

BRITISH  
LIBRARY

# 2020

## VISION



Advancing the world's knowledge

[www.bl.uk/2020vision](http://www.bl.uk/2020vision)



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# Foreword

Our national library is one of the greatest libraries in the world. The scope of our remit, the scale of our operations, the range of our services and the international importance of our collections are without equal. The collection – which consists of some 150 million items – is unconstrained by subject, geography, format or language.

The Library is primarily funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) with significant self-generated commercial income, and makes an important contribution to DCMS's key objectives. In supporting and sustaining both the research excellence of the UK and its commercial competitiveness, we contribute also to the objectives of the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills.

*We preserve the intellectual memory of the nation, we are a major player in the research ecosystem, we support economic growth*

As a major international research library, in receipt of the UK legal deposit privilege, we preserve the intellectual memory of the nation, we are a major player in the research ecosystem, we support economic growth and we offer an essential treasure house of the history, technological development and culture of the world.

The British Library has strong relationships with the past, the present and the future. What matters to us is that we preserve the national memory and enable knowledge to be created both now and in the future. Our role is a dynamic one of helping to grow the world's knowledge base through the stimulation of fresh ideas and applied insights.

The creation of the British Library by Act of Parliament, in 1972, followed by the opening of its flagship building at St Pancras in 1998, have proved to be two of the most exciting developments of UK library and information services in the 20th century. Now, in 2010, we are reinterpreting our 1970s ideals in a 21st century context in order to remain a leader in the global networked information environment.

Innovation in the technology landscape has led to a world in which the creation, storage, access and dissemination of knowledge have been completely and irrevocably changed. In the past, we have developed three-year visions and accompanying strategies setting out how we would achieve our vision. Given the

enormity of recent changes (just remember the iPhone, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter did not exist ten years ago), we think it important to look ten years ahead.

As a guarantor of continued public access to both our rich legacy of content and new forms of digital content, it is essential that we take a long-term view. In today's climate of significant financial challenge, we believe it is more important than ever to have a strong sense of our direction of travel. We aim to be at the heart of the knowledge-based economic recovery. We believe that this clarity of purpose and priority will ensure that we can continue to innovate and deliver essential public services for the benefit of the economy and society.

We consulted a range of experts, researchers and stakeholders in the course of developing our vision. It is of no surprise to us that there is no consensus view about what the future holds to such questions as: 'What will be the rate at which new technology applications are developed? How will users adopt them in their everyday lives? Will the public sector play a greater or lesser role in service provision?' What's more, we know that our predictions may be no more accurate than those of Sir William Preece who said, in 1878 (when Chief Engineer for the British Post Office): "The Americans have need of the telephone, but we do not. We have plenty of messenger boys". We have developed our vision so that we can chart a course for the future between the likely boundaries of this dynamic operating environment, in a way that allows us to negotiate the uncertainties and seize new opportunities without risking our legacy.

We are delighted to present our vision for 2020, set against our understanding of this dynamic, challenging and globally-networked environment. We will use our vision as the framework for our 2011–15 strategy. The strategy will set out in more detail how we intend to incrementally deliver our vision over the next four years.

**Dame Lynne Brindley**  
Chief Executive



# Our values

Our values represent the aspirations of our individual and collective behaviour. They guide our day-to-day decision making. In order to achieve the vision we have set out for 2020, we will endeavour to put these values at the heart of everything we do.

**We inspire** We aim to inspire people around the world through our content and expertise.

We are passionate about sharing information and are inspired by our users and their contributions.

**We innovate** We nurture leading-edge innovations and promote an entrepreneurial spirit.

We take measured risk and bring about change through informed and agile decision making.

**We collaborate** We work in partnership to achieve more by working together than we could do on our own.

We strive to be an open, responsive and reflective organisation.

**We enable** We aim to work with our users to create new insights from our content and to develop world-leading services.

We strive to encourage and empower our staff to seize new opportunities.

**We respect** We promote respect for our users and stakeholders and for one another.

We care for the collection and respect legal and institutional frameworks.

