

**Living  
Knowledge  
for everyone**

**The British Library's  
role in renewal**

October 2020



## Our mission

We make our intellectual heritage accessible to everyone, for research, inspiration and enjoyment.

## Our purposes

### Custodianship

We build, curate and preserve the UK's national collection of published, written and digital content

### Research

We support and stimulate research of all kinds

### Business

We help businesses to innovate and grow

### Culture

We engage everyone with memorable cultural experiences

### Learning

We inspire young people and learners of all ages

### International

We work with partners around the world to advance knowledge and mutual understanding.

## Our values

We put users at the heart of everything we do

We listen, innovate and adapt to a changing world

We treat everyone with respect and compassion

We embrace equality, fairness and diversity

We act with openness and honesty

We collaborate to do more than we could by ourselves.

# Introduction

The British Library published *Living Knowledge*, our vision and strategy for 2015–23, in anticipation of transformational shifts in the way knowledge is created, shared and harnessed for innovation. It outlines the unique role the national library plays in a time of rapid transformation: in data, in open access, and in the blurring of former boundaries between disciplines, sectors and physical and digital offers.

Even by the standards of the radical shifts anticipated by *Living Knowledge*, the events of 2020 have been extraordinary, giving rise to a generational moment of crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic is inflicting suffering around the world on a devastating scale, transforming societies and economies with breath-taking pace. Nor is there any sense that returning to what was once considered 'normal' is acceptable, even if it were possible. The crisis we are living through is permanently changing the way we work and create value, the way we collaborate with others, and the way we harness and combine the physical and digital worlds – one of the key ideas explored in *Living Knowledge*.

For the next two years, in the run-up to our 50th anniversary in 2023, our continuing *Living Knowledge* mission is overlaid by an additional, immediate task: to ensure that even as we work to rebuild our own spaces and services in the face of the pandemic, we play the fullest possible role, alongside our many partners, in the urgent and vital responses that are needed.

There are two themes in particular to which we will commit effort and resource over this period, and which are the focus of this document:

**Economic growth and innovation**  
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**Social and cultural renewal**  
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Our ability to support these objectives has been greatly enhanced by the major investments in support of our *Living Knowledge* vision which were announced by the Chancellor in the March 2020 Budget – a vote of confidence in our long-term strategy for which we are immensely grateful. These far-sighted investments will unlock a transformative expansion of our high impact, business support service across the country, and a major renewal of national research infrastructure at our iconic Boston Spa site, alongside a step-change in our impact in the Leeds city region and across the north of England.

The progress we have already made towards our *Living Knowledge* ambitions is summarised at the end of this document, and those achievements stand us in good stead to confront the exceptional challenges of the current situation. Our vision five years ago was an essentially optimistic one in the face of rapid and unpredictable change. While this year's events will test this in ways we could not have imagined, we remain no less confident in our ability to generate lasting economic and social impact across the UK in this moment of crisis.

# Economic growth and innovation

Almost uniquely among national libraries, we have consistently invested in services and activities that support industry, business and innovation, drawing on our collections and expertise as the UK's patent library.

As the UK confronts a period of acute economic challenge as a result of the pandemic, we will put special effort into initiatives that support business resilience, innovation, job creation and economic competitiveness.

Mickela Hall-Ramsay, co-founder of HR Sports Academy.  
Former Innovating for Growth participant and current Start-ups in London Libraries ambassador.





## 1. We will support UK entrepreneurs and small businesses

The Library's regional Business & IP Centre (BIPC) Network has been one of the great success stories of *Living Knowledge*, delivering job creation and growth through a growing network of centres based in public libraries across the UK, which help start-ups and small businesses with tailored information and advice. The Treasury investment in March 2020 in an expansion of the network to 20 regional centres (outside of London) and 90 local centres in libraries across England (in addition to an existing service in Glasgow) creates a unique opportunity to respond to the present crisis, urgently and at scale.

With immediate effect we will launch *Reset. Restart*, a new programme designed to support business owners – both BIPC alumni and new users – to adapt their businesses or innovate new ones in response to changing economic conditions. This will be followed by the rapid expansion of the network over a three year period, supporting thousands of businesses to start, survive and thrive, and create new jobs.

