A key goal for the next year is to strengthen our role within government so that departments and policy makers recognise the benefits of good information management, and are supported with the right tools and systems to improve their own approaches. We also need to continue and intensify our work in managing digital information, both through preservation and online delivery so that we meet the needs of our customers wherever they are, both now and in the future. For this reason, digitisation of records, improved search mechanisms and redesign of our services so that we become a predominantly online organisation continue to figure strongly in our objectives.

We face huge, new challenges and, like all organisations, have to learn to prioritise even more efficiently and to find creative and cost effective ways of delivering our agenda. We are working very closely with our staff and key stakeholders to ensure this ambitious programme is fulfilled. However, given The National Archives' strong track record of achievement, we are confident that we can continue successfully to meet the information management challenges of the 21st century.



Natalie Ceeney
Chief Executive
The National Archives

An overview of The National Archives

The National Archives was created in 2003 as the result of the merger of the Public Record Office (PRO) and the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC). The further merger between The National Archives and the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI), (incorporating Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO)) took place in October 2006, creating an even stronger organisation with an integrated policy, delivery and advocacy remit.

Our constituent parts have distinguished histories dating back three centuries. However, the tradition of preserving and making accessible public records is an even longer one. Domesday Book has been carefully safeguarded for nine centuries, and is one of Britain's most prized national treasures; and the systematic creation and preservation of records by the Exchequer and Chancery goes back some eight hundred years.

Public Record Office	Historical Manuscripts Commission	Office of Public Sector Information
<p>1838 Established by campaigners to bring 'order from chaos'</p> <p>1850s calendar of State Papers – critical finding aids</p> <p>1958/1967 acts: 50 and 30 year rules for access; place of deposit allows public records to be held outside PRO</p> <p>1977-1996 Move to Kew</p> <p>1990s innovative digital access</p>	<p>1869 Established by royal warrant for non public records</p> <p>1869 onwards reports and calendars previously unknown records</p> <p>1945 National Register of Archives</p> <p>1959 New warrant supports advisory functions</p> <p>1970s-1990s Leading archival advocacy and standards (BS 5454)</p>	<p>1786 HMSO established</p> <p>1882 Official publisher for both Houses of Parliament</p> <p>1889 Management of Crown copyright</p> <p>1996 Trading functions privatised</p> <p>2001 Role as regulator for standards of best practice in Crown copyright licensing</p> <p>2005 OPSI created to lead on information re-use</p>

The history of leading and supporting the identification and preservation of, and access to, important records in the constituent parts of the National Archives is as relevant today as when these bodies were created. Our history demonstrates constant change in response to the external environment, alongside proactive support and advice to the creators, holders and users of both current and archival information from the mid nineteenth century onwards. Of course, the environment has changed significantly since our founders created our constituent bodies, and will continue to change, perhaps even more rapidly in the future. But in this context, our new Vision can be clearly seen as a continuum from centuries of proud traditions of information management.

The Chief Executive is both Keeper of Public Records and sole Historical Manuscripts Commissioner. The National Archives' Director of OPSI is also Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, and the Queen's Printer. The National Archives is a government department and Executive Agency under the Secretary of State for Justice.

The National Archives' Five-Year Vision for 2007-2012

Changes in the information world have presented us with some of the most complex and challenging set of tasks we have ever faced. It is not too much to say that the future nature and existence of United Kingdom information management and archives depend on our being successful in our objectives. Of these challenges, there are three in particular that are of immense significance and determine our priorities for our future development.

Challenge 1: Government and the wider information sector need better information management to strengthen accountability and release the potential of their assets.

Our Vision: Lead and transform information management

By 2012 we aim to:

- Shape future government information policy, from information creation to re-use
- Show leadership in helping the public sector understand the importance of good information management
- Create a common infrastructure of services and guidance to support these aims

Challenge 2: In addition to preserving the nation's existing paper records, we need to rise to the new challenge of ensuring the survival of digital information for future generations.