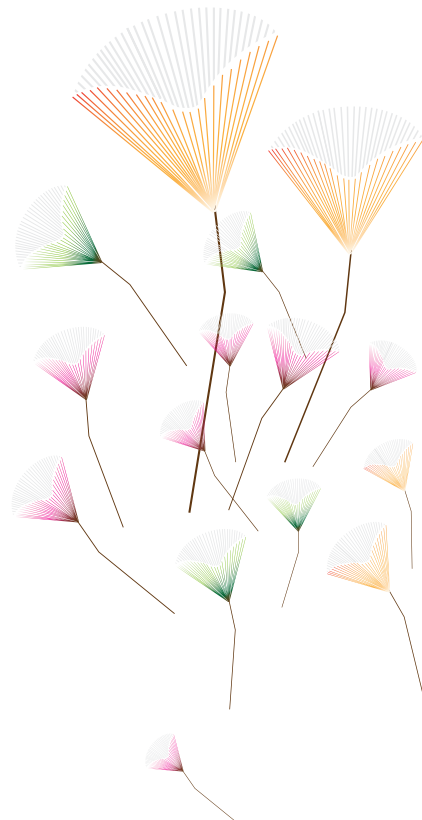
**We learn** We will continue to learn from others. We integrate the expertise of our users into our networks.

We work to share our ideas and expertise.

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\* FORECAST

The online landscape will increasingly resemble the 'semantic web' – in which computers become capable of extracting, classifying, categorising, and analysing data to create context and new uses for content.



# Our mission and vision

**Our mission:** Advancing the world's knowledge.

**Our vision:** In 2020 the British Library will be a leading hub in the global information network, advancing knowledge through our collections, expertise and partnerships, for the benefit of the economy and society and the enrichment of cultural life.

## Our vision is supported by five key themes which set out the strategic priorities for the Library:

- 1 Guarantee access for future generations.
- 2 Enable access to everyone who wants to do research.
- 3 Support research communities in key areas for social and economic benefit.
- 4 Enrich the cultural life of the nation.
- 5 Lead and collaborate in growing the world's knowledge base.

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*Research funding will be based on finding solutions to problems, and will be channelled across disciplines*

# Our changing context

To gain an understanding of what the world might look like in 2020, we interviewed experts from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors spanning research, learning, publishing, information and technology. We established a Consultative Panel of researchers and key stakeholders, including members of the British Library Board and Advisory Council and we consulted widely with Library staff.

This interaction provided a rich tapestry of information about the future environment and what it might mean for us. We are indebted to our colleagues for their significant contribution to the development of our 2020 vision.

We extended these insights by conducting research into the Library's future internal and external operating environment. We present here some headlines from our research, together with supporting quotes from interviews and workshops.

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\* FORECAST

*The consumption of media by young people will continue to increase across the full range of media channels, day and night, seven days a week*

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*Free, 'open access' scholarly works will enable improved access and will drive research increasingly towards open access models*

The technology environment will be constantly and rapidly changing, with the only certainty about the future being that it will be significantly different from today

The expectations and requirements of information users will increase and the ways in which information is provided will be more diverse

The nature of learning and scholarly communication will change to become more collaborative and inclusive of emerging technologies, moving away from a linear flow of information

It will be increasingly important for knowledge institutions to reinvent and reposition themselves to create efficiency in service provision and to demonstrate the measurable value they add to the economy

*Quotes from experts  
spanning research,  
learning, publishing,  
information and  
technology*

“Technology will be in a constant state of beta”

“The word ‘digital’ will have no meaning because digital will be the default”

“Consumer technology will be smaller, lighter, cheaper and faster”

“Learners of all ages will have access to a much wider range of content online in all formats (text, images, video, audio and data)”

“Digital natives will assume everything’s on the web”

“People will continue to use the library as an interactive research space”

“Business models that underpin scholarly publishing will change dramatically”

“Much more teaching, learning and research will be through simulation”

“Inter-disciplinary research will grow in popularity because of commonalities between disciplines and an interest in using different methods”

“All major research libraries will be interoperable”

“Consolidation of print collections, cloud repositories of content, automated preservation and infrastructure will be more common”

“Libraries will need to continue to demonstrate their value”

# 1: Guarantee access for future generations

## Where we've come from

It was the aim of Sir Anthony Panizzi, Principal Librarian to the British Museum, 1856 – 66, 'to bring together from all quarters the useful, the elegant and the curious literature of every language; to unite with the best English Library in England, or the world... and so with every language from Italian to Icelandic, from Polish to Portuguese.' This vision resulted in the concept of a 'comprehensive' collection in the British Library Act 1972.