The model of business support provided through libraries is a proven and powerful one:

- 90% of BIPC supported businesses are still trading after three years, against a national average of 60%
- Every £1 of public money invested returned £6.95 of value to the economy
- Between 2016 and 2018, the network created over 12,200 businesses and nearly 8,000 additional jobs<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Democratising Entrepreneurship*, published by Arts Council June 2019

*Voyage* installation for Light Night Leeds 2019, by Aether and Hemera, commissioned by the British Library

It's also a model that improves the UK economy's ability to harness the widest pool of talent and innovation. 55% of new businesses supported by the BIPC Network are owned by women, and 31% are people from a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background. This can have a powerful effect on the competitiveness of the economy: for example, the *Alison Rose Review of Female Entrepreneurship* suggests that if women started and scaled businesses at the same rate as men, £250bn could be added to the UK economy.

As the UK prepares to host COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, we will work with the community of business owners supported by the BIPC Network to promote innovation, best practice and collaboration on questions of sustainable business. Our 2019 evaluation of the BIPC service found that over 60% of the businesses we supported had either social or environmental aims, or both. This is a powerful cohort of socially engaged businesses, many of who are creating innovative new products and services to help address climate change.

## 2. We will invest, North and South, in major infrastructure

After years of planning, we are now ready to embark on a historic shift in our centre of gravity, by establishing a British Library in the North to transform the accessibility of our collections and services to people nationally. Underpinned by Treasury investment of up to £95m in our Boston Spa campus in Yorkshire – the heart of our operations and home to around 70% of the national collection – this major programme will futureproof our core infrastructure into at least the middle of the century and safeguard our role as a key regional employer.

The public impact of this investment will be transformed by our ambitious plan, supported by a further Government commitment of £25m in the West Yorkshire devolution deal, to establish an iconic and permanent public presence in Leeds city centre – an exciting vision with the potential to create new jobs in the area, and drive wider economic regeneration in a historically deprived part of the city.

In London, meanwhile, our St Pancras Transformed programme will build a new landmark extension of our Grade I listed building, at no cost to the public purse. The development, with our partners Stanhope plc and Mitsui Fudosan UK, will deliver 100,000 square feet of new space for the Library, a new headquarters for the Alan Turing Institute – the national institute for data science and artificial intelligence – and 600,000 square feet of commercial space for organisations seeking to locate themselves at the heart of London's Knowledge Quarter, a global centre for learning, data science, and biomedical research. This landmark scheme is a major opportunity to bring international companies and new jobs to the UK.

### 3. We will support UK science, research and innovation

This year's pandemic has placed science at the heart of both policy-making and public debate as rarely before. As the national library, we have a unique role in supporting both academic

scientific inquiry and wider public engagement with science. We will launch a new Science Strategy to add value through our collections and services, improve access to science for all, catalyse new collaborations and partnerships and facilitate innovative connections between scientists, industry and the general public. We will continue to collaborate on open access initiatives designed to find sustainable models for free access to publicly-funded research, in order to raise the social, economic and cultural impact of UK research.

As a research organisation in our own right we are already playing a leading role, with funding from UKRI Arts & Humanities Research Council, in major interdisciplinary projects such as *Living with Machines* with the Alan Turing Institute which is pioneering new approaches to computational research, data science and artificial intelligence. We will broaden our reach and engagement with different communities interested in deploying computational methods to research our collections, including for business development, artistic practice and educational programmes.

We will continue investing in strategic partnerships with creative industries to create new routes from our collections and research to industrial and commercial outcomes. This will build on successes such as our collaboration with the British Fashion Council which encourages fashion students and designers to use our collections in creating their work, including commercial collections by a new generation of emerging UK designers.

Members of the public creating their bio selfies with the team from the University of Salford during the Women in Science and Engineering Festival in February 2020.



# Social and cultural renewal

Through the current crisis and what follows, the social cohesion generated by our partner institutions in the library, heritage, culture, arts and research sectors will be more needed than ever.

Between now and 2023 we will accelerate our work to strengthen the supporting infrastructure we provide to these vital networks.

Engaging with our local community: The Story Garden is a temporary community garden on the land to the north of the British Library's building and in the heart of Somers Town.





LIVE



## 4. We will bring people together through libraries

The isolating effects of lockdown and the continuing uncertainty caused by the pandemic have emphasised the value in more normal times of libraries as safe, trusted spaces in communities across the country. The extraordinary and rapid innovation that has already been shown by the sector this year in responding to the shift to digital has emphasised the enduring commitment of libraries to serving their community. We believe libraries will continue to be a powerful unifying influence, providing access to shared social and cultural experiences and a route out of isolation.

