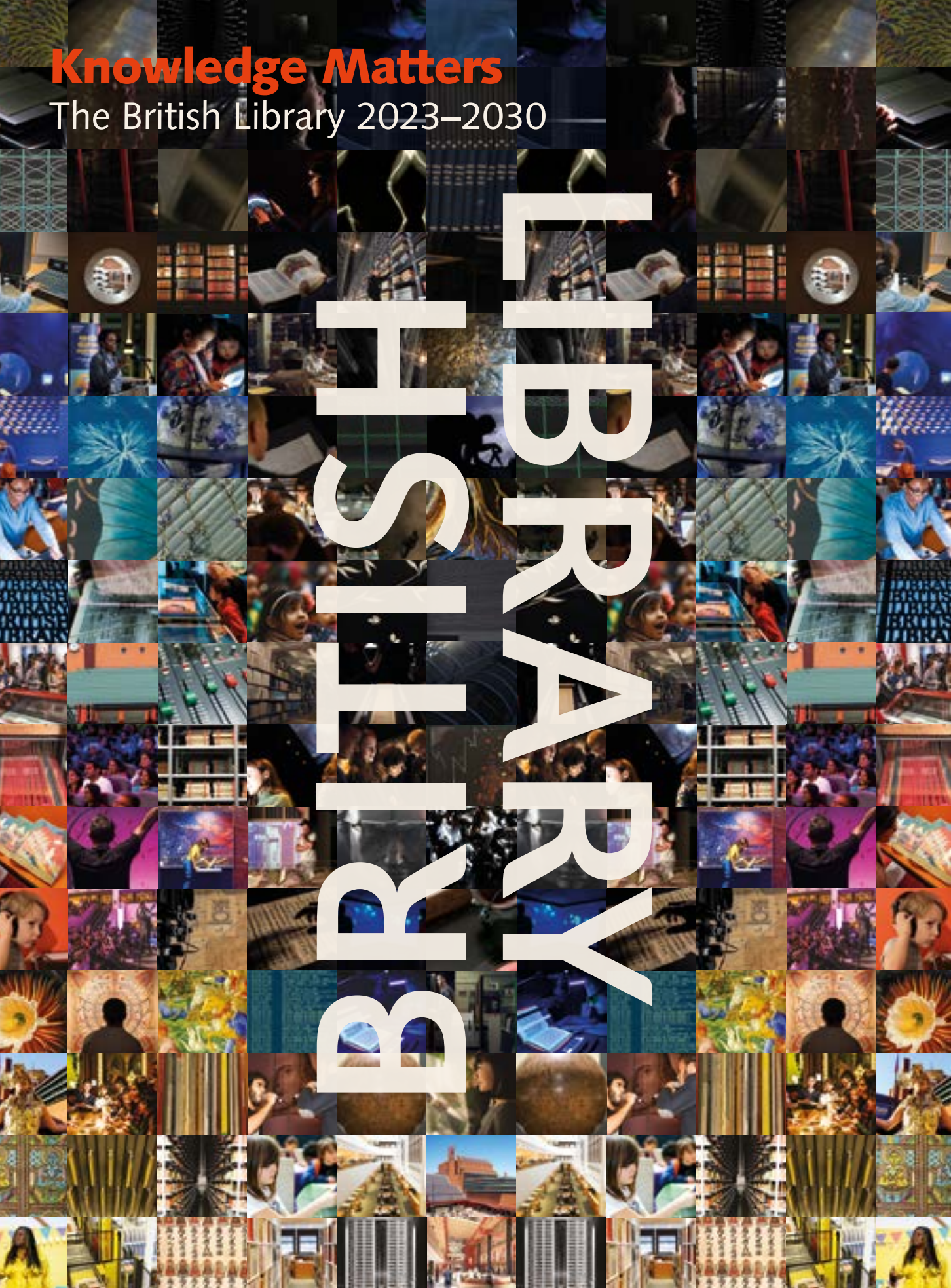


Knowledge Matters

The British Library 2023–2030

BRITISH LIBRARY



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A note on Reporting and Governance

The priorities in this document are aligned to our statutory duties as set out in the British Library Act 1972, the Public Lending Right Act 1979 and the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003, as amended by The Legal Deposit Libraries (Non-Print Works) Regulations 2013. Other priorities are agreed through our framework document with DCMS and the Chief Executive Officer as the Library's Accounting Officer is accountable to Parliament for the disbursement of our Grant in Aid. The British Library Board will assess our performance quarterly and we will publish an annual report on our progress.

Our mission

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

Introduction

This new strategic vision, *Knowledge Matters: the British Library 2023–2030*, is published as we celebrate 50 years of operation as the UK’s national library. It’s a moment to pause and look back with admiration at what our staff and their predecessors have achieved. It’s also a reminder that we are a comparatively young institution – still learning, and responding to a changing world. The British Library was founded as part of an extraordinary wave of post-war innovation and institution-building, and can be seen, half a century on, as one the great cultural creations of the second Elizabethan age.

This strategy shares many continuities with its predecessor *Living Knowledge*. It holds fast to the same mission, purposes and values; it seeks to embed many of the innovations made in recent years; and it renews our commitment to a number of transformative initiatives.

Some of these, which were little more than glints in the eye when *Living Knowledge* was published in 2015, are now on the brink of fruition. The long-cherished renewal of our Boston Spa site in Yorkshire, made urgent by a collection that grows by 8km of shelving each year, is finally under way. Our presence in nearby Leeds and the wider region is growing alongside it, as we work towards a permanent new Library site in the city centre. And we have gained planning permission to turn our iconic London campus at St Pancras into a major centre for science, with increased local community access and new spaces for our culture, learning, and business activities.

Right: Architects’ impression of the Public Foyer – part of the proposed new extension of our St Pancras site. Rogers Stirk Harbour+ Partners.



In two significant ways, though, this is more than just a second chapter.

The first relates to the word ‘everyone’ in our mission. It’s a word that has taken on an increased significance in the context of the upheavals of the pandemic of 2020. Questions of access and inclusion have come more urgently to the fore, in relation to race, social class, geography, gender and other characteristics and experience – all of them different kinds of ‘unfinished business’, as the title of our 2020 exhibition on women’s rights memorably put it. It’s a shift we recognised in our response to the pandemic, *Living Knowledge For Everyone*, and it’s a theme that runs consistently through the pages that follow.

