

Date of Meeting: 25 January 2022	Location: By Video Conference	THE
Title: User Advisory Group Meeting	Subject or Purpose: Minutes of a regular meeting held on 25 th January 2022	NATIONAL ARCHIVES
ATTENDEES		
Alison Kay (External Archives User)	Susan Moore (Map Room)	
Elli Young (Student & Early Career)	Will Reid (Diversity)	
Grace Ioppolo (Academic)	Valerie Johnson (TNA – Director of Research & Collections), Co-Chair	
Grace Touzel (External Archives)	Emmajane Avery (TNA – Director of Public Engagement) – Co-Chair	
Jennifer Aston (Senior Lecturer in History)	Lee Oliver (TNA – Head of Visitor Experience)	
Matthew Cleary (Student & Online)	Gemma MacLagan Ram (TNA – Commercial Director)	
Nadine Chambers (Students)	Rachael Minott (TNA – Inclusion & Change Manager)	
Pat Reynolds (Family History & Online)	Rachel Smillie (TNA – Head of Academic Partnerships)	
Sadie Jarrett (Map Room & Early Career Academic)	Kristen Dilworth (TNA – Senior Personal Assistant)	
Sophie Kay (Diversity)	Romi Maharaj (TNA – Interim Personal Assistant)	
Sue Adams (Independent Researcher)		
APOLOGIES		
Mike Grahn (Onsite Personal Interest)	Matthew Cleary (Students & Online)	

1. **Introduction & Welcome to New Delegates**

Apologies were received from Mike Grahn (Onsite Personal Interest) and Matthew Cleary (Students & Online). VJ welcomed Alison Kay, Archives Manager at the National Railway Museum in York as a new delegate. The existing delegates introduced themselves and their interest groups.

2. **Minutes & Matters Arising**

Minutes from the meeting held on 14 September 2021 were agreed and approved.

3. **Review of Terms of Reference**

VJ informed the group that having Terms of Reference was part of good governance, and asked the group to endorse the revised Terms, which will continue to be reviewed regularly.

The UAG agreed the Terms, though it was noted that the list of groups within the document was not exhaustive or exclusive. It was requested that TNA edit the phrasing around the list of groups represented to allow flexibility, with a caveat that UAG should not become any bigger as a result.

Action: TNA to edit wording

4. **Inclusion in the Archives Sector** (Rachael Minott)

RM was introduced to the group to give an overview of inclusion work within the Archives Sector Development Department (ASD) at TNA.

What is Inclusive Practice?

Inclusive practice is about nurturing 'a sense of belonging for as many people as possible'. RM explained that TNA, as caretakers to records of shared histories, is mindful of the trust, care and management of records required which involves enriching TNA collections through participatory practices and enriching the workforce through diversity of thought and experience.

Three policy commitments related to inclusion :-

- Archives for Everyone
- Archives Unlocked
- Becoming the Inclusive Archive

The group were informed about existing initiatives, including:

A Risk Assessment Tool

A tool to help archive services manage risk around selecting and communicating difficult stories. The tool covered

- Institutional Reputation
- Legal Obligations
- Language
- Staff & Audience Wellbeing

Inclusive Illustrations (Manage Your Collections (MYC) Tool)

Promoting inclusion visually is important, giving people the idea of belonging. RM iterated that it is difficult to find the right imagery, and this resource will provide a bank of images to use.

A Resource List reference tool is also being reviewed particularly for disability support.

The group was informed that these tools will be released together when all the resources are completed.

The group were also shown a draft matrix for inclusion around 'Self-Assessment' and 'Participatory Practice & Agency in Archives'.

RM informed the group that an MYC prototype was being reviewed for creating a Digital Black History Archive Hub in collaboration with Black Cultural Archives, the George Padmore Institute and the Friends of Huntley Archives at London Metropolitan Archive.

The prototype is due to be completed by end of March 2022.

