

<b>Date of Meeting:</b> 6 June 2023	<b>Location:</b> By Video Conference / TNA	<b>THE</b>
<b>Title:</b> User Advisory Group Meeting	<b>Subject or Purpose:</b> Minutes of a regular meeting held on 6 June 2023	<b>NATIONAL ARCHIVES</b>
<b>ATTENDEES</b>		
Grace Ioppolo (Academic)	Anne Samson (Ethnic Minority & Other Diverse Groups)	
Nadine Chambers (Students)	Valerie Johnson (TNA – Director of Research & Collections), Co-chair	
Will Reid (Diversity)	Lucy Fletcher (TNA – Director of Public Access & Government Services), Co-chair	
Susan Moore (Maps)	Lee Oliver (TNA - (Head of Visitor Experience)	
Sue Adams (Independent Researcher)	RM (TNA – Senior Personal Assistant), Minutes	
Jeremy Stocker (Academic Researcher)	Jack Butterworth (TNA – Head of Grants & Funding) - for item 4 only	
Roger Fisher (Map Room Users & Overseas Researchers)	RR (TNA – Digital Services Delivery Manager) - for item 5 only	
Mike Grahn (Onsite Personal)	Debbie French (TNA – Head of Document Services) - for item 6 only	
Lisbet Sherlock (Family History & Online)		
<b>APOLOGIES</b>		
Alison Kay (External Archive Users)	Pat Reynolds (Family History & Online)	
Grace Touzel (External Archivist)	Jennifer Aston (Academic Researcher)	
Matthew Cleary (Student & Online)		

1.	<b><u>Introduction &amp; Welcome (VJ)</u></b>
	VJ informed the UAG of apologies from delegates unable to attend the meeting.
2.	<b><u>Minutes &amp; Matters Arising (VJ)</u></b>
	Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed. There were no matters arising.
3.	<b><u>Public Services (LO)</u></b>
	LO informed the UAG that the 'Treason' exhibition had closed before Easter and that it had far exceeded expectations of its success. Feedback of the exhibition was excellent both online and by word of mouth.  LO informed the UAG that the 'Spirit of Invention' exhibition had opened to the public and

thanked those UAG delegates who were able to attend the Private View event .

It was noted that some members of the UAG had not received an official invitation. RM to follow up with the organisers to provide an updated UAG member list.

**Action: RM**

LO provided some details of the exhibition emphasising that 10-year olds from a local school were actively involved in the planning of the exhibition which has taken a year to come to fruition.

LO informed the UAG of the family orientated exhibition Sunday festival which was an amazing day with 500+ visitors. LO provided an overview of the festival which included a working ventilated top hat, musical instruments made out of junk, and demonstrations of technology used by TNA's Collection Care Department. LO also talked about the dome shaped planetarium that was set up on the first floor. LO mentioned that the exhibition was the first time TNA had loans from other institutions.

LO notified the UAG that TNA would be open every Sunday until the end of October with the first Sunday being allocated to a specific activity.

It was noted that the exhibition is free of charge.

LO informed the group that summer will, as always, be busy and advised members to suggest to their community members that they book seats / documents in advance for the reading rooms.

#### 4. **Grants & Funding (JB)**

VJ introduced JB (Head of Grants & Funding) to the UAG as Head of the Grants & Funding Office, a new department set up in November 2021.

JB provided the UAG with an overview of the Department's remit and activities.

JB outlined the three key missions of the department:

##### 1. Winning Funding

- Including supporting the New Approach to Research.
- Supporting bids through a new Expression of Interest process; the Strategic Research Fund, and training/support.
- £4.5 million of grant funding was applied for in 2022-23.
- The future: increasing the volume, breadth, development, impact, engagement and strategic alignment of TNA's grant portfolio.