It has also increased our determination to transform our visibility in the North of England, home to two-thirds of our collection and a significant proportion of our staff. Everyone who works at the Library knows that we have proud roots in Yorkshire reaching back to our foundation. We want the whole world to know it too.

The second point of difference relates to the idea of knowledge itself. In 2015 we talked about ‘historic disruption’ in the global information system, but we did not predict the sheer scale of upheaval that was imminent. The explosive growth of social

media has enabled knowledge to be shared with unprecedented speed and reach, but has also created fertile ground for disinformation efforts that undermine trust in different sources of knowledge, from journalism to science.

In this unsettling world, the global ecosystem of libraries, including ours, has a newly important role to play. Long before the internet, libraries were the original distributed information network, resilient and quietly powerful, connected not so much by technology but by a shared mission and set of values. Those values include a commitment to support the practice of serious research and learning for anyone who walks through our door or uses our services: the methodical process of identifying sources, verifying facts, and building knowledge.

Knowledge matters. The title of our new statement of vision reflects an awareness that fundamental ideas such as these must never be taken for granted, and need reinterpretation with each generation. It also reflects a sense of excitement and determination about our role: these are global challenges, and as one of the world’s great libraries we are determined to play our part.

Dame Carol Black, Chair
Sir Roly Keating, Chief Executive



Adapting to a changing world

Eight years ago we identified five trends which looked set to transform the sectors in which the British Library operates: a revolution in the creation and exploitation of data; a movement towards further openness in research; growing economic interest in the value of creativity and culture; an increased understanding of the continuing need for high-quality physical spaces alongside digital services; and a mix of new risks and opportunities for public libraries.

Today, in different ways and to different degrees, all five have come to fruition. The exploitation of large-scale data has become commonplace, with huge societal benefits as well as a new consciousness of risks around privacy and control. Open access publication has become a requirement of publicly-

funded research, although implementation remains challenging; the creative economy has continued to grow; the role of physical space in a digital age has come to the fore of debates about hybrid working. And the public library sector, though still vulnerable to shifts in funding, has taken on a new visibility following the turmoil of the pandemic and the energy crisis.

In reviewing the latest changes in and around the sectors we work in, we have built on our previous analysis to identify five significant trends which have helped us to define our new priorities for *Knowledge Matters*. Taken together they paint a picture of a world that appears to be notably less stable and more prone to sudden, radical change than in 2015.



- In technology, the acceleration originally identified in 2010 in our report *2020 Vision* has reached a tipping point beyond which the infrastructure of our world will be transformed. In particular, the uptake of Artificial Intelligence is expected to become mainstream for the first time. AI innovations using statistical models to analyse vast amounts of language and data are changing the way people access and use information. For organisations such as ours, with a vast collection of data under our stewardship, this transition demands a further step-change in **digital transformation**, modernising and improving our services and systems to keep pace with expectations among users of information resources. It also opens doors to new kinds of large-scale digital research based on free public access to our wide range of datasets.
- Alongside these advances, we have seen that falsified or distorted information can be spread across the world more quickly than ever before, sharpening divisions of opinion and weakening the bonds that bring us together. In this world, shaped by social media, algorithms and artificial intelligence, the traditional role of libraries in advancing **information literacy** – in helping people of all ages and backgrounds to understand context, access other perspectives, and critically evaluate sources as citizens and not just consumers – has taken on new relevance and urgency. Our scale and visibility mean that we have a particular,

international-scale responsibility to foster the enduring values of libraries within an information landscape increasingly characterised by over-acceleration, superabundance, and intense competition for engagement.

- *Living Knowledge* argued that the value of physical spaces and experiences appeared to be growing, not diminishing, as people's lives became more screen-based. Since then, this insight has been bolstered by a greater understanding of the importance of **place-making**: investing in the quality of the real places where people live and work, and which are often deep sources for personal meaning and pride. Our own understanding of this has been informed by our growing programme of work with local people and communities in London and Yorkshire, and by the shared insight of our Living Knowledge Network (LKN), founded in partnership with the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales and made up of over 30 library partners across the UK, as well as our Business & IP Centre National Network which reaches over 100 places across the country. These ideas are also shaping our approach to designing our major development projects as inclusive, welcoming places – and in particular to ensure that the investment in our site at Boston Spa is amplified by a commitment to reach and serve the communities of Leeds and the wider region.

Left: *Breaking the News* exhibition in St Pancras. Photo by Justine Trickett.

- The worldwide community of national libraries has expanded significantly over the 50 years of our existence, and we are active participants in it – sharing connections of knowledge and scholarship across boundaries, regardless of differences of culture, faith or political system. The emerging era of **geopolitical instability** and increased fragility in international relations has begun to test these principles to the limit, not least where situations of war or conflict have brutally interrupted the normal dialogue between national libraries. There are no easy responses to this kind of historic shift in global affairs, and the crises of recent years have taught us to be cautious and realistic in the face of an unpredictable future. But our guiding principle remains a presumption towards openness, accuracy and the maintenance, wherever possible, of cultural dialogue, exchange and collaboration.
- All of these changes are taking place against a backdrop of profound and damaging changes in the Earth's climate and its ability to support bio-diverse ecosystems. It is widely recognised that the scale of change ahead amounts to a planet-wide emergency. Our most vital response is, of course, to tackle the challenge of **sustainability** in our own organisation: to adapt our behaviour, systems and buildings in ways that radically reduce our carbon emissions. But we also want to help address the climate crisis in other ways: to be a trustworthy, engaging and accessible source of information for our communities; to catalyse positive action across the library sector; to provide the businesses we support with the knowledge they need to go green; and to support climate science through our expertise and collection.

Our ability to meet these challenges will depend, of course, on the level of resourcing we are able to secure in a period which is likely to be challenging for public finances and commercial and philanthropic income. We do not underestimate this, but we are confident in the case we can make to all the partners and supporters who have helped the Library deliver its achievements over the past half century – including, most vitally, the public we serve.

In the sections that follow we will explore, purpose by purpose, how the Library will respond to this changing world, and the priorities we are committing to between now and the end of the decade. Underpinning all of them, and driven by the trends identified above, are five recurrent themes:

Access, engagement and inclusion

Ensuring that the services we offer, and the collection we hold, are truly 'for everyone'.

