

Information Systems Planning Group
10:00am, 5 August 2009
Lord Clerk Register's Room, General Register House

Present: Dave Brownlee (chair); David Brown, Keith Dargie; Grayham Mount, Jenny Cutts (secretary).

Apologies: Rob Mildren.

1. Staffing issues

1.1 Keith Dargie reported a number of staff who have left the organisation. Chris Dunne has taken up post elsewhere within Scottish Government. Pat Mason has taken retirement. The helpdesk staff have been replaced by this year's personnel and Jackie Steele's temporary contract could not be extended further in compliance with Scottish Government rules. Keith Dargie explained the difficulties of training new helpdesk staff in consequence of this. Another member of staff has taken over helpdesk supervision duties.

1.2 A replacement for David Ross, Paul Meikleham, will start on 17 August 2009 and the web manager post will be advertised in due course. This would bring the Infrastructure, Web and Applications Team back to full complement.

1.3 Grayham Mount explained that following John Welsh leaving the Digital Access Team, the post vacancy was reviewed in June 2009. It was decided that the team leader A4 position should be filled but that if an internal candidate was successful that A3 post would be lost. If an external candidate was appointed, one Pertemp would be lost. The effects of long term sick leave within the section were noted.

1.4 One curatorial member of the Online Resources Team (Kirsty Stewart) has left NAS on secondment to Edinburgh University and temporary moves are planned to cover this absence. Leanne Jobling from Reader Services Branch will take up this position with search room cover provided by Collections Development Branch plus a temporary appointment. The return of Pete Wadley from the Famous Scots project to Reader Services Branch will alleviate this situation from November 2009.

1.5 A discussion of efficiency savings and vacancies was held. Dave Brownlee explained that Ministerial demands for efficiency savings through joint working had been considered and a response provided. In our view it will not be possible to make significant additional savings through shared working on top of those already achieved.

1.6 It was reported that the IT pay supplement is up for periodic review. A working group have produced a final draft submission which makes the case for retention of but not an increase in the supplement. Job roles will be aligned with the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) model. Grayham Mount reiterated mismatch between the British Computer Society professional development framework which assumes each staff member concentrates on one specific area, and the NAS situation whereby IT staff each cover a range of duties.

1.7 Keith Dargie noted that external technical training had been completed and that the Web and Applications and Infrastructure Teams had been amalgamated.

2. Progress reports

2.1 IT Infrastructure and Web & Applications Development Team

2.1.1 Keith Dargie reported that the accommodation arrangements for comms and server rooms at GRH and TTH are nearing completion. In addition, equipment will be moved from the IT suite at TTH freeing up space for staff accommodation.

2.1.2 The IT Security Review specification has been passed to FAB for action. All IT systems and internet access will be reviewed.

2.1.3 Keith Dargie intends that members of his team present NASnet desktop options at a subsequent ISPG meeting. He explained that XP will be used for the next 2-3 years after which time the operating system must be upgraded.

2.1.4 Server issues were discussed. A power shut-down had caused problems with one server that required hardware investigation and replacement. This fault impacted upon the Tartan Register and Gazebo systems, though core systems were unaffected.

2.1.5 It was noted the low volume of helpdesk calls over the summer period and explained that this allows other activities to be progressed.

2.1.6 Keith Dargie reported that he had produced papers identifying the faults inherent in the ScotlandsPeople applications and an Executive Board meeting will take place on 19 August 2009. A business continuity assessment will be carried out for ScotlandsPeople and senior management have noted the potential to extend this assessment to the NAS.

2.1.7 The prototype of a supporting database relating to the Register of Tartans is under development. Options for better information display within the Register are also being investigated. It was reported that a commercial organisation had used an application to harvest thread count information from the register, in excess of the 5 per day restriction. Incorporation of an anti-phishing authentication key into the register will be considered.

2.1.8 The Web and Apps innovations theme was discussed. The Keeper has indicated that the outcomes of the two ongoing studies into reader services and digital preservation are first required in order to inform business strategy and the innovations theme be addressed subsequently. Keith Dargie noted that there are numerous applications that may be developed in the meantime.

2.1.9 A mock-up of the ScotlandsPlaces website has been produced. Although RCAHMS engaged a developer for this purpose, more NAS IT resources have been required than anticipated. Development of ScotlandsPlaces website is on track.

2.1.10 It was noted that the Scottish Council on Archives had experienced difficulties in establishing their IT systems but the problems have now been resolved.

