

Date of Meeting: 19 March 2024	Location: By Video Conference / TNA	THE
Title: User Advisory Group Meeting	Subject or Purpose: Minutes of a regular meeting held on 19 March 2024	NATIONAL ARCHIVES
ATTENDEES		
Susan Moore (Maps)	Lucy Fletcher (TNA – Director of Public Access & Government Services), Co-chair	
Jeremy Stocker (Academic Researcher)	Emmajane Avery (TNA - Director of Public Engagement & Sector Leadership), Co-chair	
Roger Fisher (Map Room Users & Overseas Researchers)	Lee Oliver (TNA - Head of Visitor Experience)	
Mike Grahn (Onsite Personal)	Jeff James (TNA – CEO & Keeper)	
Alison Kay (External Archive Users)	VIB (TNA – Principal, Diverse Histories Records Specialist)	
Matthew Cleary (Student & Online)	IS (ITNA – Regional Community Partnership Manager)	
Caroline Nielsen (Diversity Inclusion Academic)	RM (TNA – Senior Personal Assistant), Minutes	
	HW (TNA – Secretariat for UAG)	
APOLOGIES		
Lisbet Sherlock (Family History & Online)	Jennifer Aston (Academic Researcher)	
Anne Samson (Ethnic Minority & Other Diverse Groups)	James Fenwick (Academic Users, Diversity & Inclusion LGTBQ)	
Richard Marks (Academic & Historian Community)	Pat Reynolds (Family History & Online)	

1.	<u>Introduction & Welcome (EJA)</u>
	EJA welcomed delegates to the meeting and introduced HW as the new secretariate for the UAG. Apologies were noted from, LS, AS, RM, JA, JF and PR.
2.	<u>Minutes & Matters Arising (EJA)</u>
	The UAG meeting minutes for 12 December were agreed with actions completed.
3.	<u>UAG Meeting Dates 2024 (EJA)</u>
	The group discussed dates for the remaining UAG meetings for 2024 and it was agreed to hold these on Tuesday 2 July and Tuesday 5 November. <i>Action: RM/HW to send calendar invites</i>

4.	<p>Public Services (LO)</p> <p>LO provided a brief update on public services informing the group that the Great Escapes Exhibition opened at the beginning of February with very positive media coverage and excellent feedback. LO informed the delegates that there had been a large number of visitors leaving memories on cards which were placed at the end of the exhibition clearly showing personal connections with this story and their families.</p> <p>LO informed delegates TNA loaned in relevant items from various institutions for the first time for the exhibition.</p> <p>EJA informed the group that the previous exhibition 'Spirit of Invention' has now opened in Newcastle on Thursday 14 March in the Discovery Museum. The exhibition includes designs that TNA holds from the Victorian Era as well as contemporary designs. This links well with inventions in the museum's collection which reflect inventions created in the Northeast of England, for example Ship Building.</p> <p>MG asked if the 'Great Escapes Exhibition' would also go on tour.</p> <p>EJA responded that there are no plans currently.</p> <p>LO informed the group that The National Archives will be closed from COB Friday 22 March until Tuesday 26 March for essential maintenance.</p> <p>LO informed the delegates that TNA will be starting a 'Windows Project' in April which will cause some disruption. The windows to the second, third and fourth floors in Q1 which are nearly 50 years old will be replaced over the next 12 months. The replacement of the windows will improve the environmental conditions of the repositories contributing to the long-term preservation of our collection, as well as being more energy efficient. The new windows will not alter how our building looks.</p> <p>SM asked that early notification be provided for any documents that will be inaccessible.</p> <p>LO agreed that TNA would endeavour to do this.</p> <p>Post meeting note – all the document moves related the Windows project have already been carried out. No records will be inaccessible due to the project.</p> <p>SM asked if this would affect the map room.</p> <p>LO reported that there are currently no plans for the map room.</p> <p>SM asked that if this changed could early notification be given in the event the map room were to be closed.</p> <p>SM asked if there were plans to change the desks in the reading rooms.</p> <p>LO reported that there had been delays to the pilot project due to budget limitations, but it was intended to resurrect the pilot</p>