Modernising our library services

Investing in skills, processes, systems and capabilities to deliver the quality of library services our users deserve.

Deepening our partnerships

Collaborating with libraries and memory institutions of all kinds across the UK and around the world, to achieve more than we ever could by ourselves.

Sustainability and resilience

Reducing our carbon impact and collaborating with partners to create a more sustainable future.

New spaces, North and South

In Yorkshire and in London, delivering new, world-class physical spaces designed to welcome future generations of visitors and users.



Photo by Marcin Nowak

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



Custodianship

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

Custodianship

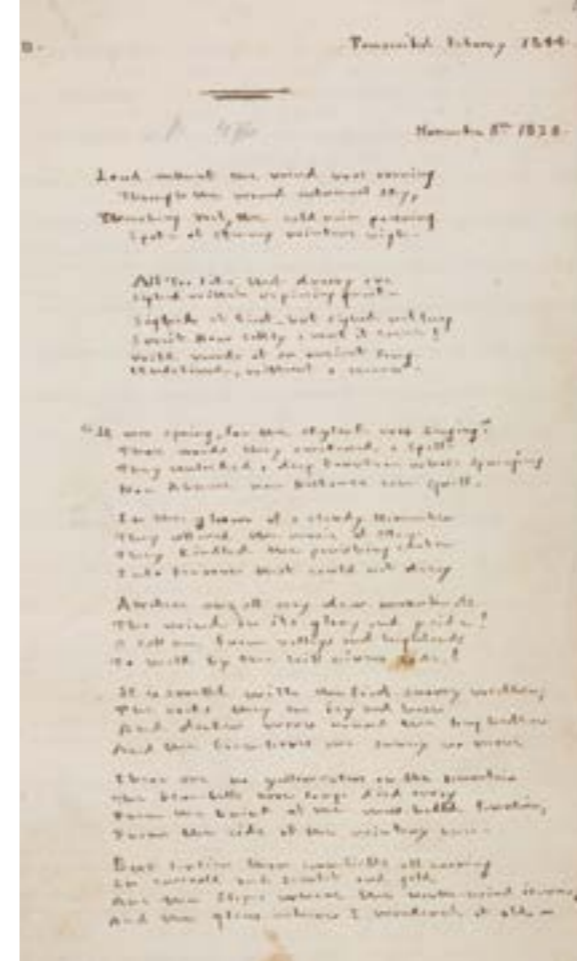
This is the purpose which defines the British Library, on which everything else depends. Among the estimated 170 million items we care for are books, journals, newspapers, patents, maps, prints, manuscripts, stamps, photographs, sound recordings, digital publications of all kinds as well as over 20 billion pages of UK web content. This remarkable collection grows every day, driven by our Legal Deposit mandate to collect everything published in the UK, whether physical or digital. Our role is to develop, preserve and provide access to this vast resource, for today's users and far into the future.

Eight years ago our 'clear and urgent goal' in custodianship was to address the preservation crisis for our historic audio collection and those of others across the UK: a campaign we called Save Our Sounds. We are proud that with the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and others – who funded the innovative Unlocking Our Sound Heritage project with sound archive partners in every nation of the UK – this programme has been completed, with more than 360,000 individual recordings digitised and preserved.



Other vital digitisation projects have flourished, and we have begun to migrate this material onto a new long-term digital preservation platform. In the meantime, the collection has continued to grow – both in partnership with the Legal Deposit Libraries of the UK and Ireland and through a remarkable, diverse set of acquisitions. The latter includes our participation in the successful collaborative campaign, led by the charity Friends of National Libraries, to save a unique trove of English and Scottish literature, now known as the Blavatnik Honresfield Library.

First among the challenges ahead is the urgent need to address the scale and quality of our **physical collection storage**. In simple terms, we are running out of space – with an additional challenge that some parts of our collection are housed in buildings no longer fit for purpose. With strong financial support from the Government, we have embarked on a major programme at Boston Spa to build a new high-density, automated storage vault and collection management centre, and to renew other key parts of the campus. Achieving this will future-proof vital knowledge infrastructure well into the second half of this century.



We face parallel challenges in the continuing growth of our digital collection – from 0.49 petabytes in 2013 to 2.95 petabytes at the start of 2023. The past decade has been a period of intense development in our **digital collection management** capability – a rapid evolution in which our systems have only just kept pace with the accelerating scale of capacity required. We have reached a point where our long-term ability to preserve and enable access to born-digital and digitised heritage collections depends on a major programme of reinvestment in our systems and the workflows that rely on them, including those of key partners such as the Legal Deposit Libraries of the UK.

As our collection evolves, so too do the skills we need to care for and understand it. Scholarship and specialist knowledge will always be the foundations of our curatorial skillset – but we also have a priority to ensure that the **cultures and practices of curatorship and librarianship** keep pace

with a changing world. As we build our skills for the next generation, we will focus on themes including: a continued increase in digital fluency and awareness; responding to an expanding range of formats, the ability to communicate and engage with the public and learners of all ages; the sensitivity and confidence to address fully complex questions around provenance and the history of the collection itself; and the skill to ensure that judgements we make about what to acquire reflect the full diversity of the UK. Sharing of professional skills, practice and knowledge will continue to be a priority, including with public libraries through our Living Knowledge Network, other national libraries, higher education and health libraries and many more.

Below left: Unlocking Our Sound Heritage in action. Photo by Sam Lane; Below right: The Lindisfarne Gospels on display at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle. Photo by Steve Brock; Above: Notebook of Emily Brontë's poems, 1844–1846, Add MS 89488, from the Blavatnik Honresfield Library.

Our priorities for 2023–2030 to support our Custodianship purpose are:

- Complete the renewal of our major new collection management and storage facilities at Boston Spa, safeguarding our physical collecting capacity into the second half of this century
- Upgrade the systems and infrastructure required to sustainably collect, catalogue, and preserve our digital collection, and to support the partners we work with on UK-wide preservation
- Continue evolving the practice of curatorship and librarianship, together with our partners, to keep pace with the changing needs of our diverse users.