2.2 Digital Access Team

2.2.1 Grayham Mount provided an update on the Digital Data Archive (DDA). Only the transformation module product is outstanding and will be completed by the end of September 2009. A Project Board meeting will be held on 6 August 2009. It was noted that a solution to the file renaming issue concerning e-sasines is still required from BT. It is anticipated that final sign-off of the DDA and first accession of records will be achieved within three months time. The scoping study regarding DDA2 has been initiated.

2.2.2 Dave Brownlee added that a meeting has been scheduled with the legal search firms. Introduction of Registers Direct 2 is not expected to happen until 2010-2011.

2.2.3 The RAC search tool was discussed. The ability to provide direct access to e-sasines via the RAC search tool would be desirable. Grayham Mount is due to meet Erland Greig to discuss transfer of Registers Direct 2 images to satisfy on-demand requests. Sending the documents via email would block the system as some of these documents are over 100 pages long. USB transfer is the recommended method.

2.2.4 Grayham Mount reported that a Restricted Access database is under development and Alan Borthwick, private records section, is providing curatorial input. David Brown queried the difference between this database and the existing Restricted Access information currently used by archive staff. The initial value of this database will concern searching and there will be scope to extend this into a restriction mechanism for virtual volumes.

2.2.5 It was reported that a dedicated server is not required for GIS information as the GIS data is held on USB drives attached to the 2 relevant PCs. Dave Brownlee explained that NAS has signed up to the Ordnance Survey One Scotland Mapping Agreement.

2.2.6 The review of customer fees and charges is ongoing and due to report at the end of September 2009.

2.2.7 Questions were asked about NAS Digital Policy. DIMCAT decommissioning approaches completion. Some problems in converting the images for retention have been experienced. A high proportion of DIMAT images are of private records and decisions about the retention and conversion of these are being carefully considered.

2.2.8 Images for inclusion on ScotlandsImages.com image library are produced at the rate of approximately 100 images per month. Digitisation of BR records for this purpose has been completed.

2.2.9 Investigation into useable microfilm surrogates continues. Some discrepancies regarding microfilm locations have been found.

2.2.10 Commissary court records (SC70/17 microfilm) are being digitised and quality assured. The contractors agreed to redo sub-standard images at their own expense.

2.2.11 Following the report on Image Processes measurement considered at the previous meeting on 22 April, new Illunis cameras have been installed at TTH. Performance has improved in consequence and certain workflow benefits have been experienced.

2.3 Online Resources Team

2.3.1 In Rob Mildren's absence, Dave Brownlee reported Online Resources matters. Catholic baptismal records have been digitised and a launch event involving the First Minister and Cardinal O'Brien is planned to be held in October 2009.

2.3.2 The Online Resources Team leader will retire later in the year. Filling that post is under review with regard to the financial situation.

2.4 Calm and OPAC

2.4.1 The new OPAC server has been set up on the network and the software will be installed next month. Following a meeting of branch representatives, specifications for further OPAC development will be provided and the work undertaken by the DAT team in due course. It was agreed that OPAC is performing well.

2.4.2 David Brown recognised the value in obtaining evidenced feedback from a set of informed OPAC users. It was noted that the Online Resources Team have utilised focus groups and held web open days in the past. Discussion of catalogue users ensued. It was observed that some people would appreciate a simpler search facility that functions like popular internet search engines. Another set of users are familiar with more complex catalogue research techniques and would desire a more sophisticated search facility. The group recognised that the very small number of complaints received is an indicator of success.

2.4.3 Grayham Mount explained that Calm indexing performance has stabilised. He added that some new fields will be added to NAS Calm to facilitate ScotlandsPlaces data. This will necessitate rebuilding of the Calm export to OPAC facility. David Brown further noted the curatorial intention that all document catalogue entries ultimately include a geographical centroid.

3. Information systems security

3.1 Dave Brownlee reported that the Scottish Government have requested a further return on IT security. Dave Brownlee and Keith Dargie will discuss this in detail.

3.2 Keith Dargie reported that there have been no security breaches since the last meeting. IT security will be investigated as part of the wider review already discussed.

4. Matters arising from ISPG Minutes of 22 April 2009 (circulated)

4.1 There were no matters arising. It was noted that there had been no activity regarding joint telephony.

5. Any other business

5.1 Keith Dargie explained that the legal search firms are experiencing problems in printing from virtual volumes. Having pursued this with the printer manufacturers, it is evident that the fault is part of virtual volumes rather than the printing hardware. Rob Mildren will be responsible for delivering a solution as the system was designed in-house using a now obsolete programming language. Extra printers have been provided for the legal search room in order to compensate for the printing delay problem in the meantime. Ian Hill and Keith Dargie have met with legal search company representatives to discuss this.

6. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is due to be held in November 2009. Jenny Cutts will canvass for dates nearer the time.

Jenny Cutts
6 August 2009