Our Vision: Guarantee the survival of today's information for tomorrow

By 2012 we aim to:

- Preserve records of all kinds; physically at The National Archives, and through our influence elsewhere
- Work with others in the United Kingdom to ensure that between us, the right information is preserved for today's business and tomorrow's history
- Collaborate across the world to share expertise and innovation

Challenge 3: Increasingly people expect to find, use and learn from information online. They expect it to be personalised and connected to their wider life. They expect to have it immediately.

Our Vision: Bring history to life for everyone

By 2012 we aim to:

- Make a positive difference to people's future by connecting them to the past
- Provide researchers and customers wherever they are with easy access to records and expertise, almost all delivered online, connected to trusted partners
- Increasingly focus our reading rooms on being a centre for expert help and specialist research

In addition, we will support realisation of this Vision by developing a capable, flexible organisation, able to deliver our new services with staff equipped with the right skills for the future.

Our Values

Our new Vision sets out what we want The National Archives to achieve. However, we also need to have a clear idea of how we work to achieve this, which is determined by our Values. These are:

Putting customers first

Responsible guardians

Setting open information free

Trusted to deliver

Working together

Resources Statement following the Comprehensive Spending Review – including the merged OPSI

	2007/8 £m	2008/9 £m	2009/10 £m	2010/11 £m
Income	(4.4)	(4.8)	(5.2)	(5.7)
Salaries and other running Costs	39.9	40.6	41.0	41.5
Total Net Cash	35.5	35.8	35.8	35.8
Non-Cash Costs	9.5	10.8	11.8	12.5
Total Income and Expenditure	45.0	46.6	47.6	48.3
Capital Projects (long Term)	3.5	2.5	2.1	2.1

The above table sets out our financial settlement for the next four years. Our financial assessment includes provision for developments which are essential for the realisation of our new Vision, for example integration of services at Kew in 2008 and continued digital services development.

Vision strand 1: Lead and Transform Information Management

Central to our Vision is the recognition that information underpins the effectiveness of government and the wider public sector. Information is essential for the delivery of effective and integrated services (whether provided by government or third parties), which are responsive, trusted and meet public demand. Organisations need to create and preserve their information to ensure that their activities and processes are documented, and that information demanded by law is kept for long-term accountability. And, for future generations, papers written, databases created and decisions made electronically today will become tomorrow's archives, informing future decision makers, researchers and consumers alike. Information has never been created solely for the benefit of history. Historical records are an end product of effective information management, and need to be seen in this context. Our plans for 2007-8 onwards recognise that effective information management, including strong record-keeping, is critical to the effectiveness of government today as well as to potential users of this information today and for generations to come.

Achieving effective information management is not only urgent and important, but extremely challenging. Information itself comes in varied and constantly evolving digital formats, moving between different systems in multiple versions and variants. Technology is changing rapidly, and most commentators recognise that we are at the birth of an online transformation that is far from 'mature'. And, at the same time, the patterns of creation and use of information are changing radically, requiring very different approaches. In this context, joined-up leadership is essential. The merger of The National Archives and the Office of Public Sector Information has created an organisation that is uniquely well positioned as a policy leader and facilitator in this field, with a wider remit to support good information management. Building on our existing policy and advisory role, we aim to join up approaches across different strands of information management as well as lead new thinking in the field to provide thought leadership, tools, guidance and, ultimately, regulation, to support government and the wider public sector.

This is an ambitious agenda for The National Archives, with a significant policy and leadership role. We are therefore supporting the establishment and running of a Knowledge Council for Government, which will provide a strategic focus for all aspects of information management. We will also be working with government and the wider public sector on a wide range of policy fronts, from the challenging issue of 'digital preservation', through to practical work to encourage wider re-use of public sector information through the Information Fair Trader Scheme and research work on some key aspects of reuse and 'mashing' of information. Our focus will be to provide practical support; through tools such as Click-Use Licensing to make licensing information easy; and through guidance on key aspects of information management, as well as through advice and mediation services. We will also play an assessment and regulation role, both through new Information Management Assessments (which will assess departmental performance) and through regulation as required under the government's reuse regulations.