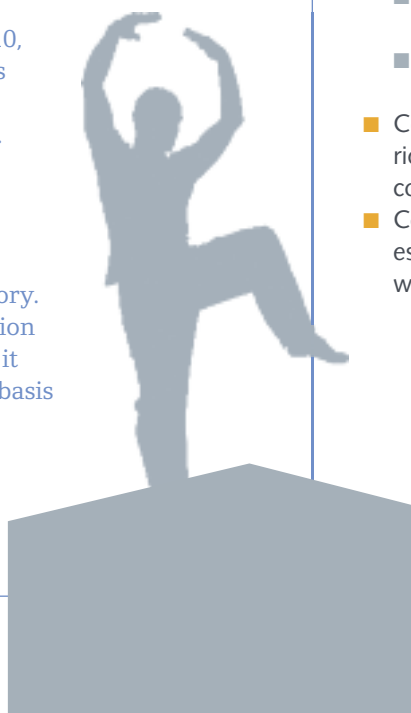
Today our collection consists primarily of analogue content while our digital holdings are growing. In 1998, the opening of our flagship building at St Pancras ensured that a significant proportion of the collection was stored in the best possible archival conditions. Since then, we have continued to invest in environmentally controlled physical storage capacity which ensures long-term preservation for our print materials. In 2003, the Legal Deposit Libraries Act extended the legal deposit privilege for print, to include digital items by subsequent regulation. In anticipation of the rapid growth of digital intake, we have developed ground-breaking digital library capability for digital storage and preservation. We have also led and participated in major research programmes to address the digital preservation challenge.

## Archiving the web

Antony Gormley's 'One & Other' project turned the Trafalgar Square Fourth Plinth into a showcase for 2,400 members of the public and was screened live by Sky Arts via the web in 2009.

Launched in February 2010, the UK Web Archive offers access in perpetuity to thousands of UK websites. The UK Web Archive has now secured the website ensuring that Gormley's artwork has a permanent place in the national memory. The Library seeks permission to archive websites which it does on a highly selective basis from the UK web space.

[www.webarchive.org.uk](http://www.webarchive.org.uk)



## Our vision for 2020

We estimate that by 2020, 75% of all titles worldwide will be published in digital form only, or in both digital and print. Our ambition is to preserve digital content for the long term in order to safeguard our intellectual heritage so that it can be used by future generations of researchers. In the digital world, an explosion of user-generated content, the creation of more research data and ubiquity of online search tools provide new opportunities. At the same time, inter-operability of library systems and automated processing opens up the potential for a re-think of traditional stewardship and collecting. As digital formats become the norm, our rich resource of physical content will become more precious. It is thus vital that we continue to develop our world-class stewardship skills in conservation and preservation.

## To deliver our vision we will:

- Collect, store and preserve for the long term a step-change increase in digital material:
  - Collect UK physical and digital materials through legal deposit, in line with the 2003 Legal Deposit Libraries Act and anticipated regulations
  - Collect, store and preserve user-generated content that provides insight into 21st century life, such as personal digital archives, institutional repositories, blogs, wikis and new forms of content that may emerge
- Collect digital content as the format of choice, actively making the print to digital transition. As well as continuing our focus on collecting books and journals, we will aim to:
  - Ensure a coherent national approach is taken to collect and preserve audio-visual content
  - Maximise the discoverability and availability of datasets
- Continue to provide long-term stewardship of our rich physical collections and our growing digital collections, ensuring their security and resilience
- Continue the transition to collecting and connecting by establishing collaborative stewardship arrangements with other national libraries and memory institutions.

