



FORUM ON HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

- Date:** Monday 12 September 2022
- Time:** 10.00 - 12.30
- Venue:** Virtual Committee
- Chair:** Professor Leon Litvack (LL), Deputy Chair
- Minutes:** Isabel Saunders, Senior Governance Coordinator and Secretary to the Advisory Council
- Members:** Dr Nigel Fletcher (NF)
Dr Helen Forde (HF)
Dr Adele Redhead (AR), Independent Forum Member
Ms Jenny Shaw (JSh), Independent Forum Member
Dr Jeannette Strickland (JSt)

Others in attendance:

The National Archives (TNA)

Head of Archive and Research Grants
Senior Adviser (Manorial Records)
Mr Jeff James (JJ) Chief Executive and Keeper (ex officio)
Dr Valerie Johnson (VJ) Director of Research and Collections
Dr Tina Morton (TM) Head of Archives Sector Development
Mr Sam Whaley (SW) Head of Strategy and CEO's Office

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 The Deputy Chair welcomed members and other attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Master of the Rolls and Pip Willcox submitted apologies for absence.
- 1.3 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes, Matters Arising and Action Log

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record subject to amendments proposed at the meeting.

Matters Arising

- 2.2 Members closed items 3, 4 and 5 of the action log.

Action: IS to amend and upload the approved minutes and to update the action log.

3. Keeper and Historical Manuscripts Commissioner's (HMC) Update

- 3.1 JJ introduced the paper, and invited questions from members.
- 3.2 Members complimented The National Archives on the Beyond 2022 project.
- 3.3 Members asked for an update on FCO 141. JJ noted conversations had been ongoing with specialists on how to return to providing access to members of the public in a safe manner. This was likely to include the use of minimal personal protective equipment. A message would be communicated to the public as soon as possible.
- 3.4 Members asked about the results of the visit to the Parliamentary Archives. JJ noted there were restraints to where the collection was currently located which would have implications for moving the collection to The National Archives but that the Parliamentary Archives team was doing preparatory work. The plan for transfer was still for 2024/2025, however many details still required resolution and liaison with the Parliamentary Archives team continued.
- 3.5 Members noted the update.

4. Archives Sector Update

- 4.1 TM introduced the report. She highlighted recent conferences attended by members of The National Archives. She also noted there were ongoing discussions around the energy crisis and what implication this might have for archives. She invited questions from members.
- 4.2 Members asked about the archive sector survey undertaken and noted from discussion with their own networks that inconsistency across the sector made it difficult for researchers to access archives and this was contributing to the lower demand archives may be experiencing. They noted there was a concern this could become a cyclical problem with low demand leading to reduced opening, which would lead to a further reduction in demand. TM noted The National Archives was considering the best time to have stronger messaging around opening hours. She also noted that inconsistency across institutions had been a problem before the pandemic, but user expectations had changed due to the pandemic, particularly as there was now an expectation of increased online access. Members noted difficulties they were aware of with institutions they were connected with.
- 4.3 Members asked about the inclusivity research The National Archives had carried out. TM explained The National Archives had been looking at current practices across the sector, current gaps and where there might be opportunity for The National Archives to add value. She noted this was the initial research phase of a larger piece of work.
- 4.4 Members noted they were still aware of concerns from researchers that archives had not reopened to pre-pandemic levels. TM noted The National Archives remained in contact with archive services, but noted that archives were now having to consider carefully enhanced demand as researchers were expecting digital provision to be provided at the same level it was during the pandemic whilst also expecting services to provide the same level of physical access.
- 4.5 Members noted the update.

5. Update on Research and Academic Engagement

- 5.1 VJ introduced the paper and invited questions from members.
- 5.2 Members noted the renaming of the Gerald Aylmer seminar to the History and Archives in Practice. They noted there may be confusion between this new name and the History and

Practice partnership. VJ noted they were different organisation but she would feedback where appropriate.

5.3 Members noted the update.

6. Manorial Documents Register Advisory Panel Update

6.1 IS introduced a report setting out the draft Terms of Reference for the new Manorial Documents Advisory Panel which would replace the existing Panel in 2023. She invited questions from members.

6.2 Members made a number of suggestions for the updated Terms of Reference and IS confirmed these would be incorporated into the final Terms of Reference.

ACTION: IS to incorporate Forum comments into the draft Terms of Reference.

6.3 VJ updated the Forum on the success of the of the manorial documents celebratory events which had taken place over the Summer. The Deputy Chair and other members confirmed the events were very successful.

6.4 Members noted the update.

7. Archive and Research Grants and Funding Introduction

7.1 The Head of Archive and Research Grants and Funding attended the meeting to introduce his new role and the work of the Grants and Funding Team. He gave a presentation covering the plans for the new team focusing on: ensuring greater strategy in applying for grants; collecting more metrics and data on the managing grants; and finally on engaging with stakeholders on providing grants and funding to review current practices.

7.2 Members asked about what steps The National Archives would take to make its funding seeking more strategic. The Head of Archives and Research Grants and Funding confirmed they would look to work with partners where appropriate, as well as considering The National Archives' own practices to make it eligible for other funding areas not previously utilised.

7.3 Members asked where the greatest need for outward funding was. The Head of Archives and Research Grants and Funding noted that core costs were a large problem and systematic underfunding of archive services exacerbated this need, however it was not always The National Archives' role to provide support in this way. It should not always be need which is funded; instead it is also necessary to fund for the future. Immediate areas of work like this included digital preservation and digital records. Additionally funding could also be useful to support networks and to support more research.

7.4 Members noted the update.

8. Promotion of the Forum's Work Follow-Up

8.1 IS introduced the item and invited questions and comments from members.

8.2 Members discussed the recommendations in the report and agreed all the recommendations. They noted it would be necessary to consult Arts Council England on the possibility of writing to archives which received acceptance in lieu records before commencing with the recommendation to do so. They also requested The National Archives provide a list of suitable institutions for a meeting to be held at an external venue.

DECISION: The Forum agreed all recommendations made in the report.

ACTION: IS to liaise with Arts Council England on letter writing following acceptance in lieu awards.

ACTION: TM to provide a list of suitable institutions for external meeting venues.

9. 2023 Strategic Priorities

9.1 IS introduced the item and invited questions and comments from members.

9.2 Members discussed the recommendations in the report and suggested priorities for consideration in 2023.

9.3 Members agreed that threats to the sector should remain on the Forum's list of Strategic Priorities, with particular focus on the implications of the pandemic as well as the ongoing issues of the energy crisis, and also focussing on the implications of digital records for archives.

9.4 Members considered if it would be appropriate to have an item covering opening and access of archives to historians and researchers. JJ suggested it would be best for SW and IS to work together on how it might be possible for the Forum to consider this within its terms of reference.

ACTION: IS to liaise with SW on a Forum priority considering archive opening and access.

9.5 Members confirmed they wished to retain Research and Cross Cutting Issues as strategic priorities; members agreed both should be core priorities.

9.6 Members confirmed they wished to add The National Archives' Sector Leadership Role as a core priority for 2023.

DECISION: The Forum agreed all recommendations made in the report.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 The Forum formally recorded their condolences for the Royal Family after the death of Her Late Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II.

10.2 The Deputy Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their work.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 12.27pm.

Date of next meeting: 20 January 2023