

Subject: Request for information on users and reading room of NRS

FOI reference: 202000017512

Date received: 21 February 2020

Date responded: 9 March 2020

Information requested:

- “1. Do you have statistics of the documents ordered in reading room for the last 5 years?
2. Do you conduct a survey about the basic reason for taking research by users?
3. In the "NRS Annual Report and Accounts" from 2018/2019 it states: "We welcomed 21,445 visitors to our ScotlandsPeople Centre and Historical Search Room this year, an increase of just under 3% in visitors from the previous year". In the previous report, however it states: "We welcomed over 15,000 visitors to our ScotlandsPeople Centre and Historical Search Room". There is much more than 3 percent between users of these reports. Should there be 30% in the 2018/2019 report or maybe the user statistics for 2017/2018 were higher?”

NRS Response:

1. Do you have statistics of the documents ordered in reading room for the last 5 years?

National Records of Scotland (NRS) does not hold statistics on number of documents ordered, however we have figures on documents produced by NRS staff and on documents viewed electronically.

Our figures for the Historical search Room (HSR) and Legal Search Room (LSR) are detailed below:

Dates	HSR	LSR
2018-2019	16,854	6,298
2017-2018	12,650	7,131
2016-2017	13,092	7,886
2015-2016	14,137	8,156
2014-2015	16,599	9,234

Please note that these figures do not include closed records, or duplicate requests. They also do not include enquiries satisfied via Virtual Volumes (online viewing tool).

The statistics below are for individual pages viewed electronically.

Dates	HSR	LSR
2018-2019	132,313	148,429
2017-2018	21,834	61,071
2016-2017	22,861	64,601

2015-2016	22,388	61,003
2014-2015	28,164	61,152

Please note that the significant increase in numbers of images viewed between 2018-2019 and previous years is due to a change of the viewing tool, as the two systems used different ways of storing information about what has been viewed.

This is a formal notice under section 17(1) of FOISA that National Records of Scotland does not have some of the information requested.

2. Do you conduct a survey about the basic reason for taking research by users?

We do ask our customers what they are researching when they get a reader's ticket and then categorise these by subject of research. But that's not always the reason for research e.g. 'family history' is a motive as well as a subject, but 'economic and social' is a subject not a motivation.

The breakdown of the subjects over the past 5 years are listed below:

Subject	Total
1 - Politics and Administration	277
2 - Economic and Social	936
3 - Local History	568
4 - Geographical Studies	83
5 - Church History	180
6 - Education	52
7 - Communications	13
8 - Legal Studies	86
9 - Military and Naval	109
10 - Literary Studies	37
11 - Art	62
12 - Architecture	87
13 - Biography	68
14 - Genealogy	2,323
15 - Foreign or Overseas	19
16 - Other Topics	2,651
1-16	7,551

3. In the "NRS Annual Report and Accounts" from 2018/2019 it states: "We welcomed 21,445 visitors to our ScotlandsPeople Centre and Historical Search Room this year, an increase of just under 3% in visitors from the previous year". In the previous report, however it states: "We welcomed over 15,000 visitors to our ScotlandsPeople Centre and Historical Search Room". There is much more than 3

percent between users of these reports. Should there be 30% in the 2018/2019 report or maybe the user statistics for 2017/2018 were higher?

Attendance figures for the HSR are detailed below. Please note that we do not keep figures for attendance in LSR because the companies attend every day.

Dates	Total number of readers visits (HSR)	Total number of different readers (HSR)
2018-2019	7,410	1,825
2017-2018	7,225	2,357
2016-2017	7,171	2,336

Attendance for the ScotlandsPeople (SP) search rooms are detailed below.

Dates	Total number of visitors to all SP search rooms
2018-2019	13,015
2017-2018	12,562
2016-2017	13,042

The figures above exclude customers who attend evening visits.

Dates	Total number of evening visitors
2018-19	1,020
2017-18	1,040
2016-17	1,040

Thus the total attendance figure for 2018/19 was 21,445 and for 2017/18 was 20,827. This was an increase of 3%. The figure quoted in the 2017/18 annual report was reported as being over 15,000, which was true but less accurate than the figures provided in the 2018/19 report.