

MINUTES OF BRANCH HEADS' MEETING
TUESDAY 27 MAY 2008 at 2:00pm
LORD CLERK REGISTER'S ROOM, GENERAL REGISTER HOUSE

Present: George MacKenzie, Dave Brownlee, David Brown, Jim Grady, Ian Hill, Alison Horsburgh, Bruno Longmore, Rob Mildren, Laura Mitchell, Linda Ramsay, Alison Lindsay, John McLintock, John Waugh, Jenny Cutts (secretary).

Apologies: Peter Anderson, Bob Phillips.

1. Minutes of the last meeting (4 March 2008)

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. Matters Arising

[5.5] Bruno Longmore reported that a statement outlining the Keeper's Public Records Legislation Review had been publicised as agreed.

3. Staffing issues

3.1 Alison Horsburgh reported that Archive Attendants have been appointed to Reader Services Branch and Conservation Services Branch and were about to take up post. Linda Ramsay noted that assistance from One HR with new starts is minimal.

3.2 Dave Brownlee explained that NAS is to adopt a hybrid version of the Scottish Governments eHR system for delivery of HR functions via the intranet. Wholesale adoption is not desirable, because there are successful NAS online business systems already in place, e.g. for FWH and Annual Leave.

3.3 Issues with recruitment services were discussed. It was noted that there is more onus upon line managers in all HR processes than was previously the case. Dave Brownlee explained that he can escalate problems with HR as necessary. George Mackenzie added that resourcing issues will be raised with Louise Wilson and suggested that NAS line managers share best practice advice with each other. It was agreed that Louise Wilson be invited to a subsequent branch heads meeting for discussion of HR issues.

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| Action: Louise Wilson to be invited to attend a subsequent meeting. |
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3.4 It was noted that a recruitment process is underway to fill the vacancy in Senior Management Branch following early retirement of the Keeper's secretary.

3.5 A request was made that branch heads be informed of forthcoming managed moves of B2 archivists. It was agreed that Peter Anderson formally announce the moves and timing as soon as possible.

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| Action: Peter Anderson to issue an announcement. |
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3.6 The issue of redeployees was raised. Scottish Government resourcing policy requires vacancies to first be advertised to redeployees, before opening up the recruitment process to other applicants. Dave Brownlee clarified the process and explained that this should add a maximum of one week onto the recruitment exercise. His view was that internal managed moves between staff of the same grade for development purposes may be arranged without initiating the redeployee process [it was subsequently agreed that this would be clarified with HR].

4. Digital Policy

4.1 It was noted that the discussion on digital policy had been twice deferred and that the working group documents were circulated in advance of the meeting. Alison Horsburgh presented the findings of the three groups concerning: copying and public access; fees and charges and policy. It was observed that the working groups included representatives of all branches (except Accommodation Services) and thanks were expressed to participants.

4.2 Following the presentation, a discussion of the following issues took place: standards for image capture; DIMCAT; virtual volumes; partial imaging; conservation; numbering; digitisation programme and priorities; resource implications; self-service copying; and restrictions.

4.3 Rob Mildren explained that images are captured in different ways depending on the type of document being copied although the metadata captured for each digital image is consistent for all. It was agreed that decisions about copying by digital imaging staff should be documented and that two sets of imaging standards (access and publication quality) are necessary. The benefits of determining two standards for customer choice were noted. Reaction to customer specification and technological changes was not considered desirable.

4.4. The shortcomings of DIMCAT were noted and options for dealing with these images discussed. The issues addressed included partial imaging and inaccurate references and descriptions. It was accepted that many of these images are worth retaining but the identification process is onerous. John McLintock explained how he had identified RHP images on DIMCAT for transferral to Virtual Volumes. It was agreed that each records branch evaluate the contents of DIMCAT for the same purpose.

4.5 Rob Mildren explained that the internal structure of Virtual Volumes, which is based upon document references, enables other systems to interrogate whether any particular image exists. Maintenance of a contents list is not required. Problems with Virtual Volumes images concern partially imaged documents, numbering, cataloguing and different types of access restrictions. It was suggested that two access paths to Virtual Volumes could solve the problems: one for all images accessible by staff, and the other for images cleared for public access. Tie-ins to the Readers Tickets System and a record of signed restricted access forms are also desirable.