Research

We support
and stimulate
research of
all kinds

Research

One of the founding principles of the British Library was to put the UK's outstanding national library collection at the service of research and innovation of all kinds. The goal remains to support the creation of new, open knowledge, across the fullest possible range of disciplines, from science and the social sciences to arts and humanities, as well as the vital interdisciplinary work that often yields the truest innovation.

We do this through our Reading Rooms; through free access, with expert support, to physical and copyright-protected digital content; through a wide range of online and remote access services, including a growing suite of unique datasets; and through special research projects that push the boundaries of innovation. We are as committed to serving citizen researchers and private individuals as we are to academics and career researchers. This diversity of use has become increasingly notable in recent years. In *Living Knowledge* we spoke about people's changing needs and the desire for 'more varied study environments'. The informal desk spaces at our St Pancras building have become as iconic a part of our identity as the Reading Rooms.

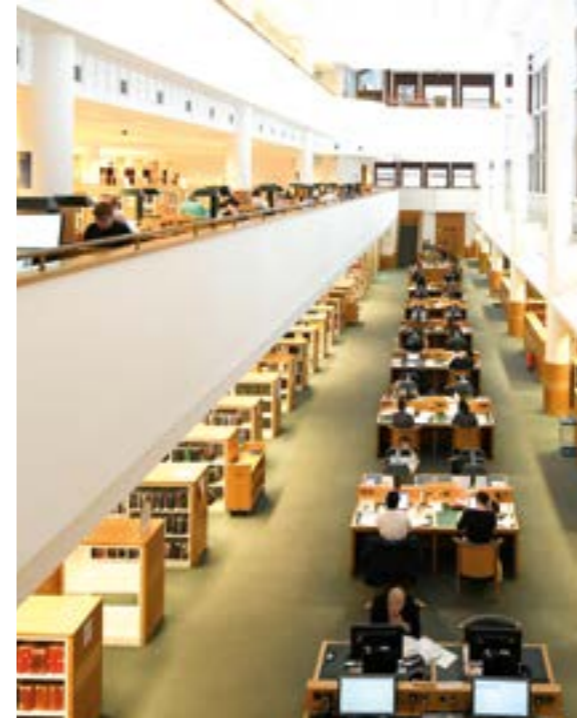


This evolution has been accompanied by growth in online resources, both through open access content – such as our EThOS service for academic theses – and licensed content available to registered Readers. Alongside this we have participated in original research, ranging from support for collaborative doctoral students, PhDs and fellowships, to involvement in the ground-breaking *Towards a National Collection*, delivered by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which is developing ways to break down boundaries between different digital collections.

Our task of opening up knowledge means that **improving access** to everything in our collection is more vital than ever. We will make it easier for people to access the collection, do research on any subject, and develop information literacy skills to confidently evaluate what they discover. We will implement the next phase of modernising our core research services, introducing online registration for anyone wanting to access digital content or become a Reader, and improving our online catalogue search function – which currently can be complex. We will continue to work with publishers and other rights holders to increase the content that registered users can access online, and we will work with partners such as the Living Knowledge Network to connect people with content in new ways.

Science has always been a core part of our statutory mission, whether providing crucial scientific research via British Library On Demand or growing our collection material that charts the history of science. Now, when

Left: *Living with Machines* exhibition at Leeds City Museum. Photo by Simon Dewhurst; Above left: Social Science and Science Reading Rooms, St Pancras. Photo by Mike O'Dwyer; Above right: Boston Spa Reading Room. Photo by Drew Forsyth.



science has never been more central to public policy, we will implement a new **science strategy** to serve the scientific research community, and raise public engagement with science through exhibitions, talks and events. We will build partnerships with other institutions that can complement our own resources and use our convening power to connect science with other disciplines and sectors. We will grow our digital research capabilities including AI and machine learning, and deploy our collection and resources to support environmental and public health research. The transformation of our St Pancras site, at the heart of London's Knowledge Quarter (one of the greatest knowledge clusters anywhere in the world) will create a major centre for both public and commercial research in life sciences, data science and other fields of innovation.

While our primary role is to support research by others, we are also an active independent research organisation. Our *Living With Machines* project, in partnership with The Alan Turing Institute, has pioneered new AI and machine learning research, utilising data from our digitised collection, to analyse millions of pages of content on a scale impossible for any individual researcher.

We will build on this world-leading research, working in partnership to **improve access to our data** and new scalable, ethical machine learning tools that can unlock value from digitised collections.

Our priorities for 2023–2030 to support our Research purpose are:

- Make it easier for more people to access the collection, with online registration, improved search and increased volumes of research content available online
- In a context of open research, help people, including those less experienced or confident, to use the information they need
- Increase our support for scientists and the public understanding of science, including the development of our St Pancras site as a major centre for life science and data science research
- Develop and implement a new AI Strategy and Ethical Guide to support the next generation of our digital research.



Business

We help
businesses
to innovate
and grow

Swiss, founder of Black Pound Day in discussion with moderator Jacqueline Brown at *Inspiring Entrepreneurs: Building the Black Economy* event. Photo by Abi Oshodi.

Business

Knowledge matters to a competitive economy: without free access to timely, accurate information, and the expert advice needed to interpret and act upon it, too many businesses fail in their earliest stages. Support for industry was at the heart of the Library's founding Act half a century ago, and it feels more relevant now than ever before. Our users range from large corporations accessing hard-to-find research papers from our On Demand service, to enterprising individuals who walk into one of our national network of Business & IP Centres (BIPCs) in public libraries.

With the opening of our 21st regional BIPC in Cumbria in 2022 we proudly exceeded the target we set ourselves in 2015. Significant investment from DCMS between 2020 and 2023 accelerated this expansion and supported the opening of an additional

80 'BIPC Locals' to provide further reach. The Network relies on collaboration, working with the Intellectual Property Office and local authorities to provide a trusted service in the heart of communities. Our 2023 report Democratising Entrepreneurship 2.0 provides vivid evidence of its powerful impact: 18,175 new businesses created (between April 2020 and March 2023) by a uniquely diverse cohort of founders, with a business survival rate over the pandemic of 95%, far above the national average. Every £1 spent on the service generated a return of £6.63 of value to the economy. Alongside our work with start-ups and SMEs, our British Library On Demand service has continued to serve larger businesses with much-needed research content, and it played an important role in the pandemic by providing rare medical research papers for the life sciences sector.

