

Date of Meeting: 03/03/2020	Location: Swan Room	THE	
Title: User Advisory Group Meeting	Subject or Purpose: Minutes of the meeting on the 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020	NATIONAL	
		ARCHIVES	
ATTENDEES			
Sue Adams (Independent Researchers)	Adam Chambers (Map Room Users)		
Amelia Clegg (Student Users)	Stephen Daghish (On line Users)		
Mike Grahn (On site Personal Interest Users)	Francis Howcutt (Family History Societies)		
Will Reid (Diversity & Inclusion)	Camilla von Massenbach (Online Family Historians)		
DF (TNA - Resource Access & Advice Programme Manager)	MI (TNA - Customer Insight Officer)		
Valerie Johnson (TNA - Director of Research & Collections), Chair	Claire McNulty (TNA - Head of Strategy Development)		
HO (TNA - Web Metrics Analyst)	Lee Oliver (TNA - Head of Venue Management & Services)		
Caroline Ottaway-Searle (TNA - Director of Public Engagement)	DP (TNA - Document Production Coordination Manager)		
RR (TNA - Delivery Manager)	Anna Stark (DigiArt)		
AV (TNA - Personal Assistant), Minutes			

## 1. Minutes, matters arising and general updates

### 1.1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Nadine Chambers (Student Users), Grace Ioppolo (Academic Users), Sophie Kay (Diversity and Inclusion) and Geoff Monks (Academic Users).

### 1.2. Minutes

The minutes from the meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December were approved. SA had appreciated the inclusion of statistics relating to the document ordering trial.

### 1.3. Matters arising

Item 1.3. Timing-out of reading room computers (AS). DP had confirmed that this is a standard, automated security feature to protect user's personal data.

Item 6.2. Process for independent researchers to be added to TNA's website (SA). LO advised that changes to the process for prospective researchers to advertise on the TNA website are in hand. A dedicated email address and application form will be available on TNA's website shortly. Applicants who are not an accredited member of either the Association of Genealogists & Researchers in Archives or the Register of Qualified Genealogists will be asked to submit testimonials. The applicant will need to demonstrate that they have a reader's ticket and that they conduct research at TNA. Researchers providing a transcription or translation service only will not be required to demonstrate the latter. Any agreement will be between clients and the researcher and TNA will not arbitrate between the two. To

ensure the list is current, researchers posted on the site will be contacted every two years and those not replying after one reminder will be removed.

The post-meeting query regarding the provision of impact mitigation for disabled users of the proposed changes in document ordering (SK) was included in item 3.

## 2. Repository Tour (DP and DF)

This item was not minuted.

## 3. Working lunch and delegate questions

Responses to delegate's questions on the changes to the ordering service being trialled have been collated into an FAQ document.

**Action:** In response to a question on the numbering of series indices and catalogues the Head of Cataloguing will be invited to attend the next UAG meeting in June.

*Post meeting note: Due to the Coronavirus outbreak the document ordering trial has been indefinitely postponed. The FAQ document will be published when the trial is about to start to ensure the information is as correct and up to date as possible.*

## 4. Missing/lost files (CM)

Under the terms of the 1958 Public Records Act, government departments are able to request the temporary return of their archived documents. A named officer for each department, usually the Departmental Record Officer (DRO), is responsible for the document whilst it is on loan. At the end of 2017 there was some media attention on the number of government documents that had been misplaced whilst on loan. As a result, in 2018 TNA was commissioned by the Cabinet Secretary to review the process. As a result of changes agreed under this review, from November 2018 original paper records can only be recalled by government departments under exceptional circumstances. Instead of departments recalling records departmental staff are required to view/take digital copies by visiting the government reading room at Kew. Where they cannot visit Kew, departments can request digital copies of both open and closed records, which are delivered electronically via a secure data transfer solution. There was also an amnesty to encourage the return of outstanding documents.

Exceptionally, where departments believe that original records have to be supplied to them (e.g. in some legal cases), Permanent Secretaries now need to agree this in writing with the Keeper of Public Records, including timescales for their return. In the event that the record is deemed to be required by the department for a period in excess of one year, formal approval for retention has to be agreed by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's via his advisory body, the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives.

In the six months following their introduction, there was a 75% reduction in records recalled by Government departments leaving the Kew site.

## 5. Project Alpha update (RR, HO and AS)

The team have been tasked with reimagining The National Archives' web presence. For the purposes of this project, the team are concentrating on developing ideas for first time and non-users, as they

know less about them and are keen to engage with them. A series of workshops have been held to gather insights and ideas with colleagues from across the organisation. These have helped to inform processes to discover, define, develop and deliver the best designs for the new website. A core question of 'How might we?' is being used to articulate solution orientated, optimistic and collaborative inputs to improve the user experience. Over 600 'How Might We' questions have been identified over a wide range of areas such as 'How might we communicate the value that TNA and its collection has to offer' and 'How might we clearly show what is a next step or way forward?' These statements have been grouped and turned into 'Epics' to inform work. A number of Ideation Workshops took place where attendees voted on the ideas and concepts they felt were the best and these will be taken forward to be built into the prototypes. The prototypes can be viewed under: [alpha.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://alpha.nationalarchives.gov.uk) and delegates are asked to make their communities aware so that they can get as much feedback as possible. A feedback form will be available online shortly.

*Post meeting note: feedback links are now on the website.*

The Alpha phase of the project will end on the 31st March. The prototypes will then go to TNA's Board and Executive Team for approval to progress to the next stage. A beta site will then be publicly released.

## **6. Delegate submitted items**

- 6.1. Events (AC). There seems to be an emphasis on ticketed events and events promoting book sales. It is feared that this is at the expense of TNA's core function of preserving documents and making them available to researchers.

LO advised that the 'What's On' programme has been running for around six years now with the aim of reaching out to both new and existing visitors to TNA. Talks by authors have always been a very popular feature of this. These talks are accompanied by a document display to inform the talk content and to showcase TNA's collection. For example the event last year around the screening of the film 'Suffragette' included an exhibition of the documents reproduced in facsimile in the film which visitors found very powerful. The authors speaking at TNA are eminent historians who are interested in promoting history and the value of archives to inform their work. It is not the case that TNA resources are diverted from elsewhere to support this activity.

- 6.2. Car park (AC). Could we have an update on revenue generated by the car park?

LO advised that the introduction of ticketing was to protect the car park as a resource for TNA visitors and is not a revenue generator. Increasing demand for parking had been seen from neighbouring developments such as residents and contractors from the new flats and GP practice. The charges have been benchmarked to those of similar local providers including Kew Gardens. The contract is managed by TNA's Facilities provider and is cost neutral.

## **7. Forthcoming Events and Any other Business**

VJ encouraged delegates to review the latest copy of TNA's 'What's On' brochure, copies of which were available. There was no AOB.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday the 2nd June 2020 at 12 noon.