##### 2. Managing Funded Projects

- A new project delivery offer for TNA, including;
  - New financial model for Workday.
  - New Grants Policy.
  - New support for project teams.
- The future: continuing work on delivery and process and realising the benefit

	<p>and impact of our funding portfolio.</p> <p>3. Delivering Funding to the Archives Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Supporting the Archives Sector Leadership Review.</li> <li>○ Over £625,000 was disbursed to the archives sector in 2022-23, for cataloguing, resilience, engagement and research.</li> <li>○ Funding consultation (Summer &amp; Autumn 2022).</li> <li>○ The future: launching the new approach, evaluation, evidence-gathering and new partnerships.</li> </ul> <p>JB provided some data on the archives funding sector since April 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ TNA provided 233 grants to the sector, with 450 archives having applied to TNA for funding.</li> <li>○ Funding totalled £2.93 million with total grants applications totalling over £15 million.</li> <li>○ 74% of funding since 2017 has been disbursed outside of London and the South East Types of organisations covered were: public sector, registered charity, academic institute, archive network, other 'not for profit', and business archives.</li> </ul> <p>JB followed this with a summary of the future, with the three focus areas for the future being Risk &amp; Resilience; Access to the Record; and Skills, Innovation and Engagement.</p> <p>JB outlined some of the challenges for funding, and informed the group that digital; the environment; and diversity, equity and Inclusion were priority areas to address.</p> <p>JB finished this session by providing the UAG with a synopsis of the way forward.</p>
Q.	<p>AS enquired: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long does it take to receive funds and who are the main sources?</li> <li>• Why is digital challenging; should this be a growth area, particularly for users from abroad and to increase inclusivity?</li> </ul>
A.	<p>JB informed UAG that funding works in long cycles; there is no way of telling how long funding will take to come through, or how much of the £4.5 million applied for will be successful. The majority of funding at present comes from UKRI and from charitable organisations.</p> <p>JB agreed that digital is a growth area, but that digital skills and practice remain a challenge for the sector.</p> <p>LF added that digital engagement is a huge opportunity.</p>
Q.	<p>GI asked if outside agencies could apply for grants, and could a particular college apply for funding, for a collection held at TNA?</p>

A.	There is a scheme for cataloguing of collections (Archives Revealed). However, JB informed the UAG that TNA cannot award funding to itself, for the cataloguing of its own collection. A request on behalf of the particular college can be sent to the Grants and Funding Office, for a more detailed discussion.
Q.	SM enquired if funding could be applied for, to improve cataloguing at TNA. Could JB give some examples of what TNA are applying for?
A.	<p>JB advised the group that TNA is fully aware and supportive of improving cataloguing. JB informed the group that the team are working with funders outside of the archives sector, to make the case for cataloguing funding, whether as a precursor to research projects or otherwise.</p> <p>Currently, most funding received at TNA is for research, particularly from the AHRC, however this is rapidly broadening, with applications being submitted for funding in digitisation, education, engagement and infrastructure.</p>
Q.	RF asked what the shortfall is between applications and projects, in the archives sector funding.
A.	<p>JB informed the group that (roughly) 80% of projects do not get funded.</p> <p>VJ commented that there is huge demand and TNA can only cover 20% of what is asked from it, in its sector funding. A level of competition is healthy, however it is clear that the sector has greater funding need that TNA can provide at present.</p> <p>JB to circulate the slides.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Action: JB</b></p>
5.	<b><u>Etna Catalogue Search and Details Page (RR)</u></b>
	<p>RR (Digital Services Delivery Manager) and the ETNA team were introduced to the meeting where an update on ETNA (Explore the Nation’s Archives) Search and Details page was given.</p> <p>SW walked through a demonstration of the current Etna Beta Site informing the group of the new feedback mechanism that appears on each page.</p> <p>The UAG were informed that the team have recently undergone a <a href="#">Service Assessment</a> which they ‘met with conditions’. The conditions were related to the approach to the up-and-coming private beta. The team have fed these conditions and recommendations into planning for the private beta.</p> <p>AN thanked UAG members who had been involved in taking part in user research and emphasised how valuable their input had been. AN provided an example of this in the placement of the order/download button which had not previously been in an obvious place on the page (ie. at the top of the page).</p> <p>AN requested assistance from the UAG for feedback while running the private beta later in the Summer. This will give users access to the current development of the catalogue search.</p> <p>AN provided the UAG with the following ways of providing feedback:-</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback mechanism at the bottom of each page</li> <li>• Emailing at <a href="mailto:UXresearch@nationalarchives.gov.uk">UXresearch@nationalarchives.gov.uk</a></li> </ul> <p>AN informed the group that there would be a series of Beta release phases with new improvements.</p> <p>AN requested that the group share this with other invested users.</p> <p>The team informed the group that TNA measures success by using KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in usage from new or first time users.</li> <li>• Users express comparative or better experience than using Discovery (80%+ positive responses in survey results).</li> <li>• Users continue on to Discovery to complete their transactions, supported by quantitative data suggesting success.</li> </ul> <p>AN finished this session by informing the group that once TNA is ready to run private beta AN will send a link directly to the UAG. This beta will be run in batches via multiple rounds during the year.</p>
Q.	MG asked if this new search will support Boolean searching?
A.	SW informed the group that Boolean and 'wild card' searches would be supported.
Q.	JS asked if there will still be a browse function.
A.	SW informed the group that Browse is a high priority on the project roadmap.
6,	<b>Advanced Ordering (DF)</b>
	<p>DF (Head of Document Services) provided the UAG with an update on advanced ordering. DF informed the group that there has been a change to a new booking system since Covid and that it is working very well. DF emphasised that TNA can only run one ordering system. The new system includes ordering offsite documents, providing greater access. DF informed the group that TNA is aware this does not suit everyone, and that TNA is looking at a new DORIS system.</p> <p>DF emphasised that TNA is aware and understands the issues of advance ordering but currently is doing the best with the current system whilst looking at improving this.</p>
Q.	<p>SM stated that it seemed staff running computer systems at TNA do not always understand what researchers want and that cataloguing is not always ideal. Ordering on the day sometimes proves difficult. SM asked what happened to the pre-Covid request to order documents from home.</p> <p>SM also raised an issue relating to ordering a month in advance for offsite documents noting that recently this had failed.</p>
A.	<p>DF informed the group that staff were doing a good job, and that perhaps some further training on computers may be appropriate in some instances.</p> <p>DF addressed the incident of failed delivery of documents from the offsite facility by informing the group that the van carrying documents arriving from TNA's offsite facility in Cheshire at the time mentioned by SM was caught up in an accident on the motorway and it was also a Bank Holiday. DF advised the group that documents coming from</p>
UAG Minutes	5

