

Date of Meeting: 08/06/2021	Location: By video conference	THE
Title: User Advisory Group Meeting	Subject or Purpose: Minutes of the regular meeting held on the 8 th June 2021	NATIONAL ARCHIVES
ATTENDEES		
Sue Adams (Independent Researchers)	Emmajane Avery (TNA – Director of Public Engagement), Co-Chair	
Nadine Chambers (Students)	Amelia Clegg (Students)	
Stephen Darglish (On line)	Lucy Fletcher (TNA – Director of Public Access & Government Services)	
Debbie French (TNA - Interim Head of Document Services)	PG (TNA - Head of Standards & Improvements)	
Angela Graham (County/external Archives)	Mike Grahn (On site Personal Interest)	
Grace Ioppolo (Academic)	Sadie Jarrett (Map Room & Early Career Academics)	
Valerie Johnson (TNA – Director of Research & Collections), Co-Chair	Sophie Kay (Diversity)	
SL (TNA – Marketing Manager)	Susan Moore (Map Room)	
Lee Oliver (TNA - Head of Visitor Experience)	Will Reid (Diversity)	
Pat Reynolds (Family History and On line)	AV (TNA – Senior Personal Assistant), Minutes	

1. Welcome and apologies for absence.

Jennifer Aston (Academic).

EJA, Co-Chair and Director of Public Engagement, introduced herself. EJA joined TNA in March and has worked for over twenty years in museum education, cultural learning and visitor experience. EJA's last position was as Director of Learning & Visitor Experience at the V&A.

2. Minutes, Matters arising (VJ)

2.1 The minutes from the meeting of the 2nd March were approved.

2.2 All action points were either completed and outcomes noted in the March minutes or brought forward to today's agenda.

3. Document Services update (LF, DF and LO)

3.1 LF, Director of Public Access & Government Services, gave an overview of her portfolio which now includes Document Services. This positioning better reflects TNA's responsibilities under the Public Records Act in making the record available to the public. Another focus of LF's Directorate is the provision of services to government including advice on how to fulfil their obligations under the Twenty Year Rule. Other teams in LF's Directorate focus on digital capability and bringing 'born digital' government records into the digital archive. LF's information rights portfolio acts on TNA's obligations under the Freedom of Information Act and General Data Protection Regulations.

3.2 DF outlined DSD's current offer. From the end of April the majority of the team were back on site. After some initial launch issues, the new booking system is working well and has been delivering a simpler and clearer service to both users and staff. On re-opening there were 101 seats available on

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the first floor reading and map rooms for up to five hours a day fulfilling up to twelve advance orders per day. In order to manage demand, users were limited to two bookings over a four week period. Bulk orders were available to allow users to order between twenty and forty documents as well as advance ordering for finding aids, library books, microfiche and film, all of which were subject to quarantine. The 'Start Here' service on PCs was re-opened and staff were available on the Help Desk. Reader registration was available - on average 30% of daily users are either new/renewed. From Step Three on 17th May the Special Invigilation Room was reopened, reading hours extended to six per day and the number of visits permitted in a four week period increased to three. These changes were well received by users. Up to the third week in April there were over 1,500 bookings, over 18,000 public productions (excluding those for staff and government) and over 600 new reader tickets issued. Cancellations have been low but have risen recently. On receipt of the Government's guidance on Step 4 we will review our offer.

5. Visitor Experience update (EJA and LO)

- 5.1 Assuming that Step 4 is permitted, the Kew site will again be open to general visitors as well as readers. It is planned to reopen the 'With Love' exhibition as this had to close last March having only been open for a short while. There will also be a family trail in the grounds, structured in response to the building and a programme of activities in the school summer holidays called 'The Ministry of Time Travel' which participants can play on their own devices. This activity will largely be outside but there will be a final indoor element. Discussions are ongoing with Maids of Honour, the onsite catering provider, to align their provision with expanded opening hours and the shop will also be open in line with these. TNA expects to reintroduce charging for car parking at some point. Security arrangements (i.e. the location and process for bag checking) may be updated in line with changes to government guidance,
- 5.2 EJA advised that as Head of Visitor Experience, LO's new remit will include working with EJA to develop a new strategy looking at TNA's audiences, what they want and their experience during their visit to Kew. Key to this will be looking at how to develop a longer lasting relationship with visitors, whether for repeat visits, further research or becoming a Friend. EJA will be happy to update the group on this work when further developed.
- 5.3 LO updated UAG on 'Project Welcome'. The Covid restrictions have necessarily focused attention on making visitors feeling safe and helping them to move quickly through the ground floor processing points. A team of four staff has been available to provide visitors with guidance and support and this has facilitated more conversations with visitors to understand the purposes of their visit. There has been great feedback from visitors saying that they felt welcome and safe. This has confirmed plans to make the welcome team a permanent feature. EJA added that visitor satisfaction scores have been very high with many of the positive comments about staff, which underlies the importance of their contribution to the quality of people's visits.

6. Archives at Risk fund (PG)

Please see the briefing note under Appendix 1.