Of course, we do not work in isolation in this field. Many of the challenges faced by us are common to other governments, as well as to the publishing industry, the wider information industry and to organisations of all kinds trying to manage their own information. Our approach will continue to be to address these issues by harnessing the best thinking internationally through collaborative

partnerships and joint working with stakeholders with common interests. We are also passionate about sharing our work to ensure that we all learn from others' experiences, to ensure that we get the best results for the UK and the sector as a whole.

Our 2007-8 Objectives

- Improve government effectiveness by establishing a **Knowledge Council** within government that will produce a clear strategy for knowledge, information and records management across government
- Provide robust and well respected **regulation and mediation services** across the information management and policy agenda, setting standards and ensuring compliance
- Reinforce and further raise awareness of the **potential for re-use of public sector information**, facilitating growth in the economic value of re-use through support, guidance and innovative tools to unlock the benefits
- Lead key players across government and the public sector to **simplify and streamline strong information management and exemplify in our own work**
- Implement a programme of **information management assessments** for central government to support sound information management and the recognition of its core function in underpinning effective government
- To develop our range of **shared services** and other solutions to shape information management across government, providing cost-effective support and efficiencies for government and the wider public sector
- Deliver **web services and content for those we support professionally** with advice, tools, guidance and access to information contained within our holdings

Vision Strand 2: Guarantee the survival of today's information for tomorrow

The information world of today is full of energy and innovation. Electronic communication has transformed communication and knowledge sharing in government, universities, commerce and industry and, increasingly, how individuals interact with the state, with service providers and in communities. As individuals we take photos on digital cameras, and store them on hard drives. As managers we send e-mails confirming decisions rather than annotating paper files. Paper is no longer the dominant medium – the future is firmly electronic. However, this means that the future is increasingly ephemeral, unless we take active steps to preserve it.

The record as we traditionally know it can now be found in a bewildering array of different formats, delivery systems and technologies with short life spans before obsolescence. Web pages have an average life of just a few weeks – and fast - moving websites (with updates on key topical issues) just minutes or hours. Floppy discs created just three years ago can often no longer be read; databases operate on old and obsolete platforms which can stop functioning; and constant migration of platforms jeopardises key content on a daily basis. Electronic documents are inherently ephemeral and vulnerable, unlike paper and parchment records which can have lifespans of centuries. There are already very real and costly examples internationally of key data being lost, from some records of the NASA moon landings to records of parking ticket fines along with the resulting revenue. For information managers and for the wider archive community this means that capturing and preserving digital information for the medium (five years) as well as the long-term (one hundred years) is now an immediate and highly complex requirement.

For government and public sector organisations this ephemeral nature of digital information brings with it huge challenges and risks. As well as needing to be able to access their corporate knowledge and business records for today's policy and operations, trust in government can be undermined if appropriate records are not kept. Furthermore, without provision for long-term reliable preservation of records data, the future historical record will simply not exist.

Our Vision recognises that it is essential that we take steps now to preserve the national record for today as well as tomorrow. Our policy role means that we need to ensure that government has the right infrastructure to preserve the digital information it needs for its own purposes. And our delivery role gives us the challenge of storing and making available thirty years' worth of paper records from central government, whilst simultaneously grappling with the challenge of safeguarding government's electronic records. There is no alternative to our undertaking this task if we do not want break our thousand-year coverage of British and international history at national and local level.

Over the next five years we aim to underpin the preservation of central government 'current business' electronic records by supporting the development of an (ideally shared) government digital preservation service. For electronic records held by The National Archives ourselves, we aim to complete stage one of our own digital preservation infrastructure within 2007/8, to ensure that we can preserve these records for future generations. We also plan to develop a plan for managing the 'paper legacy' of government records – the thirty years of records still to be archived by government, which may or may not be required for long term preservation. Partnerships are already

well established internationally to share expertise, to tackle these problems together, and to ensure that their importance is as widely recognised as is required.