Our most pressing challenge, after a decade of growth and impact, is ensuring a **stable and financially secure future** for the network of BIPCs which our partners, with our support, have built up from Glasgow to Devon, and from Bristol to Norfolk and beyond. The Network's creation has been like a start-up project itself – driven by an entrepreneurial spirit and raising funds to enable growth. Like the businesses we support, however, we face the inevitable challenges associated with scaling up. With 21 Centres established, and a further 80 locations served through branch libraries, the maturing of the Network, and its support for

job creation and economic growth, will depend on a sustainable funding model underpinned by policy support at the highest level. At the same time, the transformation of the Library's own physical spaces offers a once-in-a-generation opportunity to add new, purpose-built facilities offering incubation and maker spaces for entrepreneurs in both London and Leeds.

The expansion of the BIPC Network has coincided with, and helped foster, a growing community interested in new, purpose-led business models, such as the circular economy and social enterprise. Research in 2022/23 found that 65% of businesses using BIPC services had either a social or environmental aim or both. Many of the entrepreneurs we work with see themselves playing a key role in the transition to a **net zero economy**, particularly in terms of the environmental impact of business. As trusted sources of data and knowledge, libraries have a special role to play here: the provision of up-to-date guidance on these issues is as vital for the businesses we work with as the market research and IP advice which is our stock in trade.

Left: Map showing the BIPC National Network; Below: BIPC at Bristol Central Library. Photo by Luca Sage; Above: Jayni Gudka, CEO of Unseen Tours speaks at an event during Global Entrepreneurship Week 2022. Photo by Sam Lane.

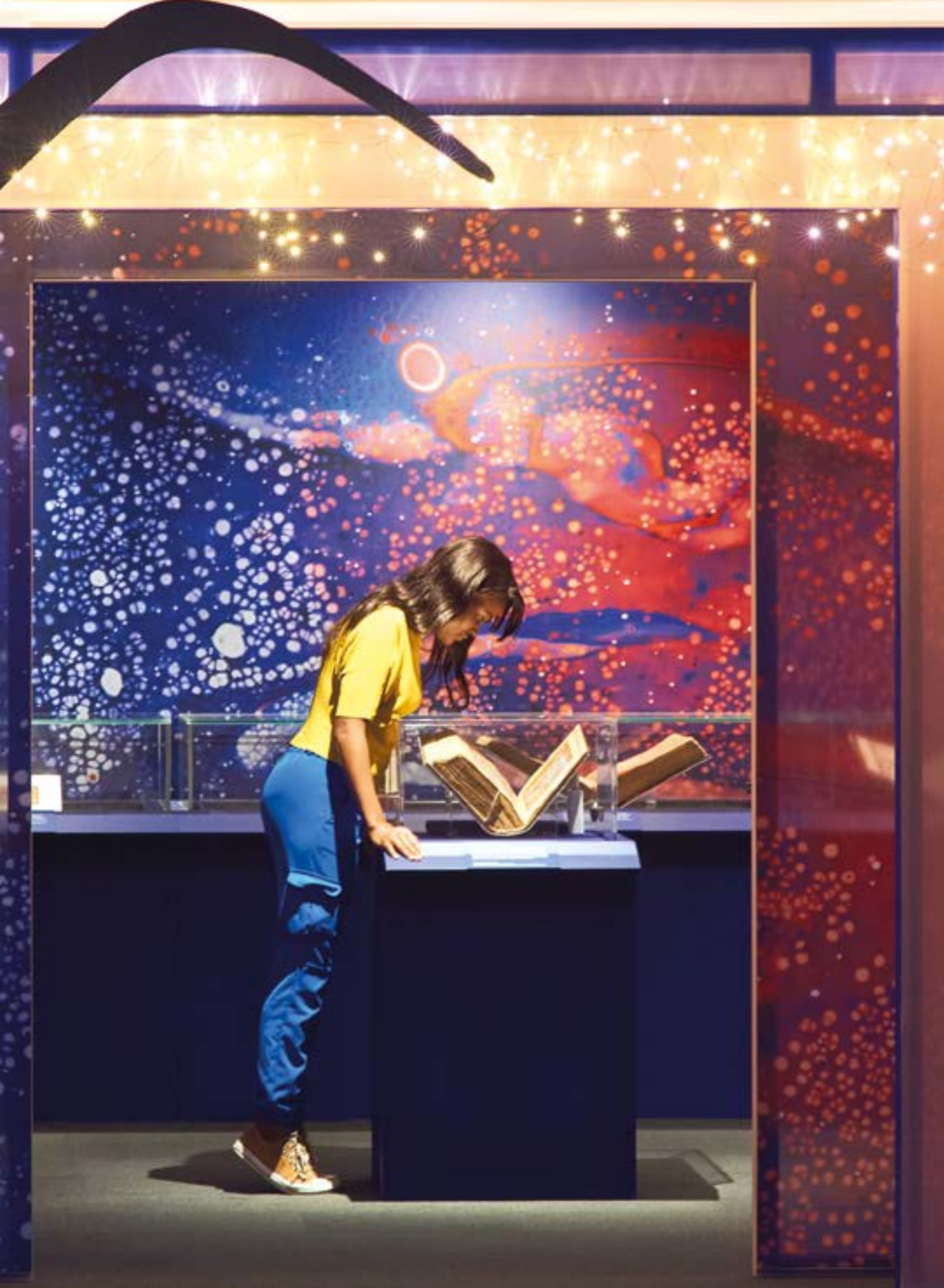


All the businesses we work with use technology to some extent, but few have the capability to make full use of the massive wave of innovation in technology, such as the use of bespoke algorithms and machine learning tools. Effective and ethical **use of AI** is increasingly a baseline requirement for companies seeking to use large-scale data and grow their online business. We see an opportunity and responsibility to act as a bridge between the UK research sector (including our partnership with the Alan Turing Institute) and the small businesses we support, to ensure they have the knowledge they need to thrive in an increasingly technology-dominated landscape.

Our priorities for 2023–2030 to support our Business purpose are:

- Sustain our expanded Business & IP Centre Network so that we can support entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds across the UK, including those in our local neighbourhoods
- Provide start-ups, businesses and social enterprises with the knowledge they need to contribute to the UK's goal of sustainable economic growth and a net zero economy
- Work with partners to ensure that the businesses we support benefit from access to relevant expertise in ethical AI and other advances in technology.