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*Mobile devices will soon overtake personal computers as the most common web access tools worldwide*



# 2: Enable access to everyone who wants to do research

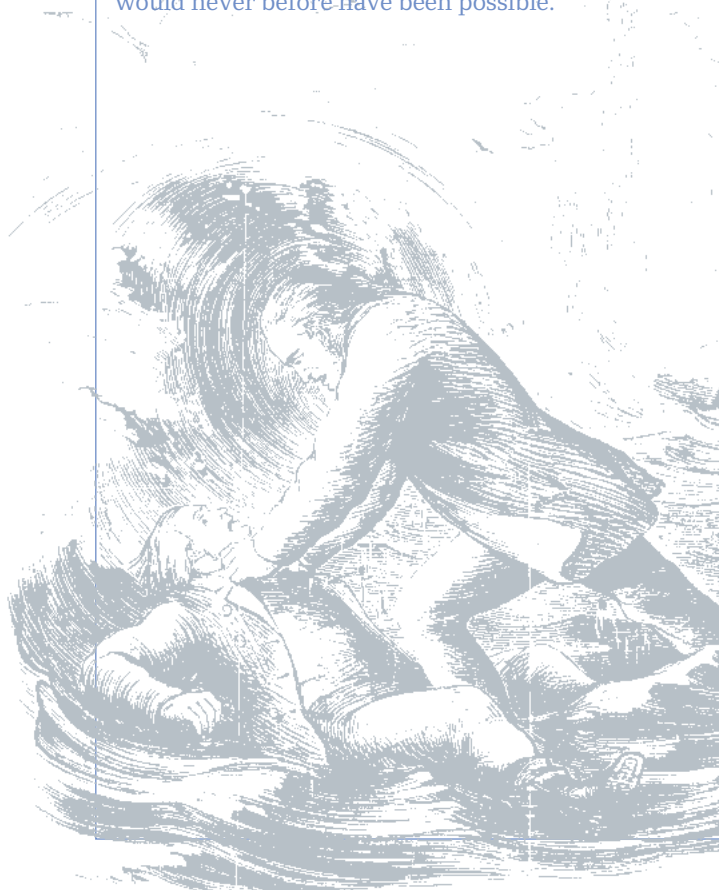
## Where we've come from

One of the key statutory duties of the British Library Board, as stated in the British Library Act 1972, is to make 'the services of the Library available in particular to institutions of education and learning, other libraries and industry'. Today, we continue to provide research services to a broad constituency including academics, business people, writers, teachers and individual researchers driven by their curiosity. We support these varied user groups through Reading Rooms, online and document supply services.

## Digitising historic newspapers

Author Kate Summerscale's best-selling book *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher* draws heavily on contemporary newspaper reports of a famous 19th century murder trial. Kate found that the digitised archive added a new dimension to her story.

With more than ten times the amount of archive newspaper content available online, authors, historians, genealogists and researchers in 2020 will be able to make instant connections that would never before have been possible.



## Our vision for 2020

At the heart of our vision is a passionate belief that everyone who wants to do research should have access to the rich resource of content held by the British Library. The digital environment provides an immense opportunity to democratise access to content through removing physical barriers. However, in enabling digital access, there are many competing factors at play, such as: striking the appropriate balance between the needs of users and the rights of creators; determining the role of public services; and bridging the digital divide.

Our ambition is for users to be able to download, share and re-use public domain digital content for the benefit of the economy and society. The key role we believe we can play in liberating access to public-domain content is through digitisation. However, digitisation is expensive and will need to be delivered through a mix of public service and commercial activities. We will focus on digitisation of out-of-copyright material; we will also establish strong partnerships with rights holders and commercial providers to facilitate digital access to in-copyright content (for which we do not own or control the rights). We recognise that much of our content will not be digitised by 2020 and our support to researchers will inevitably be provided through a blend of onsite and online services.

## To deliver our vision we will:

- Digitise a significant proportion of our out-of-copyright content, in partnership, focusing on content which is rare, unique and important to our heritage
- Make out-of-copyright digitised content widely accessible independent of location, in ways and on devices that our users choose
- Encourage others to integrate our out-of-copyright digitised content into their services, enabling users to create new insights and innovations from our content through re-use, and creating economic benefits for the UK
- Establish partnership models for licensing of digital content outside the Reading Rooms, respecting the rights of creators, supporting the commercial interests of publishers and achieving multimedia access for users
- Provide an advanced search and discovery experience for users, developed in partnership with commercial providers and other key players.