And, finally, a more fluid information environment means that there are now many more choices about what material to collect and preserve. We have choices about what type of information forms 'the record' as key information may be held on a website, or a 'wiki' rather than a formal 'file'. In addition, increasingly, the researcher does not mind who holds the content, so long as it is accessible. For this reason we need to reassess our collections policy so that we ensure that are keeping the right information for the future, not only for The National Archives, but to inform and enrich the nation's archival collections wherever they are held.

Our 2007-8 Objectives

- Strengthen our role as the **centre of excellence for government** and the wider archive sector on all aspects of preservation and conservation, from paper and parchment to digital and web content
- Work with government departments on the **'paper and digital legacy'** to manage most effectively the selection, preservation and description of government's last 30 years of records, ensuring that key records survive for the long-term benefit of the nation
- Ensure that **The National Archives' own parchment, paper and existing digital collection is preserved** for the long term, working with key partners across the world to ensure we share and disseminate best practice in doing so
- Complete our in-house **digital preservation system**, providing a solution for the transfer and preservation of government records by The National Archives
- Support government in the development of an appropriate **digital preservation infrastructure for government** so that government electronic records are preserved whilst they are needed for government use
- Begin to develop a **clear, comprehensive collections strategy for The National Archives**, in the context of the Nation's records, taking full account of the changing digital environment

Vision Strand 3: Bring history to life for everyone

The digital revolution has caused fundamental changes to society and the way people use information in their everyday lives. Today's researchers, with raised expectations through their own daily use of technology, are accustomed by use of Google to expect seamless searching for electronic content, available in their own homes or offices, often without regard for the information source, so long as they get what they need. The overall message is clear: people expect us to deliver, present and interpret our information ever more quickly and intelligently.

The National Archives has built up a strong reputation for delivering services which are highly responsive to customer needs. Over the last ten years we have seen steadily rising demand for electronic services, from our fledgling e-mail enquiry service in the mid 1990s, to 2006 when we have seen over 20 million visitors to our website and can offer fully electronic delivery services for finding, ordering and receiving a copy of a document in digital format. It is also clear that customers want to search across as many resources as possible – not only our catalogues and content but also all online information about archival content and location, both nationally and internationally. The archive sector has also proved very innovative at delivering online services, offering interactive learning, creation of community histories based on contributions of personal testimonies, both oral and written, and collection of photographic images. Online delivery is offering opportunities for bringing history to life in new and exciting ways – in delivery and rapidity, provision of global content, creative partnerships across and involving communities of all types and in capturing contemporary social history and local and national identity in ways not possible before.

Based on the explosion of interest in family research, initially driven by releases of military service records from the mid -1990's and now by growing media interest, we now have over 100 online downloads of records for every onsite delivery. While visits to our sites at Kew and central London remain as popular as ever, demand for online access is continuing to rise dramatically year on year. Our strategy for the future is therefore to provide as wide as possible access to our content online, so that researchers can find the information they need wherever they are based, whilst focusing our reading rooms on those who need to consult original records, or would benefit from specific expertise. Over time we expect to become a predominantly online service delivery organisation.

In line with this strategy, and in view of the digitisation of the censuses from 1841 to 1901, we will transfer our current services based at the Family Records Centre to Kew in 2008, creating a new integrated service for our onsite visitors, offering both access to online content and original records as well as face to face expert advice and guidance. Delivery of our strategy is dependent on utilising expertise – not only of our staff but also of our users. We aim to support capture of research knowledge and information exchange by development of a wiki site called 'Your Archives', which will create a growing repository of information about the content and interpretation of our records reflecting current online trends in how online researchers shape and use information.

Bringing history to life has significance not only for our own holdings but also for the archival sector as a whole. The rise in awareness of the wealth offered by archives is generating huge new interest and demand across the UK. Archives have demonstrated their potential in illustrating and bringing alive not only local and family history, but also challenging issues such as migration, immigration

and slavery, helping to tackle social exclusion through innovative projects. The burgeoning interest in archives has also created its own problems, with increasing numbers of private archives being lost to the nation through overseas sales. The National Archives has a role in supporting the 'archival health of the nation', which we take to mean advocating for the sector, as well as supporting the wider archive sector to learn from each other and develop the best possible services for the country as a whole. We also have a role in supporting the development of common access infrastructures where possible. In this sense we aim to bring history to life at a truly national level.

