RecordKeeping

For all those interested
in archives and records

Contents

Cover photo
William Thomas Green, a man with 'acute mania' before treatment.
Photograph taken at Bethlem, mid 1850s. (Bethlem Royal Hospital
Archives and Museum)

Note from the Editor

Welcome to the Winter issue of *RecordKeeping*, which we hope you will find useful, interesting and relevant, whatever your involvement with archives and records.

Being customer focused in our activities is very much on the agenda, and in this issue we feature a number of projects and initiatives responding to the challenge. Our front cover features a photograph from Bethlem Archives and Museum. You can read about their education and outreach activities inside, including the use of such sources to inspire students to produce their own artwork. Other case studies include the community-led initiatives of Northamptonshire Black History Project, and news of a new partnership to provide an integrated public and university library in Worcestershire, which includes the county's archives.

Our theme of outreach activities continues with a look back at A2A successes, an update on what The National Archives (TNA) has to offer the higher education community, and news from the Public Services Quality Group. Elsewhere, we are delighted to feature an introductory survey to the archives of Queenswood School.

As usual, we bring you an update of activities from The National Archives and the wider archives and records management communities, including a report from the *Sea charts and surveys* event, progress of TNA's *Appraisal Report*, and news of a recent conference exploring some of the current thinking around the theory of Public Value. We also hear of a new Action Plan to make Europe's cultural heritage more accessible through the internet.
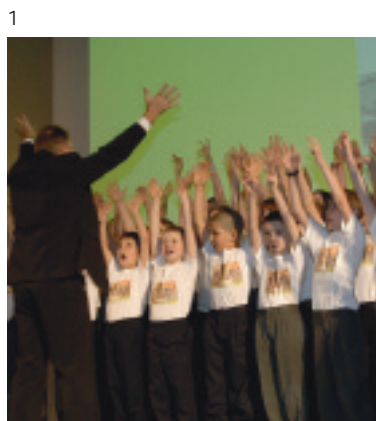
Thank you for reading. Your views are very important to us, so please let us know what you think of *RecordKeeping*, and have a chance at winning £30 in book vouchers, by taking a couple of minutes to fill in our online reader survey at www.priority-research.com/wbs/recordkeeping

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TNA update

Cataloguing Grants Scheme demonstrates the level of need for cataloguing funding

In the last issue we mentioned the success of The National Archives' application to the Pilgrim Trust and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for funding to run a pilot Cataloguing Grants Scheme in London, North-West England and Scotland.

A total of £200,000 is available from the two trusts in 2006. Bids for the funding were invited from repositories in the three eligible areas at the end of October, with a closing date of 6 January 2006. A total of 70 applications were received from the three regions, seeking £1.3m of grant aid.

The fact that the available money is six-and-a-half times over-subscribed clearly demonstrates the level of need

for funding for projects of this type, and the strong response to the scheme strengthens the prospect of it being repeated in 2007, when the focus would shift to different areas of the country.

The number of applications does, however, make the process of allocating the money even more difficult than we expected! To help with the inevitable tough decisions, The National Archives (TNA) has set up a Cataloguing Grants Panel, chaired by Georgina Naylor from the Pilgrim Trust, which met for the first time on 18 January and agreed the assessment process for the bids. Staff in TNA's National Advisory Services will undertake an initial assessment of the bids against the agreed criteria (which

were prefigured in the guidance notes for applicants), and the Panel will then consider in more detail the applications which emerge from the assessment process with the highest ranking, and make final decisions about the allocation of the fund. We intend to inform applicants of the outcome of their application by 3 March, and to make a public announcement shortly afterwards.

Nick Kingsley
Head of the National Advisory Services
The National Archives

Archives Strategy Seminar: working together for improvement and sustainability

In January The National Archives (TNA) came together with representatives from the regional agencies, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), CyMAL, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the National Archives of Scotland to discuss a number of significant issues affecting our sector.

The purpose of the seminar was to present the strategic vision of TNA in supporting the archival community, outline the key recommendations in the Strategic Review for the National Advisory Services and present its work plan for 2006/07, and consider how all the organisations could work together to achieve mutual objectives.

The agenda covered the new self assessment scheme and how this can key into the Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework; the need for TNA and the national and

regional bodies to promote the role of archive services in contributing to the records management agenda in the wider public sector; and finally a shift in emphasis on this theme to the broader issues concerning the management and preservation of all digital records. Collecting policies and audiovisual archives were also on the agenda but due to time constraints will be taken forward in smaller groups at a later date.