5. **Inclusive Archive (Part 1) (VIB & IS)**

VIB was introduced to the group and provided an overview of TNA's 'Inclusive Public Programming'. The main topics covered were: -

- Approach
 - Diversity & inclusive focused events with wider themes
 - Events, Exhibitions & Collections teams working together identifying potential engagement opportunities.
 - Work to mark history month, LGBTQ month and other inclusive anniversaries.
 - With the growth of digital audiences TNA have integrated and embedded diverse and inclusive programming throughout the year. Around a quarter of online programming for 2023 – 2024 was around diverse histories with topics such as Windrush 75, history of blindness, female inventors and marking the lives of extraordinary people which include Charles Ignatius Sancho, Virginia Hall and Eliza Raine.
 - Engage audiences in different ways to reach different demographics.

VIB provided an overview on upcoming events.

- There is a planned BSL tour of the Great Escapes Exhibition (TBC)
- TNA are investigating an audio description tour before the exhibition closes in July.
- Online diverse history events such as 'In conversation' with Sathnam Sanghera and an 'African History of Africa' with Zeinab Badawi.
- Family day in July for Pride.
- Women's History Month (March), LGBTQ History Month (February)

VIB gave an overview on different forms of activity, such as Creative Engagement through artworks (Pride Portraits, Windrush artwork), Creative Worksheets (self-lead), Cabinet Table (women themed, awakening paper records and video on Lord Archer and the AIDS crisis) and creating classified ads, re-creating the census, pop up Windrush talks.

VIB finished the session by informing the group of the offsite opportunities being investigated through various institutions and spaces to reach more audiences.

This included :-

- Windrush Day at Tilbury docks with local people such as NHS workers and Caribbean communities
- Collaboration with the Science Museum to attend their 'Late to deliver' love themed event on Queer connections' based on records TNA hold pertaining to the 1920's lonely hearts publication 'The Link'.
- Migration Museum an offsite event to engage audiences on migration related family history.
- Using Podcasts, social media and other digital formats.

SM asked if there was a guide to direct users to specific places for certain records.

VIB reported that there are around 365 guides and would send some links to SM.

Action: VIB to send links

AK suggested curating for change links with the National Railways Museum and provided the links below.

- <https://curatingforchange.org>
- <https://www.railwaymuseum.org.uk/whats-on/go-as-you-please>

VIB reported that capturing profile of audiences in a more efficient way is a work in progress; at the moment we capture numbers and some demographic information, but this could be better.

CN asked if there were any plans to have quiet hours turning off sensory lights etc. to help those children and adults in public areas in relation to accessibility and inclusion of non-physical impairment.

CN provided a link to:

- <https://www.accessable.co.uk/>

VIB reported that this has been an issue that has been raised but currently TNA have not been able to trial these but are constantly thinking about how to adapt such measures.

EJA informed the group that Inclusivity Part 2 will cover some of these points at the next UAG meeting.

CN asked that when the TNA website is redeveloped, could it include better signposts for impaired users to locate information.

LF informed the group that this was useful information and would pass this on to our digital experts.

IS presented a session on 'Exploring the Intersection between archival records, transnational histories and community memory'. IS informed delegates that the last time he presented was back in 2020.

IS shared a brief on a new project in line with the 80th Anniversary of the Second World War and in collaboration with CEE colleagues.

- The project identifies a number of records in the War Office and Colonial Office that speak to the multitude of languages from handbooks and training manuals.
- The project will offer opportunities to work with Archival records, family and community memory stipulating language as an entry point to personal experiences of the conflict.
- The project explores the roles and experiences of combatants and non-combatants living multilingual lives in Britain today.

