

PSQG Steering group

27 January 2004

Present

Geoff Pick, LMA (GP – Chair/Convenor)

Charlotte Hodgson, Glamorgan Record Office (CH – Vice-Chair/Convenor)

Chris Pickford (CP)

Liz Hallam Smith, The National Archives (EHS)

Bruce Jackson, Lancashire Record Office (BJ)

Catherine Redfern, The National Archives (CR – Secretary)

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies received from Deborah Jenkins, Alison Horsburgh, Steven Jones, David Mander and Richard Childs.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 14 October 2003, 6 November 2003 and matters arising

2.1 14 October 2003

[2.2 – AKA CIPFA report] This had been published on the PSQG web pages.

2.2 [2.3 – PSQG logo] – Deborah Jenkins had contacted Katie Norgrove to discuss. Geoff Pick (GP) would follow up to find out what happened. Charlotte Hodgson (CH) said it might be a good idea to have the new logo ready for the new TNA website due to be launched in April. GP

2.3 [3.2 – Performance measures/indicators & CIPFA] - The information on PM/Is has been given to CIPFA.

2.4 [3.4 – Resource digest of statistics] – This has not been published yet. GP would contact Resource to find out more and to offer to publish it on the PSQG web pages. GP

2.5 [3.5 – Cultural Trends] – CP's article is due to be published soon. GP

2.6 [3.17 – Resource funding for PM/I work] – GP had written to Resource but had not yet had a reply. Three issues needed to be discussed with Resource: 1. Funding for PM/PI work 2. Potential for Resource funding of the Visitor Survey, specifically to allow smaller archives to take part. 3. A survey/analysis of all the visitor survey statistics. All agreed this work would be very useful and interesting. EHS would follow this up at a forthcoming meeting with Justin Frost. EHS

2.7 [5.3 – TNA user statistics] – EHS said these were being compiled and would be published on TNA's website so that they would be in the public domain. The PSQG pages would link to them.

2.8 6 November 2003

[2.3 – Home Countries] - There had been no change to the Home Countries contacts.

3. Quality Forum 2003 / 2004

3.1 General

The Group had had good feedback about the 2003 Forum. GP said the speakers were well chosen and challenging, and that the organisation of the event was also good.

3.2 Presentations

It was disappointing that not all the presentations were available on the website and the Group agreed that the invitation to speakers should be explicit about the fact that the presentations are expected to be available online after the Forum.

3.3 Bookings

The Forum had been very popular and had been booked up quickly. Catherine Redfern (CR) reported that she and Donny Webley had received many phone calls shortly before the Forum asking if there were spare places available, and requesting to be added to the waiting list. It was also noted that some colleagues from related professions expressed interest. The Group felt this was due to an appealing theme and early organisation. CR reported that around 10 delegates did not turn up. This could be an unfortunate consequence of the Forum being such good value, as delegates did not lose out financially by non-attendance. The Group suggested that it would be feasible to overbook by 5% next time to account for drop-outs. CR noticed that 5 organisations had booked 30 places in total (i.e. each sent between 4-8 delegates) and wondered whether it might be fairer to limit the amount of delegates an organisation could send, bearing in mind the demand for places.

3.4 Location

PSQG valued the relationship with TNA but wondered whether a larger venue might be appropriate for 2004. There was also the problem of transport in getting to Kew on time. The British Library was suggested as a potential alternative. EHS would ask Katie Norgrove to investigate. In the meantime CR would book the conference rooms at Kew. EHS, KN, CR

3.5 Date

The 2004 Forum would be on Wednesday 10th November. Bruce Jackson (BJ) asked whether 11am would be a better start time for people travelling long distances. However this would depend on whether the venue was in central London or Kew, and would be agreed at a later stage.

3.6 Theme

The theme should be appealing and interesting and not just merely topical. It should also look to the future. The SOA Conference was going to be on FOI, Data Protection and Records Management so PSQG should do something different. The Group discussed potential themes, including the following ideas:

Profile and marketing (e.g. trend for reduction in on-site visitor numbers even though production of actual records is up; investment in archives; numbers v. quality).

How to measure success? What makes an archive successful? What makes a quality archive service? Do we want simply more visitors, a wider range of visitors, more varied uses of the archives, or a general awareness amongst the lay-person?

Impact assessment? (e.g. Archives Awareness Month impact assessment, Regional projects, etc.)

"Counting the true value of archives" (this could also include impact assessment, compliance issues, and proving the value of the service to paymasters).
"Accentuating the positive"

3.7 Other PSQG events

Chris Pickford (CP) reminded the Group that it had once been proposed to hold two events a year, one outside London. This might help to boost the profile of PSQG. It would have to be in an accessible location and potentially could be organised in co-operation with the Regional Archive Councils. The event could either repeat the annual quality forum or provide a more regional focus, such as "PSQG roadshows". This would need further consideration but would be worth bearing in mind.