The principal outcomes of the meeting were:

- Support for the self-assessment process, and especially for its future development into a full-scale accreditation regime for archive services.

- Agreement on the need to improve communications between TNA and the regional agencies.

- Recognition of the need for archive services to participate in arrangements for records management in the wider public sector, even when relevant archivists currently do not have the necessary skills or the services do not have the resources to take the leading role.

- Agreement that the move to digital record keeping in society at large posed issues for archivists and others which need to be addressed nationally and strategically.

- Agreement that the seminar should become an annual event, scheduled at the beginning of the year so as to inform the business planning processes of the organisations represented.

Katie Woolf
National Advisory Services
The National Archives

Elizabeth Hallam Smith leaves The National Archives

Elizabeth Hallam Smith, Director of National Advisory and Public Services at The National Archives (TNA) and Chair of the National Council on Archives (NCA), is to become Director of Information Services and Librarian at the House of Lords.

Elizabeth Hallam Smith has been a valued member of staff at The National Archives since joining the Public Record Office (PRO), as it then was, in 1976. When she took on the role of Director in 1994, she led on initiatives including creating The National Archives' online services, improving and extending access to the reading rooms at Kew and the Family Records Centre, developing expert services, working to support the needs of archivists and records managers, establishing The National Archives' education department, and developing an outreach programme with socially excluded groups.

She had the following farewell message:

I am delighted about my new role at the House of Lords, as it will present me with new and fascinating challenges in a different environment. But I will certainly miss The National Archives, its superb collection of records and my colleagues. I have worked here for many years and have enjoyed every moment of it. Every day has presented me with a new challenge to help increase the national profile of archives and to find new ways of improving public services.

During my career at the Public Record Office and more recently The National Archives, I have learned a remarkable amount from archive and records management colleagues. Highlights have included looking after the PRO's Archive Inspection Service and chairing the archival mapping project boards; working with Chris Kitching, Nick Kingsley and other colleagues in developing the new National Advisory Services at TNA; representing The National Archives at the European Board of National Archivists and the International Council on Archives (ICA); and working most constructively with the DLM (Document Lifecycle Management) Forum and the EU Commission on Moreq2.

As vice-chair and latterly chair of the National Council on Archives, I have greatly valued my contacts with the Council Members and officers and with all our member bodies – and I am delighted with the NCA's progress in key areas of activity: its strategic and advocacy work, the Archive Lottery Advisory Service, Archive Awareness Campaign, the Public Services Quality Group, and the Community Archives Development Group.

I have been consistently impressed by the enthusiasm and commitment of people in our community and will miss my formal ties with it. But I am really delighted that my new role includes responsibility for the excellent Parliamentary Archives, which means that my professional links with archivists and records managers will continue in the future. On a final note, I hope to keep in touch with my many friends in the sector.
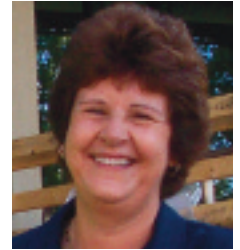
Records Management Department (RMD) Training and Consultancy Service: Questionnaire

RMD's Training and Consultancy Service was launched in 1997 as a result of recommendations made in the report of the Scoping Study on Records Storage and Records Management.

After its initial development phase it was given increased impetus as a result of the passing of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. It has made a significant contribution to the Government's priority of improving and professionalising records management in government.

The training side of the service provides free courses for central government staff at The National Archives (TNA) – an introduction to the public records system and cataloguing/packing – and works closely with Liverpool University on the education programme for the Diploma/Certificate in Professional Studies: Records and Information Management.

At a recent meeting of the Records Management Advisory Group future training needs for central government staff who are beyond the introductory stage and who do not wish to register for full certificate or diploma modules under this programme were discussed. TNA is now keen to gather views on priorities for training, in the public sector generally, to fill this gap and have issued a questionnaire on the subject.

This can be completed electronically from TNA's website: (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/training/) or the enclosed insert completed and sent to Kelvin Smith at The National Archives, Kew, Surrey, TW9 4DU, email: kelvin.smith@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Kelvin will also be happy to discuss any training issues, telephone 020 8392 5330 ext 2303.