7. Delegate questions:

- 7.1 May delegates attend DCDC this year using TNA's access code? (NC)
VJ confirmed that this facility will be available to UAG delegates this year. Delegates are asked to advise AV when they have applied.
- 7.2 Members are interested in the records for the Home Guard in County Durham (series WO 409). These records for County Durham were from the Ministry of Defence for a pilot project in 2012. Are there any plans for the records for other counties to be passed to TNA and made available? (SD).
- 7.3 Is there any update on World War II service records held by the Ministry of Defence? (SD).
LO replied to 7.2 and 7.3 together. In February of this year the Ministry of Defence began to transfer

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approx. 9.7 million personnel records to TNA for permanent preservation. The records that make up this collection cover before, during and after individuals' service in the Navy, Army and Royal Air Force where the individual has a discharge date prior to 31 December 1963. They include half a million records with WW1 service but the vast majority are for those who served in WW2. These records are of national significance and are internationally unique. The records will require work to ensure their long term preservation before being accessible to the public. This transfer is probably the largest and most complex since Kew was opened in 1977 and represents over 30 km of shelving. The transfer will take over seven years and will require care and work to make them accessible. In the meantime, researchers should continue to use the existing channel of information, i.e. The Service Personnel & Veterans Agency in Glasgow. As the project progresses, information will be made available to indicate which groups of records are now handled by TNA. SD asked if this information is public. LO confirmed this is the case (and recruitment has taken place to support the project) but it is important to manage expectations in that the records will not be available in the reading rooms for a while yet as the records require preparation and cataloguing.

8. Delegate Recruitment (VJ)

A campaign will commence in July for new delegates, as SD (On line users), AC (Students) and AG (County/ External Archives) complete their terms on UAG. Delegates' assistance in circulating the advertisement amongst their networks over the summer would be appreciated.

9. Any Other Business (All).

- 9.1 An update on 'The Inclusive Archive' will be given at the next meeting on **Tuesday the 14th September 2021 at 10.30 am.**
- 9.2. Further to item 5.6 in March, an update on TNA's post graduate student activity is given in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1. The Covid-19 Archives Fund.

Author: PG, Head of Standards & Improvements

The Covid-19 Archives Fund was allocated £500,000 from HM Treasury, to secure physical and born-digital records that are at risk of being dispersed or lost, with grants up to a maximum of £50,000. This support comes at a time when many organisations are struggling to deal with issues related to their collections which have arisen as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The fund was open to both recognised collecting institutions and other archival custodians to help them to safeguard their vital records or re-home other vulnerable collections. The grants will offset some of the practical costs of the planned intervention, such as storage, conservation, transport and expertise.

The fund was launched on the 4th December 2020 and by the closing date on the 15th January 2021 had received 85 eligible applications from across the United Kingdom requesting a total of just under £2,000 000 or almost a ratio of 4 to 1 for the available funding of £500,000. In this context the assessment panel which met on the 27th January and the 3rd February prioritised those applications which they judged faced the most risk or would have the most impact. These included acquisition of collections facing immediate peril, the mitigation of curatorial risk faced by collections, and network surveys to identify vulnerable archives. The National Archives provided an additional £7,089 to enable 25 grants to be awarded by the assessment panel drawn from representatives from academic, archive and funding sectors from across the UK. The amount of the individual awards varied from £406 for conservation equipment to £50,000 for major projects such as national records surveys of vulnerable collections and the median size of grant was £ 20,300. All the grants were disbursed by the 31st March 2021.

Public Announcement

The public announcement of the grant awards was made on the 18th March 2021:

Website <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/covid-19-archives-fund-grants-awarded/>

A summary of the each award is published at: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/finding-funding/covid-19-archives-fund/awarded-grants/>

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Appendix 2: Update on Post Graduate Student Activity.

Author: RS, Head of Academic Partnerships

TNA's Doctoral Cohort

- We have been supporting students with their applications to UKRI for additional funding to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on their research.
- When restrictions have permitted, we've enabled student access to site by managing the access of TNA students to the Staff Reading Room.
- We have hosted virtual meet-ups for students and delivered remote training for TNA supervisors.

Student Placements

- Remote placements started in summer 2020 with successful placements completed in Research and Academic Engagement, Archive Sector Development and Collections Expertise and Engagement.
- We are considering making a remote placement option a permanent part of our offer as they are potentially more inclusive than in-person placements (e.g. they are easier to undertake for students who have caring responsibilities).

Group Visits & PAST

- We began to offer virtual group visits early in 2020 and the first virtual group visits were delivered in November 2020.
- We have delivered roughly one virtual group visit every 1-2 months which is on a par with in-person group visits.
- There is currently no timeline for offering on-site group visits as this is dependent on the easing of restrictions and on whether universities are delivering in-person teaching.
- We held 4 PAST 'Introduction to Archival Skills' days remotely in February 2021, each accommodating up to 25 students. There was substantial demand for places so we held an extra 2 sessions in March.

Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships (CDPs)

- Recruitment for our 3 CDPs is underway.
- We reviewed and updated the membership of the external panel that selects ideas for our studentships to make it more diverse, and reviewed the text for studentship adverts to ensure they were inclusive of people from different backgrounds.
- Studentships have been advertised with additional paid ads on Instagram, Facebook and Linked In (in the past these would have only been posted on Twitter). We are reaching out to organisations who champion diversity in heritage and academia to seek their help in promoting the CDPs including: [Diverse Histories](#), [Leading Routes](#), [Culture&](#), [Young Historians Project](#), [African-Caribbean Research Collective](#) .

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