Culture

We engage everyone with memorable cultural experiences

Culture

Through the sheer quality, scale and diversity of its collection, the Library is a cultural institution of global significance. Among the many millions of precious items are some of the world's greatest masterpieces of illuminated manuscript art; rare books, including unique survivals that tell a comprehensive history of the printed word; significant documents, charters and letters; the handwritten archives of authors, scientists and composers; voices and music spanning the history of recorded sound.

We want to share the wonder and interest of the collection as widely as possible – through exhibitions and displays, and a year-round programme of creative events, talks and performances that use our collection as a starting-point to help us understand the world we live in.

Since 2015 we have transformed our cultural programme. Exhibitions have ranged from illuminating, provocative explorations such as *Windrush: Songs in a Strange Land* and

Unfinished Business: The Fight for Women's Rights to acclaimed historical shows such as *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms* and *Elizabeth and Mary: Royal Cousins, Rival Queens*. Our promise to make the Library 'a hub of ideas, debate, discussion, dialogue and experiment' has been fulfilled, reaching around 50,000 people each year with a diverse programme of on-site events, regularly enhanced by live streaming, and partnerships with major cultural festivals from around the world.

The Living Knowledge Network (LKN) – a collaboration between ourselves, the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales, and over 30 public library authorities across the UK – has fostered a distinctive and powerful way of delivering cultural experiences, enabling partners to bring Library exhibitions into their communities and expand on them through regional collections and interpretation. The 'local' displays of our most successful ever exhibition, *Harry Potter: A History of Magic* reached some 750,000 people throughout the LKN. We have also launched a new



touring exhibition programme and developed our work to loan key items, including the popular Treasures on Tour series.

Looking ahead we are determined to deliver a step-change in our cultural impact across the **north of England**. We have made a special commitment to work with partners and communities in the region to expand our programme and at the heart of this is an ambitious goal to establish a world-class permanent public space in Leeds, powered by our resources at Boston Spa. At the time of writing, our favoured site for this 'British Library of the North' is Temple Works, the extraordinary historic flax mill building on Leeds South Bank.

The pandemic accelerated our work to live stream Library events to audiences from further afield than ever. We want to further grow the regional **impact and visibility** of our cultural programme. We will work with the LKN and other partners to ensure that our exhibitions and events resonate across the UK, and we aim to help build the capacity in the sector needed to enable more collection items to be showcased in UK libraries. We will deliver a year-round programme of hybrid and online-exclusive events that reach audiences who would never otherwise have the chance to take part.

A particular focus in recent years has been our work with people and partners on creative ways to engage **local communities**. As we develop our physical spaces, north and south, we will ensure that those who live and work closest to us feel a part of the cultural experiences we offer. In particular, we commit that the extension to our St Pancras building, both in its design and the programmes that we run, will make the Library more open, accessible and engaging than ever before for local people.

Left: Jaipur Literature Festival. Photo by Marcin Nowak; Above right: *Chinese and British* panel exhibition at Liverpool Central Library, part of the Living Knowledge Network. Photo by The Sound Agents.



Finally, having established new benchmarks of quality and impact for what a major national library exhibition can be, we will increase our focus on **innovation in our exhibition programme**, testing creative new approaches to story-telling. This will inform our curatorial and design thinking as we look to create a new generation of gallery and display spaces through our capital development programmes.

Our priorities for 2023–2030 to support our Culture purpose are:

- Grow our impact in the North of England and beyond, with the goal of establishing a new permanent public space in Leeds
- Develop our work with the Living Knowledge Network and other partners to provide cultural experiences, on-site and online, for audiences across the UK
- Make our buildings and spaces more welcoming and engaging than ever before for the communities who live around us
- Continue to shape and deliver an innovative, creative and inclusive exhibition programme.



Learning

We inspire
young people
and learners
of all ages

Learning

Every library is a place of learning – a welcoming space where anyone can embark on their own personal journey of discovery. Whether for school students, families or adult learners, our learning programmes are designed to make the Library's collection as accessible as possible for those who might not otherwise easily connect with what we do. For young people in particular, we want to inspire the potential researchers and innovators of the next generation, sharing the richness and interest of the resources we hold.

On-site activities are a vital part of this, and we still have work to do to grow the quality and scale of our physical learning spaces in London and Yorkshire. Equally important though is our learning work online, where our curated and contextualised selections of digitised primary sources, devised in partnership with teachers and educators, now reach a national and international audience of many millions.

The *Living Knowledge* period has been one of growth and consolidation for our Learning

teams. Our long-held ambition to launch a family programme at our St Pancras site has been realised, and families are a familiar and welcome sight in our spaces. We built on the continuing success of our online *Discovering Literature* resource with the launches of *Discovering Children's Literature* and *Discovering Sacred Texts*. Our vibrant on-site programme was interrupted by the pandemic, but our response was creative and driven, as ever, by the needs of the learners we work with. One example was the popular 'micro-books' project in the summer of 2020, for which local partners such as food banks helped us to ensure that those impacted by digital poverty were not excluded. Other partnerships have helped us to offer learning opportunities to people with very specific needs or lived experience – from Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, to people living with a wide range of disabilities.

As we look forward, we see important opportunities to grow the impact of what we do as a national centre for learning. Part of our educational role, in common with other libraries, has always been to help our

users – especially those who are younger or less experienced – to develop the skills they need to access and evaluate trustworthy information. In a world of disinformation, this traditional responsibility to promote **information literacy** has taken on a renewed significance, as a critical requirement for a well-functioning civic society. We will invest in the resources and skills to ensure that we play a full role.

For learners of all ages, especially since the pandemic, high-quality online resources have become more essential than ever, particularly for those without ready access to other kinds of educational support. Our *Discovering* series has proven the power of well-curated collection content for learners, and now our goal is to enhance our suite of **digital learning resources** to support other parts of the curriculum which teachers have told us they need, including access to unique historical documents, carefully contextualised, which can bring history to life in new ways and offer students fresh perspectives.

Essential as this online growth is, we know from feedback from the learners and families who visit us that the impact of in-person learning experiences remains as important



than ever. We will create **new on-site learning facilities** as part of our vision for the development projects we plan to complete in the years ahead, including purpose-built Learning Centre spaces as major elements of our new extension in London and our planned new site in Leeds. We have also made a commitment to open up our renewed Boston Spa campus for school and other visits, so that children and young people from across the region can have a memorable 'behind the scenes' view of one of the world's great libraries at work.