	<p>IS shared a personal experience with the group on memories of viewing records from the 70th Anniversary of the Partition of British India in 2017 which described the violence during this time.</p> <p>IS followed this by informing the delegates of a collaboration between The National Archives and Psychotherapists at Stillpoint Spaces (Black, African & Asian Therapy Network – BAATN) aimed at starting conversations about processing the challenging material relating to 20th Black British History & Indian Indentured History.</p> <p>The collaboration resulted in the following projects:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TNA launched the ‘Kuli Dhal Puri’ anthology, a project mixing archival research with therapeutic practice with workshops carefully designed focussing on records of Indian Indenture in TNA’s collection. Participants explored records and using personal archives linked to individual memories. • A new play ‘A Story told three times and still unfinished’ by Mel Pennant with the Tamasha Theatre Company was a result of research conducted with African Caribbean communities in London & Bristol. • BAATN reached out to the Windrush generation capturing data through links on a dedicated web page.
6.	Delegated Submitted Items (LO)
	None
7.	Update & Reflection (JJ)
	<p>JJ reflected on the highlights of the last 10 years, noting the successes, as well as the challenges. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming a more commercially focused archive – raising income from Licensing & Royalties and managing the accounting and financial forecasting challenges around these. • Delivering key digitisation projects such as the Farm Survey, 1939 Register and 1921 Census. • Engaging in key partnerships with the UAE National Library & Archives and <i>The Gazettes</i> which brings in substantive income. • Increasing our visibility and transforming our international presence, particularly in Europe. • Becoming a more confident and assertive archive with strong relationships with government departments, research institutions and commercial partners. • Becoming more inclusive through digital projects related to migrated archive (FCO 141) and having a more diverse Board to support the organisation’s direction of travel. • Delivering successful exhibitions and education engagement programmes, such as Great Escapes, Windrush, touring of the Spirit of Invention and the Magna Carta. • Expanding our digital services, such as launching ‘Transfer Digital Records’, which enables records to be transferred digitally from government departments and expanding it to deliver Find Case Law. • Creating a ‘safe haven’ for 20 million digital records of the Ukraine National Archives.
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- Embarking on one of the largest transfer projects – 10million MoD service personnel records.

In terms of external factors which have impacted the organisation, JJ noted Covid-19 and our response by making digital records available for free; EU exit and securing additional funding to deliver legal certainty through Legislation services; and the end of the transition to the 20-year rule which has been delivered for government and has one year remaining for local authority places of deposit.

Looking ahead at the future and some of the challenges, JJ noted a general election, potential pressure on public spending, preparations for a Spending Review. More, longer-term he noted storage challenges which TNA was currently investigating and recruiting digital skilled staff. Cyber security was also on the agenda, following the British Library incident. He concluded by informing delegates about the launch of 'Archives Unlocked' – a refresh of the government's vision for Archives.

This was followed by a question and answer session which centred on the following themes:

- Activities and challenges of the cataloguing team and their role in making the Parliamentary Archives collection available and accessible on our technological infrastructure.
- Strategic prioritisation choices in a resource constrained environment and an explanation of activities that relate to TNA's Public Task around the preservation of records, versus public value, such as our education and exhibitions programme. Over the years, TNA has tried to make sure access and engagement is as much part of its responsibilities as preservation.
- TNA's outreach activities and its role and reach as a 'national' institution versus the constraints of its geographical location and looking at innovative ways to overcome this i.e. prioritising digital access to records nationally and internationally, through delivering leadership to the archives sector and broadcasting from the Learning Centre to reach audiences beyond London.
- The various powers of the Keeper as set out in the Public Records Act, Letters Patent and Royal Warrants.
- The risks of seeing digitisation as a cost-effective way of avoiding expensive storage and the value in retaining and preserving original records.

8. **Any other business**

MG asked why the information on the TNA website only covered physical disabilities and asked if there were any plans to refresh it to cover other disabilities such as neurodiversity.

LO responded that TNA had just commissioned Access Able to undertake a new accessibility audit which would cover all types of disability.

Meeting closed at: 12:05