Our Living Knowledge collaborations with public libraries have been designed to create value beyond the sum of our parts, sharing resources to strengthen the sector, and opening up our content and services to larger audiences than was ever previously possible. Since 2016, our innovative Living Knowledge Network has seen public libraries across the country come together with all three of the UK's national libraries – the British Library, the National Library of Scotland and the National Library of Wales – to share knowledge, resources and cultural activity. During lockdown, the Network successfully opened up access to resilience resources to the whole sector, with over 100 library services engaging as well as members of the public from over 36 countries.

Between now and 2023 we will learn from this open access approach and expand participation in the Living Knowledge Network as rapidly and sustainably as possible. At the same time we

will also accelerate our work with partners to develop a shared digital channel to showcase content and services from UK public libraries. This builds on two years of intensive exploration, supported by Arts Council England and Carnegie Trust UK, with the goal of significantly improving the visibility and impact of libraries in the online space – an ambition made all the more urgent by the pandemic and the restrictions it has placed on traditional physical access.

## 5. We will increase access, engagement and diversity

We will use these initiatives, alongside our wider networks of partners across research, heritage, arts, culture and learning, to open up our content, services, programming and spaces and better serve our communities.

This means expanding our UK wide cultural engagement programme, with more spotlight loans, touring exhibitions and panel displays based on British Library exhibitions to diverse communities across the country. We will continue to grow our programming and engagement with local families and communities in Camden and West Yorkshire. And we will build on what we have learnt in lockdown using digital channels and content to create new and inclusive offers for broader audiences, wherever they are.

This work to increase the reach of our cultural offer across the whole of the UK enables us to facilitate relevant social debates in a way that actively includes local and regional perspectives. We will curate high-quality and engaging exhibitions, events and content that create



Our cultural events programme going national through live screenings and the Living Knowledge Network. Events include *Jacqueline Wilson: Rebel Girls* and *Food Season* highlights included *Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall: You, Food and the Planet*, with Bee Wilson, and *Polly Russell*; and *On Restaurants* with Angela Clutton, Asma Khan, Jimi Famuwera and Tim Anderson.

opportunities for different views and challenging perspectives to be explored in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

As an institution, we offer a platform that can combine deep academic inquiry with broad public engagement, underpinned by the multi-disciplinary collection we care for. We will use the opportunities this presents to bring people together, for example connecting technology experts with people to explore issues of fake news and misinformation, engaging the public with accessible science, and linking scientists, entrepreneurs, and people who are working to green the UK economy and tackle climate change.

We will continue to invest in opening up our physical spaces and services for people with disabilities, visible or invisible (encompassing cognitive, developmental, intellectual, mental, physical and sensory impairments), building on recent access initiatives such as openings for people on the autism spectrum and sensory supported tours. We want to be an institution that is welcoming to everyone, and an organisation where anyone can see themselves working. Our *Everyone Engaged* portfolio will work to remove historical barriers to entry by being more inclusive across geography, socio-economic background and protected groups under the Equalities Act 2010.

As part of this we are committed to an anti-racism action plan that will guide our response to vital questions including representation within senior levels of our workforce, an open recognition of the colonial origins and legacy of some of our collections, and ensuring the inclusivity of our spaces, events, exhibitions and

policies. This commitment will be embedded in every aspect of delivering our *Living Knowledge* vision.

## 6. We will contribute to the UK's international impact

As the UK enters the next chapter of its history on the world stage, we will continue to be international in our approach across all of our purposes, led by our *Living Knowledge* commitment to work with partners around the world to advance knowledge and understanding in a spirit of mutually beneficial reciprocity.

The British Library has a leadership role in multiple global networks within our sectors, and a key focus in this pandemic era will be on helping the international library community to respond and move on from the crisis, sharing best practice resources with those most at risk and ensuring that in turn the UK can benefit from global insights. This will add to our vibrant programme of cultural dialogue in countries around the world, helping to maintain the UK's distinctive voice in a rapidly changing geopolitical context.

This will build on established networks such as the Endangered Archives Programme, supported by the Arcadia Fund, through which we have worked with partners in over 90 countries to protect and preserve at-risk heritage material. We will learn from lockdown by using new digital engagement tools to share collections and curatorial expertise with partners around the world.

Using 3D photography, our collection of 30 rare and fragile globes dating back to 1600 has been digitised and made available for the public to explore via augmented reality.