Far left: Celebrating the Ukrainian Bookshelf Project, Olena Zelenska, First Lady of Ukraine and Akshata Murty, wife of the UK Prime Minister meet children and Headteacher Inna Hryhorovych from the St Mary's Ukrainian School. Photo by Rory Arnold; Below left: Women's Inclusive Team youth group visit. Photo by Emma Brinkhurst; Above: If Homes Had Ears Project. Photo by Amal Malik.



Our priorities for 2023–2030 to support our Learning purpose are:

- Support people of all ages and backgrounds to develop their skills in information literacy
- Enhance our online learning services with new resources that support teachers and schools, including historical documents and other primary source material
- Make our buildings and spaces more inclusive and engaging than ever for learners of all ages, children and families, and school visits.



International

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

International

A national library is also, by its nature, an international library – part of a global community of unique institutions whose combined collections could be truly said to comprise ‘the world’s knowledge’. This is a network in which the British Library has a central and highly visible role to play, not least because of the uniquely international and multi-lingual character of the collection we hold.

The spirit of collaboration and professional dialogue among these national institutions is strong. At a time of heightened uncertainty and risk in international relations, the values which underpin our international work – based on exchange and the sharing of knowledge for its own sake – have taken on a new and sharpened significance.

Since re-stating our international purpose in 2015 the volume and diversity of our international activities have all flourished. Our term as Chair of the Conference of European National Librarians (2015–21) deepened our

alliances across the continent, providing valuable continuity at a time of historic change in Britain’s relationship with Europe. Relations with partners in India have matured, including the launch and delivery of our ambitious Two Centuries of Indian Print project and successful exhibitions in Delhi and Mumbai. The British Library in China programme brought exhibitions and events to new audiences in Beijing, Chengdu, Shanghai and Hong Kong. Our digitisation partnership with the Qatar Foundation marked its 10th anniversary, and the International Dunhuang Project reached three decades of operations since it first began digitising collection items relating to the Silk Road.

In *Living Knowledge* we committed to growing our engagement with those parts of the world whose cultures and histories are reflected most strongly in the collection. In practice this meant **Europe, South Asia, South East Asia, East Asia and the Middle East**, in all of which we continue to deliver significant cultural initiatives, digitisation projects or partnership activities. These regions will remain central to our international work: our challenge will be to build on what has been achieved, maintain a spirit of innovation, and establish patterns of engagement which are sustainable long-term.

Alongside these relationships, recent years have seen an increased level of interest and dialogue with a new set of partners, notably in regions where Britain in its imperial era played a key role, including countries in **Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas**. This has coincided with a new era of urgent international focus on colonial histories and increased study of the transatlantic trade in enslaved peoples. This shift enables us to establish reciprocal partnerships and exchanges which will advance knowledge and enrich understanding of key parts of



the collection. Within the Americas, we will build on the work of the Eccles Centre for American Studies to achieve this.

Because of its sheer scale, the Library has always had a highly visible role in international **professional leadership and skills** development. Recent initiatives such as our new International Library Leaders Programme have consolidated this role and demonstrated that interest in what we do is, if anything, greater than ever before. Within the limits of our resources, we will maintain our engagement in these international professional dialogues, whose continuation is, at times like these of increased instability and division, more needed than ever.

That global instability means that the commitment we made in *Living Knowledge* to support international partners who have **collections at risk** has proven, sadly, to be even more important than we had guessed – with the dangers caused by climate change added to the list of risks alongside war and civil emergency. With the generous funding support of Arcadia, the Endangered Archives Programme will continue its vital work; and we will, where feasible in terms of resource,

continue to supplement this with special initiatives at moments of heightened international crisis.

Below left: Page from *Introductory Bengali Spelling Book with Reading Lessons*, Calcutta, 1872. Digitised by the Two Centuries of Indian Print project to widen access to the South Asia collections; Above: Delegates and hosts from our International Library Leaders Programme, July 2022.

Our priorities for 2023–2030 to support our International purpose are:

- Consolidate and sustain the Library’s strong relationships across Europe, South Asia, South East Asia, East Asia and the Middle East
- Deepen and diversify our engagement with key partners in Africa, Caribbean and the Americas
- Maintain our contribution to professional dialogue, skills exchange and capacity development across the international library sector
- Through programmes such as the Endangered Archives Programme, work with institutions worldwide whose collections are at risk from war, climate change or civil emergency.

Enabling the vision

By 2030 the British Library will have completed a major 20-year programme of transformation. Our *Growing Knowledge* strategy in 2010 set us on an irreversible path to engage fully with the digital age.

The *Living Knowledge* era has seen us become ever more open, creative and innovative across everything we do, reaching out to new audiences and partners across the UK and the world.

Now, with *Knowledge Matters*, we are setting a vision of a British Library that has ‘re-centred’ itself – geographically and symbolically – at the heart of the UK, with modernised services, deepened and more effective partnerships, sustainable ways of working, and a culture that is more inclusive and accessible than ever before.

The delivery of this vision will place big demands on our organisation: from technology to estates, from fundraising to finance, every part of our organisation will have a stretching and vital role to play.

People

The expertise and commitment of all our staff enables us to deliver a diverse and valued range of services for our users, across all our purposes. At the same time, we have implemented change projects that range from gradual improvements through to major transformations – all to enable us to better achieve our mission.

We know that realising our ambitions for 2030 will test our resilience. Investing in our people will be an essential part of managing the scale of change required: from skills and training to reward and recognition, and from succession planning to smart working. As a large employer in both Yorkshire and London we aim to increase the diversity of our workforce to reflect the communities that we serve in both locations.

We are already taking action on these priorities and others, in our current People Strategy, including important initiatives such as our Race Equality Action Plan. We will build on this to set out where key investments in our workforce will need to be made in order to enable our vision.

Our people priorities for 2023–30 are to:

- Deliver a refreshed People Strategy to support the delivery of *Knowledge Matters*
- Fulfil our commitments to inclusivity and equity for all our staff and ensure diversity across all levels of the organisation
- Invest in employee wellbeing and development, and embed throughout the organisation, in culture, leadership and people management.