Mapping Inclusive Practice Across English Regions

RM informed the group of a new research initiative to understand inclusion being undertaken in archives across England in different regions (1) North East, (2) North West, (3) Midlands, (4) East/South East, (5) South West and (6) London. Investigators will carry out research on behalf of the archives to explore barriers and opportunities faced in these regions in pursuit of inclusive practice. The work is being undertaken between January 2022 and March 2022.

Wellbeing language has been introduced as an initiative to create a series of videos where invited speakers pre-record content that can be shared on our webpages, on wellbeing, language and archival practice. The videos will form the basis of a series of events to support the sector where participants can respond to the content and continue discussion around wellbeing and language concerns in their contexts as a form of collaborative learning.

Romi M to circulate RM's slides to Group.

Action: Romi M

RM answered questions from the Group members:

Q. AK asked if there were any advisory panels.

A. There are none at present, the intention is to establish an Archives Disruptors group/ critical friends of archive professionals and theorists as the archive sector development users are archive sector professionals.

Q. SK asked if there was any scope for a Disability User Panel.

A. RM is working closely with UX Research team (Jennifer Klepfer) who explores user research on access from a digital perspective a larger dedicated Disability user panel has not been explored yet, resources to support the sector to be accessible are being created, including a disability resource list, but it is difficult to do a physical user panel for the sector at large.

Q. EY asked if there was a diversity gap in staff, access and training. These are lacking within these institutions, is there anything in place for this?

A. Archive apprenticeships will be a core element in enabling staff diversity. There are apprenticeships, Bridging the Digital gap trainees, with a focus on diversifying entrance to the sector and Plugged in and Powered up training to support with the focus on retention for cultural workers. Lack of diversity is a barrier.

Q. GT asked about Revising 'free text' descriptions in catalogues, and the disparity in practice in libraries, museums and archives- How do you catch-up?

A. This is being reviewed this year, but continued research into managing offensive descriptions has been conducted by Grace van Mourik and continued work is being done into catalogue descriptions and search queries.

Q. Geographical areas in the Northwest have been funded for data collection of black music,

race riots etc. with volunteers. There are good case studies, could these be used elsewhere? (WR)

A. Always looking for further case studies to learn from the sector and platform good practice. We are exploring how to gather better data on users and archive subjects, but it is complex and requires an intersectional approach, specific lines of enquiry and testing of our assumption.

5. **TNA's Postgraduate Student Activity** (Rachel Smillie)

VJ confirmed to the group that this item was a specific request from UAG.

RS presented the group with a 'Postgraduate Student Activity' overview.

RS emphasised to the group the benefits of student activity to TNA, which were:-

- As an Independent Research Organisation (IRO), student work supports ground-breaking research, investment in future research partnerships and enhancing TNA's research reputation.
- Inclusive Archive – supporting a diverse range of students thrive, upskilling supervisors to support students.

Focus has been on improving our PhD student offer due to the challenges for Covid 19, lack of diversity among UK PhD students, high staff turnover leaving gaps and stressful study for them.

Key actions presented to the group were:-

- New student induction process and documentation
- Regular meet-ups and check-ins
- Annual Reporting
- Student involvement in TNA research
- Developing recruitment communications to encourage under-represented groups to apply for PhDs.

TNA Doctoral Cohort

RS informed the group that at TNA there are currently 15 doctoral students studying at 12 universities across England. There will be 4 Doctoral studentships for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP)

RS advised the group that TNA were approached by 27 different academics. There were 12 expressions of interest from 11 universities from which 6 project teams from 6 universities were selected to develop full proposals.

In January 2 studentships will be awarded funding after an external academic selection.

The item concluded with RS summarising of student activity in 2020 – 2021.

- Training & Skills Development, Postgraduate Archival Skills Training (PAST), Palaeography, Placements at TNA, Media, Digital Humanities, Research Skills, Conference Organisation.
- Research dissemination & outreach, Publications in peer-reviewed journals, Book chapters, Blogs, Application to New Generation Thinkers, Conference Papers.

RS opened the floor to questions.