# How the Library is adapting to a changing world

When our doors closed in March 2020, and a nationwide lockdown began in response to the Covid-19 crisis, we took an immediate decision that the work of the national library should go on despite the necessary closure of our physical sites. With an over-arching message of 'The Library is Open', teams across the Library moved swiftly to create a digital-first model wherever possible. The extensive progress made in digitising and making available online large parts of our collection in recent years paid a healthy dividend, enabling us to maintain online access for researchers to a huge amount of digital research material.

A particular priority was to identify and offer services of direct and urgent help to the UK's medical research community. This included prioritising access via remote on-demand digitisation for NHS bodies, Public Health England and other Covid-19 related researchers to the vital content needed to improve our response to the virus in clinical settings and science labs.

As one of the UK's key memory institutions, we began a new Covid-19 archiving programme to ensure that researchers present and future can access the data and information needed to understand the crisis our society is enduring. It covers many areas of our collecting responsibilities, including newspapers, oral histories, radio broadcast, websites, scientific publications and other published works.

A significant range of our public programme and engagement activity pivoted to an online model, including the provision of business support sessions, cultural events via webinar, and UK-wide learning activities, including the launch of our *Discovering Children's Books* site and a hugely popular, interactive

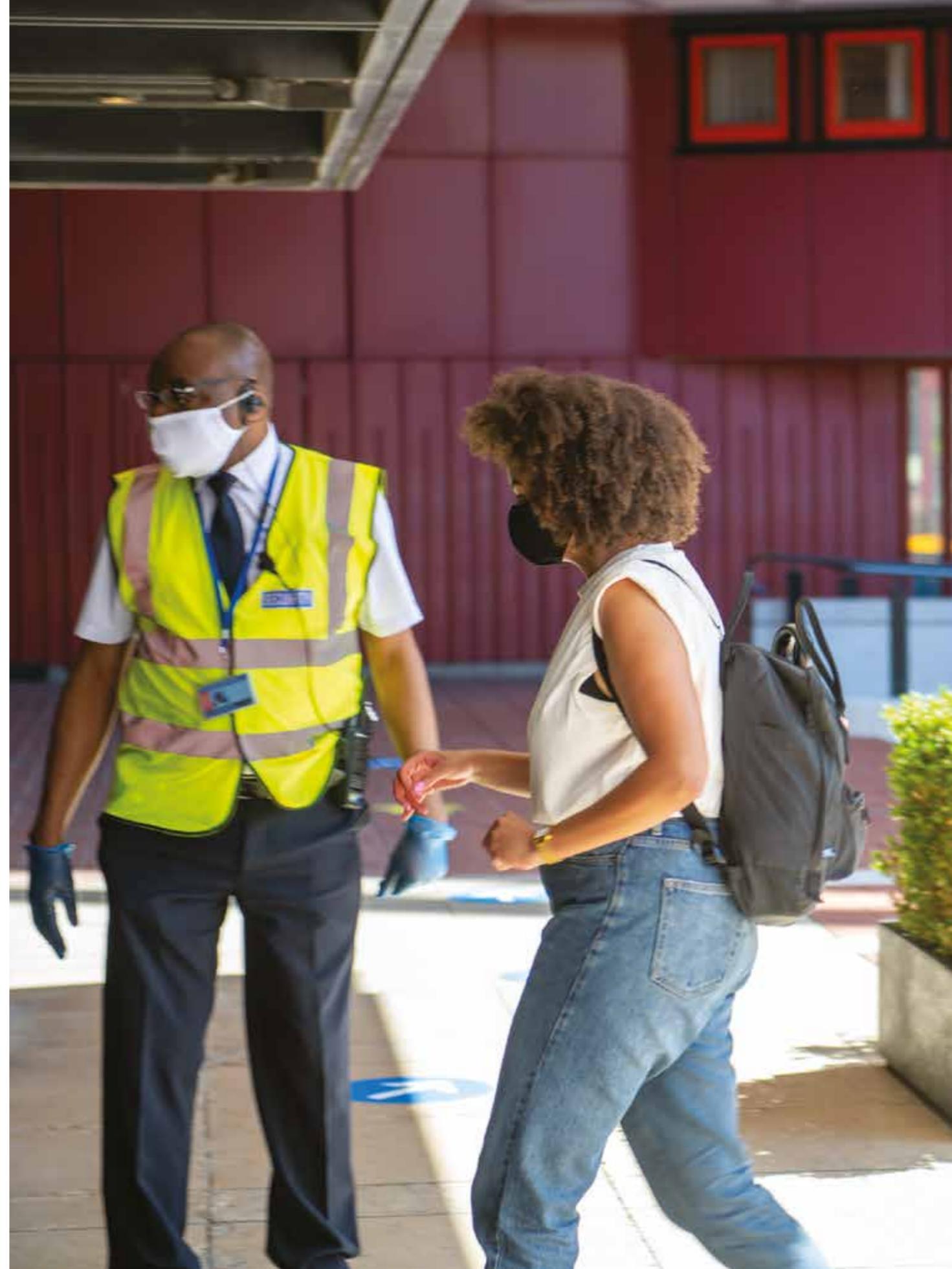
miniature books project for children. At a time of extended school closure we were also able to produce over 50,000 special printed educational activity packs which were distributed via schools, public libraries, community partners and food banks.