Access, engagement and inclusion

We are determined to ensure that our services and collection are as accessible, engaging and inclusive as we can possibly make them to the people whose lives and stories they reflect. We want as many people as possible to experience the collection we care for. These aspirations also affect the way we will shape and run our business as a major public institution.

In 2023–30, this means improving our practice around how we design and change our spaces and services in partnership with others, particularly the people and communities who use them; improving the way we evaluate the impact of what we do; and using that expertise to grow and evaluate the impact of our outreach activity and our work with our local communities and involve them in shaping our programmes.

Our access, engagement and inclusion priorities for 2023–30 are to:

- Ensure we are truly open and welcoming to all by improving the quality, reach and equitability of our services, in-person and online, for everyone
- Fulfil our Race Equality Action Plan commitments to enact a generational shift to become a more representative and diverse organisation that is welcoming and empowering for everyone
- Continue delivering and strengthening our community engagement work in local neighbourhoods, collaborating in support of local heritage, entrepreneurship and employability, and lifelong learning.

Digital transformation and technology

In order to deliver our vision, we have needed to respond to a daunting array of technical challenges to our digital infrastructure. If our strategy is to succeed in growing demand in a sustainable way, this is a period that will require sustained investment and effort in upgrading our core systems and platforms.

Our ambitions range from supporting game-changing AI research, to helping more of our users to understand online information and how to use it. *Knowledge Matters* will require ongoing transformation, and investment in, not just of our technology infrastructure, but of our culture, practice, and ultimately our business model. This investment is vital not just for our own work, but for the supporting infrastructure we provide to our partners. This includes enhancing core preservation capacity in collaboration with our Legal Deposit Library partners, and the *LibraryOn* initiative: a new digital platform being developed in partnership with Arts Council England to promote what libraries bring to their communities.

Our digital transformation and technology priorities for 2023–30 are to:

- Procure and implement a new Library Services Platform, so that we can manage and improve access to the collection
- Transform the user experience and quality of our website and digital resources for our users
- Ensure that our digital storage capacity keeps pace with collection growth
- Work with partners to support the further development of *LibraryOn*.

Finance, commercial services and fundraising

Knowledge Matters looks set to be delivered against a challenging financial context. The immediate task for the initial phase of this strategy is one of stabilisation and recovery across our income streams. This will demand innovation and creativity to reach pre-pandemic levels, but we also see opportunities over the longer term, as we grow our reach both physically and online, with increased footfall, new retail offers, an improved digital experience and more. A combination of careful, prudent financial management and confident, bold investment strategy will continue to be at the heart of our approach to resourcing *Knowledge Matters*.

We can't do this by ourselves: we rely on a broad community of people and funders who generously support our work. This next strategic period brings with it new opportunities to collaborate on vital, transformative projects, and we will continue to develop our networks to unlock resources for public value.

Our finance, commercial services and fundraising priorities for 2023–30 are to:

- Ensure we manage our public funding efficiently and to the highest standards
- Build back our commercial revenues to their pre-pandemic levels
- Secure the philanthropic funding required to complete our major development projects and further open up our collection and services to people across the UK.

Right: Aerial view of the Urquhart building's solar panels in Boston Spa. Photo by Dan Watts.

Sustainability

We have an existing overall goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, compared to 1990 levels, in line with the UK Government's commitments expressed in the 'Climate Change Act 2008' (with 2019 target amendments). These Government commitments also target a 78% reduction by 2035. In this strategy period, we will be seeking to meet and exceed these targets, by adapting our ways of working and our buildings to reduce our emissions.

As a national library and a repository of global knowledge within a powerful network of libraries, research and cultural institutions, our opportunity to have a positive impact goes far beyond decarbonisation. From opening up climate science collections for research in new and innovative ways, to providing new culture and learning opportunities that support climate literacy, and supporting businesses to have a positive climate impact.

We will work with our partners across the sector, including the Green Libraries

Partnership, to be part of a wider movement – one that shares a common set of values as well as best practice and learning on how to undertake positive action and adapt to the challenges we face.

Our sustainability priorities for 2023–30 are to:

- Continue decarbonising our buildings and embedding best practice in environmental performance in our new spaces
- Collaborate with people to open up the collection in new and interesting ways, to support work on solutions to the environmental challenges we face – from climate research to enabling sustainable business and enterprise, and engaging people through culture and learning, to increasing climate literacy and visibility of climate science
- Embed partnerships across the sectors we work in to support wider change, share and encourage climate action, best practice and learning.



Capital projects and estates

In this next period, the transformation of our physical spaces will underpin the full range of our *Knowledge Matters* strategic goals. Working to complete our three major development projects in St Pancras, Boston Spa and Leeds, will be one of our most significant challenges in a tough economic climate. Success will bring once-in-a-generation opportunities to increase our capacity to welcome visitors from further afield, but also to transform the nature of people's experiences on site through user-centred design.

Our Estates strategy will ensure that we continue to invest in the vital task of maintaining our complex building estate, and will also seek to keep pace with the changing world of work, providing functional, flexible and modern workspaces for our staff working to deliver this vision.

Our capital development projects and estates priorities for 2023–30 are to:

- Complete our Boston Spa Renewed programme on time and on budget, and commence work on a permanent Library site in the centre of Leeds
- With our partners, deliver a major extension of our St Pancras site, to create a brand new public space for London that's connected to our community and open to the world
- Continue our essential core maintenance programme, including replacing ageing mechanical, electrical and building fabric assets at both sites.

Architects' impression of the viewing gallery of the proposed new storage facility at Boston Spa. Slab / Carmody Groarke.



Knowledge Matters

The British Library 2023–2030

The big themes that will guide us between now and 2030

Access, engagement and inclusion

Ensuring that the services we offer, and the collection we hold, are truly 'for everyone'.

Modernising our library services

Investing in skills, processes, systems and capabilities to deliver the quality of library services our users deserve.

Deepening our partnerships

Collaborating with libraries and memory institutions of all kinds across the UK and around the world, to achieve more than we ever could by ourselves.

Sustainability and resilience

Reducing our carbon impact and collaborating with partners to create a more sustainable future.

New spaces, North and South

In Yorkshire and in London, delivering new, world-class physical spaces designed to welcome future generations of visitors and users.

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