4. Review of working parties' activities

4.1 CIPFA statistics

The working group had a meeting with CIPFA on 18th November 2003, at which they had given them CP's work on PM/Is. There was potential for this methodology to be used in the CIPFA figures. The next CIPFA questionnaire would contain some minor amendments. The report on the last statistics collection would be out soon. BJ would write the introduction, and GP would comment. This would be then put on the website. There was no other CIPFA meeting planned until around Autumn 2004. BJ

4.2 Access standard

The standard had now been endorsed by most of the organisations asked. The most significant organisations who had not endorsed it were the Audit Commission (who supported the standard but did not wish to formally endorse it) and Resource. BJ asked whether the LGA had endorsed the Standard [post meeting note: the LGA has not yet replied to the letter requesting endorsement. SJ would follow this up with them]. SJ

4.3 The next step was to finalise the report, add the endorsements to the document and to re-publish it on the website. EHS reported that a pre-amble was currently being written by TNA. The Steering Group requested the opportunity to see and comment on the pre-amble before it was published. SJ

4.4 CH asked whether the Standard would be promoted and asked TNA to clarify what it intended to do. For example it may be useful to link the Standard to the Disability Discrimination Act deadline of October 2004. CR confirmed that the Standard could be promoted in the Bulletin to Places of Deposit and also as part of the TNA "framework of standards" which was currently being developed. The Group also thought it would be useful to have an article in the Society of Archivists newsletter. The Group wondered whether Resource would be willing promote the Standard (e.g. on the website) as it fitted closely with the access agenda. EHS would ask on behalf of the Group. EHS recommended that the Standard be revisited in a year to assess the take-up and usefulness of the document. TNA, EHS

4.5 Visitors' survey

The working group was holding a meeting after the Steering Group meeting. A note has been put on the archives-nra confirming that the survey would go ahead in May/June 2004. It would be mostly the same as the previous survey but with a few tweaks. BJ asked whether the ethnic origin section needed to be altered in light of

the ONS's new guidance which said that Scottish and Welsh would be added to the list as ethnic identities. GP would check whether this was current guidance or intended for the next census and would amend accordingly. Elizabeth Scudder of the Corporation of London was the secretary to the working group. Stuart Bligh from the Centre for Kentish Studies would be taking more of a lead in the working group. GP

4.6 The Group discussed the potential for Resource to provide funding to help smaller archives take part. BJ asked about the impact on the overall statistics if smaller services were included. GP confirmed that the results would be weighted to provide an accurate picture. GP

4.7 Performance indicators, phase 1 (access indicators)

Phase 1 (access measures) was now complete. The next steps were to look at measures for stewardship and efficiency, and then finally to develop indicators. The original plan was to send out a letter to various organisations asking for endorsement of Phase 1. However, the Group agreed that it would be best to avoid asking for formal endorsement at the current time, as phase 1 could change as a result of work on the next phases. Instead CH would write a letter to raise awareness and to request comments and feedback, using the same mailing list as was used for the access standard. Each stage would be released in a "modular" fashion, to help promote the achievements of the working group so far. CH

4.8 The development of the next stages would depend on Resource funding. The Group wondered whether it might be useful to bear in mind other sources of funding for the work. CH was concerned about the potential for the work to be delayed. CP explained that the original delay was due to waiting for the snapshot diagnostic to be released and to undertake consultation; the next stages should be quicker as phase 1 could be used as a template. GP asked whether the PIs could be developed in parallel to the PMs, but CP said the PIs needed to be developed at the end. CH said that it would be useful to gradually incorporate the PMs into the CIPFA questions so that people would become accustomed to using new ways of counting.

4.9 The working group needed to be re-activated. For the next stage the group needed to include conservators and people with collections management experience.

5. DCMS / Audit Commission performance management framework for cultural services

5.1 The Audit Commission was revising its guidelines on Comprehensive Performance Assessment for 2005. DCMS wanted to input into the Commission's work on the cultural services area of the CPA (formerly libraries and leisure). GP reported that he had been invited by DCMS to attend a consultation meeting on this. The discussion had covered such issues as how can a performance assessment framework effectively cover such a wide remit. A few local authorities would be piloting the new system. DCMS was holding two meetings on this; the second was being held in Birmingham on 27th January (today). BJ said ACALG had not been asked to attend the consultation, but that NWMLAC had been invited. It was unknown whether any other Councils had been invited to attend. GP would send BJ the background information. GP

6. Treasurer's report

6.1 Adam Green was not available to attend but would send information to GP.

7. Any other business

7.1 The Group wondered whether the day or time that the Steering Group meeting was held prevented some members from attending. CR would ask members whether they preferred particular times or days. CR

8. Date of next meeting

8.1 21st April 2004, (time to be confirmed), LMA.

CSR

3 March 2004