4.6 Partially imaged documents were discussed. It is recognised that for a number of digitised images, only part of the document has been copied. This causes problems with the Electronic Ordering System and misleading catalogue entries. It was

suggested that digital policy stipulates that documents are always copied in their entirety. The problem of identifying instances of existing partial imaging requires resolution.

4.7 Linda Ramsay pointed out that all document copying causes degradation. Although creating digital surrogates aids preservation in the long term by reducing handling of the originals, the aim should always be to digitise documents only once. The need to make the right decision about which standard should be used to capture images was emphasised. It was agreed that the option to refuse digitisation requests on preservation grounds should be included within digital policy and procedures. Resource requirements for conservation work to facilitate digital copying must also be considered when estimating costs.

4.8 It was noted that many records are stored at TTH and transported to GRH for digital copying. The benefits of copying documents in the locations where they are stored were recognised. The possibility of establishing a digital copying station at WRH was raised but it was noted that the idea had been previously rejected on cost grounds.

4.9 Issues concerning the numbering of documents were discussed. Concerns relate to staff resources, numbering for digital surrogacy and the NAS Cataloguing Guidelines which reflect archival practice. George Mackenzie suggested that the relevant working group be asked for recommendations on this matter.

4.10 It was noted that a mechanism for suggesting inclusions to the digitisation programme is necessary. Branch heads were encouraged to consider records series for future digitisation. A scoring system was considered useful for prioritisation of the programme.

4.11 Resource implications were discussed. This includes digital capture, conservation work, curatorial preparation, administration of payment; movement of records and catalogue work. Bruno Longmore pointed out that where certain documents have been imaged for special purposes (such as news stories on the website) the relevant catalogue entries had to be enhanced to accompany them involving significant resource. It was noted that large scale digitisation of records series is relatively cheap but ad hoc copying is more expensive. The working group on fees and charges was asked to make recommendations on including a preparation charge. It was agreed that any pricing scheme should be kept simple.

4.12 Restrictions were considered. Where images of restricted access material are held on Virtual Volumes, the public access system must be able to deal with this. A link to an enhanced Readers Ticket System that records completed restricted access forms would be advantageous.

5. Branch Reports

5.1 Branch Heads were given the opportunity to briefly report on salient issues. Reports were succinct due to time restraints.

5.2 Alison Horsburgh explained that RSB are carrying a long term sickness absence. Dave Brownlee confirmed that a replacement would be obtained for a 6 month period.

Laura Mitchell reported on CLRB cataloguing progress. Bruno Longmore explained that the Public Records Legislation Review Group had been established and that SG Information Management Unit have increased the number of paper files reviewed using macro-appraisal. This is counter to expectations of a decline in the volume of reviewing and presents an additional pressure of GRB resources. Rob Mildren reported that improvements to the WRH network and NAS internet upgrades will be concluded in the near future. David Brown reported that a meeting with National Qualifications Online to discuss the Scottish history curriculum has been scheduled; that the video-conferencing facility in GRH is advancing and that staff training will be arranged by the Development Centre. Ian Hill explained options concerning the Elgin papers and added that Dewar papers are expected to be deposited soon. Linda Ramsay asked about NAS budget allocation. Dave Brownlee explained that branch budget allocations will soon be finalised. Preparation of the Adam Dome in advance of the official opening of the ScotlandsPeople Centre was discussed, including aesthetic considerations. Jim Grady explained that FAB are currently working to prepare annual accounts and audit arrangements are in hand.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 It was accepted that the remit for DDA2 scoping study is due for commencement. George Mackenzie will discuss with the appropriate Branch Head.

6.2 Dave Brownlee explained NAS involvement in TNA Study Visits initiative.

6.3 Bruno Longmore proposed copyright policy and procedures as an agenda item for the next meeting.

6.4 Dave Brownlee reported that almost all annual performance appraisals had been received and passed to Scottish Government HR on time.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Jenny Cutts to canvass for the date of the next meeting, to be held in approximately 6 week's time.

Jenny Cutts
19 June 2008