Previous page (3) Image courtesy of Neubau Welt

Left (4) Image from 19th Century British Library Newspapers Database

# 3: Support research communities in key areas for social and economic benefit

## Where we've come from

The British Library has a long tradition of providing services in response to user needs and over-arching trends in research. Over the past five years, we have developed a discipline-based approach to service provision, in partnership with the research communities we serve. In each of the three major discipline groupings – Arts and Humanities, Social Science and Science, Technology and Medicine – we provide specific areas of highly focused research support.

## Sound recordings online

Dr Amy Irwin, research fellow at the Medical Research Council's Institute of Hearing Research, has used the British Library's Archival Sound Recordings (ASR) during the course of her work to assess the impact on the human brain of sounds perceived as either pleasant or unpleasant: "Being able to download clips directly was a great time-saver – the variety of soundscapes available was also useful. Combined with the soundscapes I found from other sources, Archival Sound Recordings provided for all my needs."

Resources such as ASR will continue to be developed over the next ten years, with services tailored to researchers in specific disciplines, while also exposing an increasing proportion of our collections to people working across disciplines.



## Our vision for 2020

In the 2020 environment, researchers will require services to be contextualised, personalised, 'intelligent' and highly differentiated to their specific needs. Our ambition is to support research excellence, new forms of creativity and economic benefit, through providing tailored research services, informed by a deep understanding of user needs and the end-to-end research process. We can only do this in a small number of sectors in which we can make a demonstrable difference. In partnership, we will develop differentiated services for a small number of focused areas which include for example: researchers in the digital humanities, environmental scientists, researchers studying management and business, entrepreneurs and growth businesses, the creative industries, and researchers in inter- and multi-disciplinary fields. We will monitor these areas as well as new research challenges as they emerge to ensure our resources have maximum impact.

Strong partnerships, digital scholarship skills and a blend of public service and commercial activities will be critical to achieving this vision. We will couple British Library content and expertise with the rapid product development skills of commercial providers, and the engagement of the research communities we serve, for the benefit of research, the economy and society.

## To deliver our vision we will:

- Provide tailored services, in partnership, for researchers in focused areas which:
  - Demonstrate a clear need for public service
  - Provide a major contribution to innovation, economic output or social value
  - Enable us, together with our partners, to demonstrate significant capability and competency in provision, and to add significant value
- Undertake continuous measurement of our performance in offering tailored services so that we can recalibrate our services accordingly.

\* FORECAST

*Users will increasingly demand searches that identify sources of quality information and expect prompts for new information based on previous patterns of activity – giving new context to content*

# 4: Enrich the cultural life of the nation

## Where we've come from

Since its inception, the Library has offered exhibition and publishing programmes to appeal to the general public. The move of the British Library to St Pancras in 1998 heralded a new era in interpretation and understanding of our content. We have built on the new physical space provided by our flagship building with ground-breaking exhibitions exploring global heritage and culture. We have developed public events which have contributed to important debates and which have given pleasure to many. In the digital space, virtual reunification of heritage items has created unprecedented public involvement as well as international research collaboration. In addition, we have developed family events and a learning programme for teachers and school children. Our public and learning events now have a significant presence on our website as well as on our physical premises and beyond.

## Exploring cartographic treasures

Independent production company Tern TV approached the Library with a proposal for a four-part series entitled *The Beauty of Maps* for BBC4 to tie in with the opening of the Library's major exhibition, *Magnificent Maps*. The series secured a viewing audience of half a million per episode – a record for BBC4 – and subsequently transferred to BBC2. In parallel, visitor figures for *Magnificent Maps* have averaged 1,500 per day – around 60% above target.

Using media partnerships and other collaborative approaches we will share our world-class collections with an ever wider national and international audience.



## Our vision for 2020

We recognise that the learners of today are the researchers of tomorrow. We are committed to engaging people through our content and expertise; we aim to provide personal inspiration and enjoyment which may translate into lifelong learning experiences and personal research projects. In particular, we aim to bring to life the vast international heritage held within the British Library through immersive, interactive experiences. Through public engagement, particularly in the digital space, we will demonstrate to all the relevance of research and the value of heritage and culture.