Q. Are courses open to non-students? (SM)

A. Introductory courses are open to non-students. In-depth sessions for skills and methodology are only for students.

Q. The focus on students was successful, but what does the year look like for PAST workshops? Can PAST workshops continue the importance of pastoral care? What is available for non-funded students?

A. Postgraduate workshops were run online but RS noted that the appetite was reduced during the pandemic. PAST programmes are now running in person again.

In February a medieval and early modern programme will run in person with document handling (as advertised).

Training for doctoral students was offered within Records, Collection Care and Research (Digital Humanities one to one) which will continue to run.

Students can access placement programmes online and there are a number of bursaries available which has been increased this year.

6, **Digitisation** (Gemma Maclagan)

VJ Introduced Gemma to the group to give an overview on Digitisation.

After a brief overview, Gemma answered questions raised in item 7, Delegate Submitted Items, referring to Census 1921 and Access for Local Historians. Further questions followed:

Q. I understand that FindMyPast wants to target the 1921 census as a tool for genealogists and that TNA needs to find commercial avenues to raise money. However, the 1921 census is also an extremely valuable source for local historians who need the ability to browse screenshots by place.

Could this be available as standard subscription? Without this option, the 1921 census is still closed to local historians; more so, in fact, as it will no longer be possible to view the original returns on site. (SJ)

A. The 1921 Census is available to everyone free at TNA. However, since the creation of the online product has been paid for by a third party (FindMyPast) the product is chargeable when accessed from elsewhere. Digitising is a costly process and resource heavy. FindMyPast will eventually offer access via subscriptions to users, but a timeline has not yet been set for this.

Q. There have been complaints from academics regarding the costs of scans and access. Why is there not a fuller list of what is available? GI

The Public have been misled on the cost of accessing the census with the misconception that as it was tax funded, access would be free. The cost of downloading documents has made the

census out of reach for some history groups eg. Women's history is too expensive. (SM)

- A. The 1921 Census was funded by the taxpayer at its conception, and once the 100 year closure period had passed, records were transferred to the Archives where viewing is free. It would have been impossible for TNA to take on the task of digitising without partners. As mentioned, the census is currently available on a pay per view basis but eventually FindMyPast will introduce a subscription model (date to be advised). The group were notified that FindMyPast have up to 3 years exclusivity.

Costs for this service were published in October when publication of this service was announced.

VJ added as a comparison that the public pay to access and download title deeds from HM Land Registry.

- Q. SA asked how much did the digitisation cost; and if government was lobbied to fund this? (SA)

- A. Gemma informed the group that TNA appreciated that some users were disappointed; however, this approach to publishing census records was not new, all previous digital editions have been handled in exactly the same way. Gemma added that FindMyPast funded the project in its entirety, as the nature of that investment was their information only.

7. **Delegate Submitted Items**

Ordering Timetable (SM)

- Q. What is the timetable for returning to advance ordering the day before a visit? Ordering a week beforehand has been fine for catching up on many months of backlog, but as life moves on researchers need to be able to react more quickly to what they find.

- A. There is no timetable. The current advance ordering process is working well, with the option for on-demand ordering and the ability to hold documents over for visits within the next 7 days means one can either have documents waiting on the day of your visit, or order them on the day. (DF)

- Q. Will the time for last orders on-site be extended from 3:30pm to 5:00pm? (SM)

- A. Pre-pandemic, document ordering closed at 4:00pm across all days. As it can take up to an hour to produce documents, a 4:00pm cut-off is not feasible for Wednesday, Friday or Saturdays. TNA are looking to extend Tuesday & Thursday ordering times. (DF)

- Q. Are there plans to change anything in the Map Room? (SM)

- A. No plans to change anything.

Census 1921 & Access for Local Historians (SJ)

This was covered in Item 6 on Digitisation.

8. **Any other business**

Lee informed the group that Document Services will be implementing bar code scanners on all the reading room computers, replacing the old bar code swipe technology.

Lee advised the group that the USB-camera trial was a success, and these devices will be permitted items in the reading rooms. Full details of what is permitted is described in the Rules for Readers.

As there was no other business, the meeting closed at 1:45pm.