Our 2007-8 Objectives

- Develop **outstanding new online services** for those using resources held by us and others, and transform our own catalogue, to allow even easier searching, identification and delivery of content to customers wherever they are, and enable most research to be done at home
- Grow our **digitised resources**, both pre-digitised and through digitisation on-demand, so that over 90% of what customers request can be located and delivered remotely
- Use our **specialist expertise** to make it easier to interpret and use our collections, increasingly through online knowledge bases and reference guides
- Harness the **expertise of those using our records**, through online subject forums and innovative approaches such as user-generated content
- Create a **world-class integrated reader experience**, including a strong family history service and help for specialist researchers, joining records and expertise from across our collections and helping customers to make the most of our online services
- Work proactively with **media, the wider archive sector and academic partners** to bring history to life through archival content and expertise
- Create and manage **online relationships with customers** that will offer them benefits, improve trust and communication and encourage participation
- **Support the wider archive sector** through advocacy, guidance and sharing of best practice, ensuring that the sector reaches its potential, and that that potential is recognised by policy makers and funders across the UK

Vision Strand 4: Supporting this Vision through a capable, flexible organisation

The National Archives is aiming to deliver a highly ambitious strategy at a time of tight financial constraints. This is combined with our increased workload in dealing with both digital and paper information management and extending our remit within government in terms of advocacy, policy advice, and guidance in the information field. There are significant pressures on us as an organisation to find ways to work more efficiently and to innovate to achieve this challenging agenda. Most significantly, this means equipping our staff with new knowledge and skills during a period of rapid and profound change, ensuring that we build on the existing high levels of motivation and engagement. Having identified the key skills and behaviours needed to deliver the Vision, we are now investing in staff development programmes at all levels of the organisation.

Our strategy for the next five years for internal development aims to maximise savings and re-engineer our processes so that resources can be focused on its achievement. We must keep identifying ways that we can deliver more for less, we need to raise more income through our trading services, and we also need to develop our strategy for development funding via increased contribution from grants and partnerships.

The National Archives' Vision also raises physical and organisational challenges within the organisation for its achievement. Not the least of these is a major programme for redesign of the reader areas at Kew by 2008 and the consolidation of staff and services from three of our constituent sites to support joined up working and services.

The new Vision highlights the growing importance of specialist expertise, web skills, policy and advocacy. Our new human resources and learning and development strategies will support our staff in developing new skills in these areas. We must also ensure that we understand and contribute to emerging technologies and innovation in information provision as well as ensuring we remain strong in professional archival developments and knowledge of our holdings. Our new research strategy will ensure that we will fulfil this aim and also consolidate our role as a leading innovator in information and archival science. In addition, our work with varied partners and a strong marketing function will ensure that we remain recognised and visible as an information player and innovator and a centre for research for all those who want to use us.

Our 2007-8 Objectives

- Create a **joined-up organisation in The National Archives** to form an effective organisation which is more than the sum of its parts
- Ensure that **all within The National Archives understand the Vision**, and the key role that they individually play in delivering it
- Build and maintain **strong partnerships with key third parties** in the public and private sectors to deliver this vision
- Develop a National Archives **research strategy**, covering both business/technical and content, to ensure we focus energy on critical areas
- Produce marketing and communications strategies to ensure we **successfully communicate** with government, our key stakeholders, customers and our own staff
- Ensure that our services and communications are **accessible to, and welcoming of, people from all backgrounds**, and that we increase the diversity of our workforce
- **Develop and support our staff through change**; we will recognise, value and retain the existing expertise of our people and develop expertise in new areas, through a period of strategic change and site rationalisation
- Support this vision through **effective and efficient IT, Finance and HR services**, which meet recognised benchmark standards for performance and cost-effectiveness