To make this vision a reality, we will develop new relationships and build on existing strong partnerships with public service organisations such as the BBC and commercial players such as Microsoft. In particular, we will use the expertise of our partners to bring cutting-edge, interactive technologies to our public programmes.

## To deliver our vision we will:

- Digitise our rare and unique collections, enrich them with the expertise of our specialist curators and community of users, and make them more widely accessible on digital platforms for everyone in the world to appreciate and enjoy
- Provide access to the collection through vibrant and interactive experiences, both online and onsite
- Develop, in partnership, new collaborative virtual and physical public spaces
- Engage in 'crowd-sourcing' initiatives that involve our users, staff and other knowledge organisations.

Previous page (5) Seashore © digitalvision (6) Soundwaves from the British Library Sound Archive

Left (7) The Fra Mauro World Map (detail) c.1450. Copy by William Frazer, 1804

\* FORECAST

*Technology will encourage and enable cultural discourse in a more diverse, open and participative way*



# 5: Lead and collaborate in growing the world's knowledge base

## Where we've come from

We believe that successful partnerships will allow us to achieve more by working together than we could on our own. The British Library has long been at the centre of a number of networks, disseminating and fostering knowledge exchange and best practice. Through a fifty-year history of document supply, we have exploited economies of scale and new technology to provide shared services that underpin the Library network. We have a tradition of collaborating with the other UK legal deposit libraries on the intake of the UK published archive. We have led and collaborated in the international development of bibliographic and other standards, and in preservation projects. We play a significant international role including restoring and sustaining cultures through the conservation, cataloguing and digitisation of collections, and capacity building through Memoranda of Understanding with a number of national libraries. Today's challenging economic climate provides an even greater imperative for us to collaborate with a wide range of institutions to ensure long-term sustainability.

## Uncovering datasets

Peter Cartwright has published a number of books on the use of probiotics to combat chronic intestinal complaints. Peter used the British Library to access a wide range of research-level biomedical content. Given the plethora of material now available on any topic online, Peter believes that there is more need than ever for quality-assured information supplemented with the appropriate supporting evidence. Through the British Library's dataset strategy – and its involvement in international initiatives such as DataCite – the raw research data that lies behind such information will become increasingly available and transparent, enabling review and repurposing by other researchers.

By 2020 the improved transparency and traceability of datasets will help to ensure that the latest biomedical knowledge reaches the people who need it most.

## Our vision for 2020

In a digital 21st century, where the flow of information is instantaneous and without boundaries, we must define the role of a national library in the global information network. In 2020 the British Library will be an enabling force in the global networked environment of users, libraries, archives, research institutions and information providers from the public and private sectors. We will create the links which bring these institutions together, facilitating the transition beyond the project environment to long-term sustainable business models. We will be a major hub in a truly global networked partnership for information.

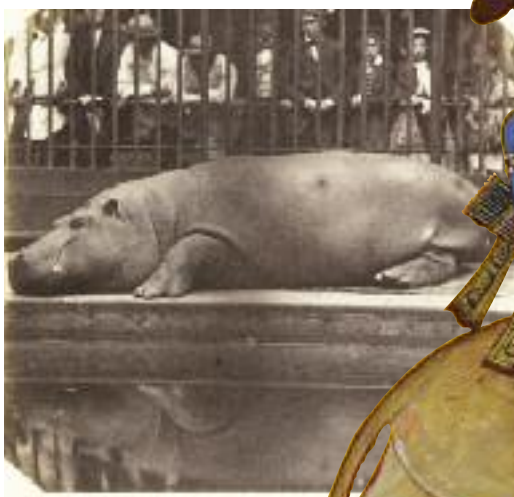
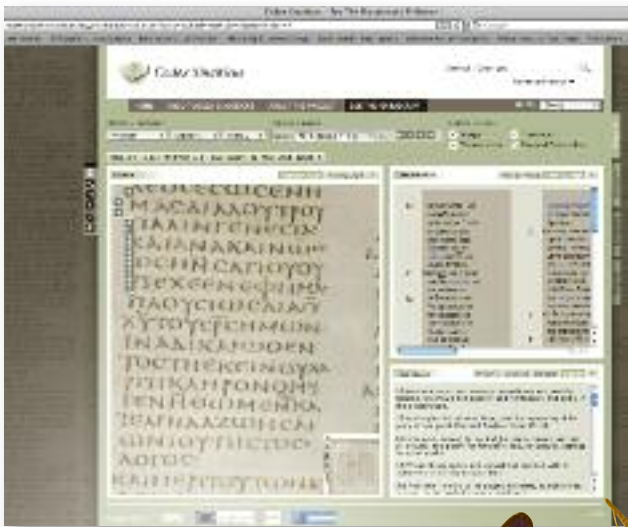
## To deliver our vision we will:

