

TAKING FORWARD THE NEW RESEARCH STRATEGY AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Why research at The National Archives?

Research is important to The National Archives.

The team co-ordinates externally funded or partnered research done by and with The National Archives that:

- supports the organisation in identifying, funding and solving questions it needs to answer;
- supports better public services;
- supports the archive and information sector;
- enhances access to records for the wider community of researchers.



Three key functions

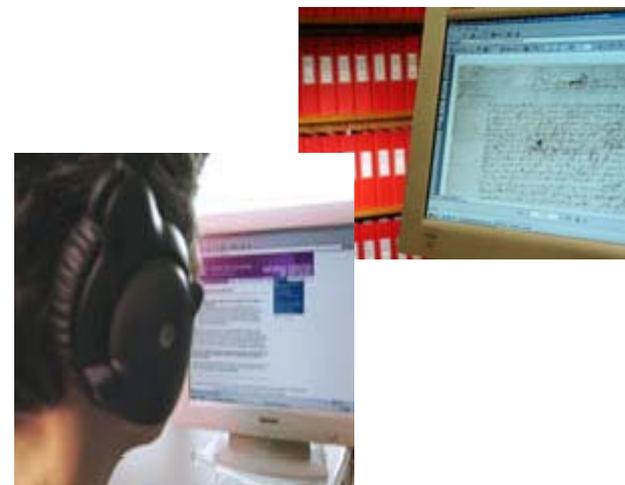
- 1) Research co-ordination
- 2) Academic liaison
- 3) New thinking in information



1) Research co-ordination

The co-ordination role covers:

- setting and managing research priorities and external funding applications, to support the targeted application by The National Archives for funding opportunities and initiatives;
- leading on strategic relationships with research councils and funding bodies;
- research communications.



2) Academic liaison

The National Archives needs to maintain strong consultative and collaborative relationships with a broad and varied academic audience, but particularly historians.

As part of a strong and responsive dialogue, the Research team:

- provides a clear lead on strategic academic relationships, for example, through the Strategic Academic Stakeholder Forum, and the Forum on Historical Manuscripts and Academic Research;
- runs an academic engagement and communications plan;
- provides briefings on academic issues and support for academic events.



3) New thinking in information

Research is an important vehicle for bringing new thinking about information into The National Archives and supporting new knowledge, theory and practice, from user participation through email preservation to web archiving.

The Research function therefore:

- supports records and information management projects and policy work at a strategic level, by bringing new thinking and external intelligence into The National Archives, and partnering information research projects.



A new strategy for research and academic liaison

- As part of the TNA 2010 project, the Research function was reorganised, with a central Research team co-ordinating research.
- In 2010-2011, TNA focussed on academic liaison, building strong and successful relationships with academics.
- But in 2011, we became aware that though we were partnering and supporting much research, we were not putting in many applications in our own right, and were therefore failing to win funding.

The role of research at The National Archives

We therefore needed to change our strategy, but Research still needs to have a strategic fit with the organisation and the business plan.

It needs to deliver:

- benefit to the organisation
 - benefit to the sector
- benefit to public services

The National Archives' 2010-2011 Research Priorities

Supporting Government data and policy

- Facilitating the responsible publication of government data.
- The codification and re-use of statutory information as Linked Data: for example, legislation and the official Gazettes.
- Using research and new thinking to support government policy in records, data and information management.

Access, use and the user

- User participation : for example, the potential for and role of user participation in cataloguing or other TNA activities and services.
- Accessibility and use of online material: for example, the implications for the organisation of how digital is changing research; how TNA can encourage new and wider uses of its digital material; the potential development of OCR for early or challenging documents.

Digital information management

- Digital information collection, management, sustainability and access: for example, the implications of Sharepoint; the development of techniques / technologies for automatic selection and classification of documents; the implications for records of different types of compression.
- Socio-cultural aspects of information management: for example, why users do not use EDRMs.

Leading the archive and information sector

- TNA's role in information standards and strategy: for example, supporting research into standards for and quality of service provision in the wider archives sector, and strategic issues facing archival institutions.
- TNA's role in relation to private archives: for example, supporting work that identifies the location, content and research value of archives in private custody.