	<p>Cheshire are sometimes delayed due to outside influences that are not always predictable.</p> <p>DF emphasised the fact that public orders take precedence over Government orders. One can order something and receive it in an hour, whereas in some other institutions you may have to wait 2-3 hours.</p> <p>LF confirmed DF's comments, adding that records are being delivered for more people. LF emphasised that it is public money being used, acknowledging that TNA is having to work with legacy systems at the same time as being committed to looking at new platforms and improvements.</p>
Q.	<p>NC commented that there have been massive system changes to the benefit of users and asked how the UAG could support DF's team.</p>
A.	<p>DF advised the group that feedback is never seen as negative in TNA and is always welcomed from readers. DF pointed out that this year's feasibility study will be a starting point and noted that research has changed since the current DORIS system was first introduced. DF advised the group to keep being vocal, to use the feedback forms online and to keep engaged in the improvement and user research processes.</p>
Q.	<p>NC asked if there was any specific product or system being looked at.</p>
A.	<p>DF informed the group that there was nothing at present and that TNA would require a more bespoke system.</p> <p>LF added that compared to the rest of the world, TNA has one of the best archive services in terms of document delivery: you can get a document within an hour.</p>
Q.	<p>SM asked if there was dateline or programme that can be provided of what is being moved to the storage facility in Cheshire. Can this be provided at a future UAG meeting.</p>
A.	<p>LF informed the group that there are transfer plans that can be looked at online, for example, there is a Ministry of Defence transfer page informing users that 50km is being moved. Some will come to TNA for digitisation, and some have gone to Cheshire.</p> <p>LF advised the group that DF has a number of archival experts and in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence they decide when records should be moved and where. LF added that there is around 10 km of storage newly created at Kew, and that those documents being sent to offsite storage will be low usage documents.</p> <p>LO commented that this is not a new situation: managing where collections are stored is a continual and long-term process.</p> <p>DF informed the group that a review is done annually and there is a questionnaire that can be completed. DF to send questionnaire for UAG to circulate.</p>