At our London site we partnered with our neighbours, the Francis Crick Institute and University College London Hospitals, to open a Covid-19 rapid testing facility for NHS staff on Library premises.

The key task of recovering our physical onsite offer began on 22 July, when we began a phased reopening of some Reading Rooms, followed by the reopening of some of our exhibition galleries on 1 September. We will continue to reopen more of our spaces to more people, as it becomes safe to do so; likewise we will not hesitate to slow or reverse this process if needed, in line with public health guidance.

Through all of this we have sought, like all organisations, to strike the difficult balance between our desire to restore our full public service and our determination to protect without compromise the safety of staff and visitors. We have also aimed to maximise the benefits, where they exist, of home or hybrid working, while seeking also to reoccupy and reanimate our workspaces, wherever it is safe to do so. We are deeply grateful to all our staff for their unwavering commitment through all of this, including those who worked onsite throughout lockdown to keep our buildings and collections safe, and also to our huge community of users – Readers, Members and general visitors – for their patience and messages of support during this period of historic change.

Welcoming back our first onsite visitors on 22 July 2020.





## How who we are will define our response

The organisations that were merged to create the Library in 1972 formed a key element of the UK research infrastructure, supporting a unique blend of research disciplines across the sciences and humanities. The result was a singular institution capable of serving an extraordinary breadth of uses.

These constituent parts include the vast and ever-growing legal deposit collection (which now encompasses digital publishing as well as physical), the national centre for inter-library loans in the UK, lending functions for science, technology, and invention, the UK Patent Office Library, and of course the renowned and unmatched heritage collections inherited from the British Museum Library.

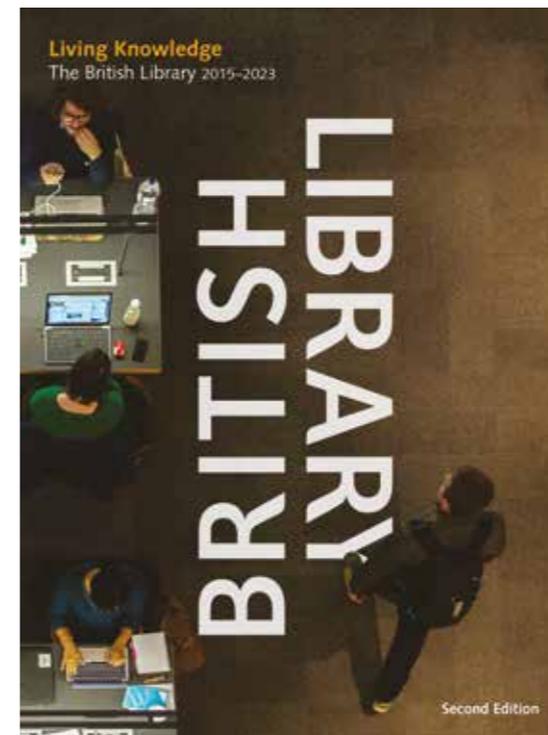
The result is an institutional perspective that draws on the coexistence of disciplines and sectors, on physical roots in Yorkshire and London, and a distinctive and vital role at the heart of the UK's interconnected system of public, academic and national libraries. We will bring this to bear on the challenges facing society and the economy today. We believe that the freest possible flow of ideas, inspiration and information will be more vital than ever in the years to come: enabling businesses, researchers and innovators to revitalise the economy, and bringing communities across the UK back together.

Researchers were delighted to return to our Reading Rooms in July 2020.



# Living Knowledge 2015–2023 the story so far

The summary on the following page sets out, purpose by purpose, the *Living Knowledge* strategic priorities that we set out in 2015, along with headline achievements against each of these objectives so far. These objectives remain the guiding direction of our strategy, and are the framework within which we have defined the additional priorities outlined in this document in response to the Covid-19 crisis. We will publish a new long-term strategy in 2023.