PRONOM Unique Identifier Scheme launched

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PRONOM technical registry

Following the release of version 4 of the PRONOM technical registry and the Digital Record Object Identification (DROID) automatic file format identification tool in October 2005, The National Archives is pleased to announce the publication of the PRONOM Unique Identifier (PUID) Scheme.

The PRONOM Unique Identifier scheme provides persistent, unique and unambiguous identifiers for records in the PRONOM registry. Unique identifiers are essential for the exchange and management of digital objects, allowing users to identify and share the technical information required to support access to a digital object. This is a virtue both of the inherent uniqueness of the identifier, and of its binding to a definitive description of the format information in a registry such as PRONOM.

Formats are considered a particular priority for such a scheme. Current approaches, such as Disk Operating System (DOS) and Windows file extensions, Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (MIME-types), Unix 'magic numbers', and Macintosh data-forks, all fail to meet the requirements of persistence, uniqueness and granularity.

The PUID scheme has been developed for the single purpose of providing such identifiers. In the first instance, PUIDs have been assigned to over 130 of the most common digital formats, and more are being added on a regular basis. The DROID tool is now also capable of assigning these identifiers to files, through its live update facility with the PRONOM database. The scheme has been adopted as the recommended encoding scheme for describing file formats in the latest version of e-Government Metadata Standard (www. govtalk.gov.uk/schemasstandards/metadata_document.asp?docnum=872). This means that, for the first time, a consistent, persistent and highly detailed scheme for describing file formats will be in use across the UK government.

PUIDs can be expressed as Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs) using the "info:pronom/" namespace, details of which are available from the info URI

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registry (http://info-uri.info/registry/OAIHandler?verb=GetRecord&metadataPrefix=reg&identifier=info:pronom/). The National Archives has plans to develop a range of services to support automated querying and retrieval of PRONOM registry content, including a resolution service for PUIDs. Further information and technical documentation on the PUID scheme is available at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/aboutapps/pronom/puid.htm

Freedom of Information update

The issue of access to coroners' records deposited with local archive services under the Public Records Act has been causing some concerns to both coroners and archivists since the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). As noted in the previous issue's FOI Update, The National Archives (TNA) has agreed with the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) that the latter will issue new guidance.

On 12 December, TNA representatives were invited to give a briefing on this to the Coroners' Advisory Group (CAG) of DCA, and explained how the interaction of the two pieces of legislation affected coroners, who are not themselves public authorities for FOIA purposes. The subsequent discussions served to reassure coroners that their principal concerns about inappropriate access to deposited records could be addressed through the use of FOIA exemptions, and to give TNA some feedback on what form of guidance would be helpful.

CAG decided that FOIA should be included in the regular series of training sessions for coroners, and TNA has agreed to provide input to these. Mr Vic Round, Worcestershire Coroner and currently secretary of the Coroners Society, has agreed to coordinate more detailed responses to the TNA briefing, and provide feedback on any further difficulties experienced in particular cases. Coroners present also raised the related issue of a possible revision to current guidance on which records should be permanently preserved under the Public Records Act. TNA agreed to review this in consultation with other stakeholders, and include any revision in the DCA guidance.

Information Tribunal
The Information Tribunal hears appeals from notices issued by the Information Commissioner under the Freedom of Information Act. At the time of writing the Tribunal has issued six FOI decision notices. Details of these decisions are available at www.informationtribunal.gov.uk/

Questionnaire on Catalogue Retroconversion

The progress made by archives in the UK with retroconverting their catalogues has been highlighted by the findings of the Questionnaire on Catalogue Retroconversion, undertaken by The National Archives to inform the development of Archives UK (aUK).

150 repositories took part in the survey (a response rate of 55%), and a wide variety of archival institutions responded (91 local record offices, 12 national repositories, 32 universities, 9 specialist repositories and 6 religious institutions). So far, based on responses received, an average of 44% of catalogues have been retroconverted.

However, a clear divide emerges between the 21% of repositories who have failed to undertake any retroconversion and the 15% who have retroconverted between 91% and 100% of their catalogues.

Other key findings were:

- 89% of repositories have contributed to a network service, showing the significant role of the networks.

- 62% of archives have archival cataloguing software. Of archives with cataloguing software, 87% use CALM and 6% use ADLIB.

- Across the archival sector there is a strong move towards online catalogues. 46% of archives already have their catalogues available online and 13% hope to achieve web access within the next year.

The findings of the Questionnaire were presented to the aUK Board and more detailed analysis is to be produced. For further details please contact: nas@nationalarchives.gov.uk