**Action DF**

7.	<b><u>Delegate Submitted Items</u></b>
7.1	Map Room User (SM)
Q.	SM raised a situation where a map room seat had been booked but changed by TNA to a first floor seat, which caused inconvenience for the reader. The staff are usually very helpful in putting things right, but the problem should not arise.
A.	At TNA, customer satisfaction is something we take very seriously so it is disappointing to hear of this reader's experience. If one makes a booking and requests a seat in the map room then a seat should have been allocated there. The paper printout received when the order is placed no longer shows which room a reader has booked. The digital services team have been informed with a request to include this information in all orders. This may take some time. In the meantime, readers should use the comments box to indicate they would like a map room seat.
Q.	There are no suitable sockets for Apple MacBook laptops on the first floor main tables.
A.	LO replied by confirming that this is the case, and that TNA is currently embarking on a project to trial new Document Reading Room furniture and facilities, the DRR Lab, which should be open before the end of summer. There will be opportunities for readers / users to provide feedback, which will help in redesigning the first floor Document Reading Room.
Q.	There was unpleasant hassling by Security staff at the end of the day, long before the 1850hrs time of returning the documents.
A.	TNA recently held two Reader Invigilation team meetings, where reading room closing procedures and interactions with the public were discussed and such incidences addressed. This will hopefully mean such incidences will not recur. TNA follows up on all incidences reported and any feedback is always welcome, as the experience of readers is very important to TNA.
Q.	Announcements cannot be heard in the invigilation room on the first floor.
A.	This is being investigated with a view to it being resolved shortly.
Q.	E179 Database (SM)
	SM raised an issue of rumours being circulated regarding the E179 database being withdrawn.
A.	Communications have been issued by TNA with respect to this item, informing users that there is no intention of this database being withdrawn.  LF commented that it would be helpful in future if such rumours were notified by UAG or their communities to TNA staff.
Q.	Digitisation Programme - JS asked about the current status of the digitisation programme and emphasised its importance for remote access to records, especially for researchers not based in the London area. He cited the successful example of the digitisation of Cabinet Office records undertaken some years ago and gave examples of other series ripe for digitisation. JS noted that this is 'core business' which might be prioritised over 'non-core' activities like exhibitions.
A.	LO shared the current list of Licensing's digitisation projects. The group were informed that this document is confidential, and that the information in it was not to be shared apart from that recently published on the public domain.
UAG Minutes	
7	



	<p>LO informed the group that the days of TNA doing its own large-scale projects to publish on Docs Online are now over. There is very little budget for in-house digitisation, therefore the bulk of digitisation is commercial-related. TNA may digitise smaller collections where there is no commercial benefit, but in that case, there may be other reasons for them to be digitised. There are a number of international digitisation projects also underway.</p> <p>LO reminded the group that there is free access to digitised records onsite and noted that MoD records will be outsourced for digitisation. LO informed the group that digitisation is a costly process and that Jisc funded the original Cabinet Papers project.</p> <p>LF added that there are a number of cabinet memoranda digitised annually that can be seen online.</p>
Q.	Cost of Reproduction Services (RF)
	RF raised an issue about the cost of reproduction/copying for PhD students.
A.	LO notified the group that copying services at TNA are defined by law and the costings are statutory, and vetted by other government bodies and parliament. There is an option to engage independent researchers to take photos for those students who are abroad.
Q.	Digital Archive Crowdsourcing (AS)
	<p>There are a number of archive users/staff in the UK and South Africa who are prepared to share photographs of documents to help researchers who do not have access to archive documents in person. AS asked whether with new technology would this now be possible.</p> <p>There could be a working party of archive specialists and researchers in the UK and elsewhere to explore feasibility.</p>
A.	This is a discussion to have off-line with the relevant TNA staff (GMcG & JB)
Q.	Security Checks (SM)
	SM raised concerns with regard to security checks at the main entrance and the parameters of what is checked, why and the policy. She also made a request for Security to attend a future UAG meeting to discuss.
A.	Deferred to next meeting in September.
Q.	Digitisation of Military Records (SM)
	SM made a request for TNA to describe the project and outline its impact on readers, the potential migration of records from Kew, and to make clear which items in the catalogue are stored in Cheshire.
A.	Answered under item 6 above
8.	<b>Any other business</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VJ informed the UAG of the DCDC Conference in Durham on 11-13 July. UAG members are offered the opportunity of free conference registration.</li> <li>• VJ reminded the group to use the correct email address when corresponding with</li> </ul>



TNA. RM will send the correct address again to members.

**Action: RM**

- VJ advised the group that there will be a UAG recruitment campaign for 4 vacancies to commence week of 3 July.
- VJ thanked members whose tenure was coming to an end.
- VJ informed the meeting that as she was stepping down from TNA in her role as Director of Research and Collections, that this would be her last meeting as Co-Chair. She thanked the group for its contributions during her time as Co-Chair.

Meeting closed at 12:34hrs