# Living Knowledge 2015–2023

## the story so far

### Custodianship

**Address the growing preservation and access challenges for our historic audio and recorded music collections**

UK-wide Save Our Sounds £15m programme, including digitisation, radio archiving and born-digital music collection

**Work with our UK Non-Print Legal Deposit partners to develop the national collection of born-digital content and ensure its long-term preservation**

Successfully completed Government Post Implementation Review of NPLD (five years from implementation); Digital Asset Management and Preservation system procured

**Develop our collection management capacity at Boston Spa in Yorkshire to offer shared services that help deliver efficiencies for other public organisations**

Boston Spa Renewed master planning under way with £95m of HMT funding secured in March 2020

### Research

**Ensure that the Library's onsite facilities and Reading Room services keep pace with the changing needs of researchers**

St Pancras Transformed programme; increased informal research activity; Content Strategy

**Develop our remote access services to become a trusted and indispensable resource for fact finding, research and analysis for researchers anywhere**

Everything Available programme: BL Open View launched summer 2020

**Leverage the Library's collections and expertise to drive innovation in large-scale data analytics, for the wider benefit of UK research**

Alan Turing Institute partnership; £9m *Living With Machines* research programme

**Work with partners to increase the Library's capacity as an independent research organisation**

Growth in Library-led research activity; key role in £18m UKRI *Towards a National Collection* programme

### Business

**Work with partners to secure funding to grow the network of regional Business & IP Centres to a total of 20 UK city libraries**

Network has grown from six regional BIPCs to 13. Funding secured in Budget 2020 – on track to reach 22 regional BIPCs (including London and Glasgow) and a further 90 local Centres across England

**Develop and open up our St Pancras campus to maximise its potential for knowledge exchange and innovation at the heart of the Knowledge Quarter**

St Pancras Transformed will deliver 570 metres<sup>2</sup> of additional space for start-ups and local businesses

### Culture

**Grow the profile, diversity and creative impact of the Library's cultural activities, both onsite and online**

Increased profile and impact of exhibitions, including internationally significant *Harry Potter: A History of Magic*, blockbuster *Magna Carta: Law, Liberty, Legacy* and *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War* exhibitions

Diversity of offer: *Windrush: Songs in a Strange Land*, *Gay UK: Love, Law, Liberty*, *West Africa: Word, Symbol*, *Song*

Doubling of our cultural events programme, including major international festivals.

**Develop an increased programme of loans, touring exhibitions and digital collaborations, with public libraries and others, that open our collections to new audiences across the UK and internationally**

Living Knowledge Network exhibitions and livestreamed digital content, *Treasures on Tour*, Leeds cultural programme, first ever touring programmes both for UK and internationally including major exhibitions in China and Japan, development of new commissions and partnership with Google Arts & Culture

### Learning

**Improve and expand our onsite capacity to grow the numbers of school students, young people, families and local communities able to engage with our collections**

Launch of three new programmes: Family and Community, Access and Outreach, and Adults – expanding our support to learners of all ages and those not in formal education

St Pancras Transformed will double onsite learning capacity and increase local community focus

**Expand the range of teaching resources and primary source material available online**

Grown use of online learning resources, from 3.4 (2013/14) to 10.8 million (19/20), including new resources on themes including Sacred Texts, Children's Literature and *Windrush*

### International

**Increase our engagement in those regions of the world, including South Asia, the Middle East and Africa, whose cultures and histories are reflected most strongly in the Library's collections**

Heritage Made Digital programme driving digitisation at scale of key global content such as the Qatar Digital Library, the International Dunhuang Project, and Two Centuries of Indian Print

**Take a professional leadership role in the national library network of Europe to contribute to the development of a global distributed digital library**

We have chaired the Conference of European National Librarians since 2015, significant reform and impact delivered.

**Grow our capacity to support other institutions whose collections are at risk from war or civil emergency**

Endangered Archives Programme renewed in 2018 for seven years, which has worked in over 90 countries on over 400 projects

## **Economic growth and innovation**

- 1 We will support UK entrepreneurs and small businesses
- 2 We will invest North and South in major infrastructure
- 3 We will support UK science, research and innovation

## **Social and cultural renewal**

- 4 We will bring people together through libraries
- 5 We will increase access, engagement and diversity
- 6 We will contribute to the UK's international impact

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