Caring for collections

- Sustainable stewardship: for example, targeting wider collection management issues in order to provide solutions for sustainable stewardship of TNA's collections.
- Managing material change: for example, understanding materials, degradation processes and the relationship of materials to their environments, to enable TNA to predict the long-term stability of its holdings.

Change of direction: proactivity

We therefore asked for and received Executive Team support to change the strategy to:

- identify Strategic Research Priorities, and proactively seek partners and funding to **lead** bids that answer these questions;
- **support** and **drive** a wider set of priorities, now to be known as Organisational Research Priorities alongside a new set of Historical Research Priorities

Research at TNA – what should it be ?

"We want to do research in areas where we really need to be involved strategically for the future of the organisation, and where further research can build our knowledge in a way we could not do internally – quicker, providing credibility, providing resource we do not have." (Caroline Ottaway-Searle)

Research at TNA – Strategic Research Priorities identified by Executive Team

- What is the nature of the digital archival record ?
- Has digital changed the needs, expectations and nature of research and user behaviour?
- How can we develop and exploit digital information extraction tools to help support digital selection and digital sensitivity review ?
- Can we develop Open Data models to provide better-quality, authentic and trusted data for use and re-use ?

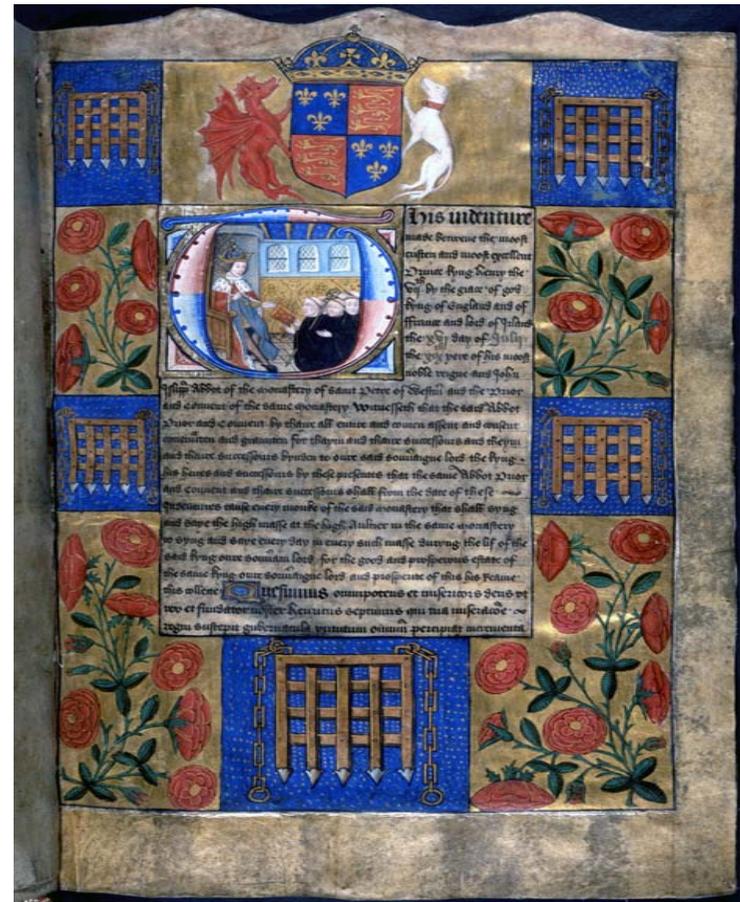
Delivering on the new strategy

- Leading research for Strategic Research Priorities
- Supporting wider research via Organisational Research Priorities and Historical Research Priorities
- Sustained development of effective research co-ordination and communications
- Refocussed academic liaison via a new Academic Communications Strategy



New Academic Communications Strategy

- Why?
 - New Research Strategy
- Who?
 - Academic Contacts
- What?
 - 'It's all about dialogue not PR'
- When?
 - Action plan up to 2012



Academic Communications Strategy

How?

- Research Newsletter
- Webpages
- University Visits
- Conferences/seminars/events
- Collaborative research and partnerships
- Forums and groups

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Comments and suggestions to:

Research@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