- Lead debates, champion agendas and provide guidance and advocacy to the international information community in strategy and policy, information standards, planning, business models, preservation and digitisation
- Use our trusted brand, authoritative voice and neutral position to bring organisations together for the benefit of research
- Engage in significant international cultural diplomacy efforts through the exchange of ideas and information, and by developing capability and capacity in other national libraries and research institutions
- Engage in a range of partnership models which will include:
  - Shared service programmes of benefit to knowledge institutions, facilitating a reduction in the total cost of the network through sharing resources and avoiding duplication
  - Public-private partnerships as well as public funding arrangements that will help us to deliver our vision in a challenging financial climate
  - Enabling users to share their expertise in a manner which improves our services.

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### \* FORECAST

*As access to mobile devices becomes ubiquitous, users will expect seamless access to information and services, provided anywhere, in real time*





# Delivering our vision

## Maximising our resources

The British Library has a statutory duty to collect, preserve and make accessible physical and digital content for today's researchers and future generations. Within this context, we face substantial and growing fixed costs. We expend significant resources maintaining Reading Rooms and storage buildings, and preserving and conserving our collections. While our physical collections continue to grow, we face new investment demands as a result of the changing digital paradigm. At the same time, we are committed to delivering increased efficiency, creating greater impact and maximising value for each pound spent from the public purse.

**Our vision is framed within today's challenging financial environment which is likely to persist in the medium term. In the 2020 environment we will need to do more with less; we must be clear about our priorities, our responsibilities and our constraints. Our ambitious vision for 2020 requires our resources to be allocated effectively and efficiently. In order to deliver our vision, we will maximise our resources through:**

**Our skills base:** We will develop the skills and agility of our staff to enable continuous improvements to be made to our services at a time of diminishing resources.

**Partnerships:** We will work in partnership with a range of public, commercial and third-sector organisations, where it is appropriate and cost-effective to do so. We will use a range of channels to reach our users.

**Operational efficiencies:** We will operate efficiency programmes which enable us to simplify our operations and structure, use our asset base more effectively, reduce our overheads and cut the costs of service delivery.

**Commercial services:** We will offer enticing and competitive commercial services that leverage our core infrastructure and allow us to create greater capacity for service. Subject to customer demand, these could include digital preservation services, licensing of digitised content, digitisation-on-demand services and retail opportunities. We will provide commercial services only where they fulfil specific criteria, including a threshold for return on investment, fulfilment of the remit of the Library and creation of wider public value.

**Cultural change:** We will embed and adhere to our values which are key to the achievement of our vision.



Previous page, clockwise from top left (8) Image © Richard Eaton (9) Screenshot from [www.bl.uk/timeline](http://www.bl.uk/timeline) (10) Image detail of the *Diamond Sutra* conservation (11) The Mauritius 'Post Office' stamp, 1847 (12) Interactive map from *Magnificent Maps* exhibition (13) Interior of *Magnificent Maps* exhibition (14) Interactive 'Muybridge' from *Points of View* exhibition (15) Detail from Mewar Ramayana 1649–53 (16) Don Juan Carlos, *The Hippopotamus at the Zoological Gardens*, 1852 (17) Screenshot from [www.codexsinaiticus.org](http://www.codexsinaiticus.org) (18) Tube poster of *Henry VIII* exhibition.

This page, top (19) Image of the new Additional Storage Building (ASB) in Boston Spa © Stuart Rayner

Above (20) St Pancras site © Clive Sherlock

*We are committed to delivering increased efficiency, creating greater impact*

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