

# Manchester Libraries Transformation and Renewal Programme

*Neil MacInnes*

*Strategic Lead – Libraries, Galleries and Culture*

*Manchester City Council*

## Introduction to Manchester

Manchester is a city in North West England with a population of 515,000 in 2013. Greater Manchester is a global regional capital, being the UK's second most populous area with an economy worth £48 billion, a population of 2.6 million people, and over 90,000 businesses.

There are almost 400,000 jobs in Manchester alone including 19,000 at Manchester airport which now has direct flights to Hong Kong and Singapore. Manchester airport provides the gateway to the north of England and the wider Northern Powerhouse.

The city itself has recently benefitted from a £1billion investment programme to future proof its transport system and connect the airport to the region's suburbs.

Manchester's growth in turbulent economic times is testament to its large and diverse economy. The city is internationally leading in science and high tech research and development. For example, in 2004 scientists at the University of Manchester isolated Graphene, the strongest material in the world.

Further planned investment in the city's assets include the development of the Sir Henry Royce Institute for Advanced Materials. Our Creative & Digital sector accounts for 105,000 jobs creating GVA of £4.7billion per annum with significant growth opportunities at MediaCityUK and the Sharp Project.

The growth and opportunities across Greater Manchester will be further enhanced through a constitutional breakthrough achieved by the city region. Greater Manchester will take on major new powers from government over transport, housing, skills, health and policing with a new metro Mayor to provide a louder voice for our unique region.

As we look to the decade ahead Manchester has a strong platform for growth. The investment we have made in our city, its rapidly growing population, infrastructure and businesses is already paying dividends in terms of jobs and prospects locally and our reputation internationally. We will continue with this approach to ensure a long term sustainable future for Greater Manchester.

Manchester is renowned for being a library city. Chetham's Library was founded in 1653 and is the oldest public library in the English-speaking world and the city also houses the wonderful John Rylands Library, which is part of the University of Manchester. There has been a public library service in Manchester since 1852, when the Manchester Free Library opened in the Hall of Science, Campfield, on the site of what is now the Museum of Science and Industry. Famous figures such as Charles Dickens and William Thackeray attended and spoke at its inauguration. Manchester had taken advantage of powers granted by the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1850 to become the first local authority to establish a rate-supported public lending and reference library.

### **City Library Strategy**

The latest City Library Strategy was agreed by Manchester City Council's Executive in May 2013 and outlined a remodelled library service across the city to ensure the sustainability of statutory city wide library provision. The strategy has developed a new model of delivery for a modern, quality, sustainable, comprehensive and efficient Manchester Libraries, Information and Archive service. The strategy created a tiered and layered library offer focussing investment in co-location, digital development and wider community engagement, thus ensuring the best use of resources and investment opportunities.

The service operates a hub and spoke model for service delivery, with Central Library underpinning the overarching library offer across the city. Our network of 15 neighbourhood libraries continues to provide a vital role in the heart of their communities and supporting the 5 universal library offers around reading, digital, information, health and learning. Manchester Libraries is developing Manchester standards and customer promises to support the delivery of the universal library offers. Our Neighbourhood Libraries are valued community spaces and act as a shop front and an access point for a range of other council services and partner organisations. We also have 6 community libraries, operated in partnership with volunteers and local agencies, which provide local access to library services supported by a parent/buddy library.

Manchester Libraries reported the following performance information for 2014-15

- **2.7million** visits per year
- **1.3 million** book issues per year
- **464,980** PC sessions per year at **600** public facing PCs
- **109,712** active library book borrowing members
- **15,475** benefits validations
- **115,196** people attended events
- **19,565** young people attended education events
- **844,867** lending items
- **195,083** wifi sessions
- **17,140** volunteer hours
- **25,015** 0-16 year old active members

Manchester's libraries have seen a significant transformation over the last ten years. The Council has secured considerable capital investment in library

buildings through an ambitious programme of construction, modernisation, replacement and refurbishment, resulting in 75% of the library network now being significantly improved.

Libraries in the city are open 721 hours per week with larger libraries operating 46 hours per week (including 2 evenings and Saturdays) with other neighbourhood libraries operating 30 hours per week (1 evening and Saturdays). The quality and distribution of our libraries is a major strength of the service we provide and over the past few years we have been looking at how we engage and deliver the library offer across the city and not just within library buildings.

The library transformation programme is supported by better systems, new technologies and a range of customer focussed service improvements. This form of channel shift is cost effective, convenient and empowering for customers who want easier, faster access to information, library resources and the ability to manage their library accounts. The library website is a key part of the service with access to 24 hour resources, local and family history material and ebooks for loan. Wifi has been introduced at all libraries across the city and a mobile phone library app has been launched which is available for iphones, android and blackberry devices, allowing greater access to customer accounts and the catalogue.

Fundamental to our ability to provide a high quality breadth and range of services is the need to work well and effectively with a broad spectrum of partners and volunteers. Our partnership working across the city ranges from local community groups to specialist intellectual property lawyers who give their time pro-bono to support fledging entrepreneurs, to the British Library, Manchester Metropolitan University,, the University of Manchester, The Manchester College and the Arts Council (England) to mention but a few, as well as nearly

300 volunteers across the city who contribute their time and energy to helping to support our service, with over 17,000 volunteer hours delivered in 2014/15. Partnership working has continued to grow as a means of ensuring co-ordinated service delivery, and to maximise the best use of the resources available within the city.

In terms of a strategic planning framework, services in Manchester are being developed to support the 5 nationally agreed 'universal offers', which modern users regard as integral to public libraries; reading, health, digital, information and learning. This will ensure that we have a coherent structured offer which meets the current and future needs of our residents. Library services also provide significant support for key Manchester City Council objectives such as raising literacy levels (both reading skills and digital), reducing dependency, sustaining local neighbourhoods and creating economic growth. Libraries also offer access to a range of other MCC and partner services, enabling people to access these services at a local level.

Manchester libraries have a critical and key role in supporting the City Council's priorities – Growth, Reform and Place :

### **Growth**

- Library facilities support communities and can be especially important to communities newly arrived in the city. They are a first point of contact and a safe, non-threatening place to spend time and use computers.
- They are a resource for local children/young people, parents and teachers through the books, computers and other materials available; as a space to study or play and as a teaching resource through class visits.
- Helping to connect residents to appropriate training, skills provision and employment opportunities is a key function of library facilities
- Libraries are a source of information for people taking the first steps towards setting up their own business and for a wide range of more complex business needs as well as a route through to more intensive business support.

## Reform

- Library facilities play a vital role in relation to the reform agenda through the provision of free public access to computers, access to information, benefit validation and advice sessions.
- Many services and agencies within and outside the council use libraries to disseminate information and obtain feedback from communities as well as a venue for delivery.
- Libraries play a role in the health agenda by providing mental stimulation and combating loneliness, which are key factors in reducing dementia and depression - this kind of early intervention can reduce costs further down the line by keeping people mentally healthy and independent.
- More people are volunteering and becoming involved in community life through libraries and archives and this is also helping to widen the range of services on offer and secure others.
- Libraries are a safe and interesting place for parents and carers of under fives to visit with a range of books, attractive children's areas, storytimes and with policies to help make the library visit a good experience for parents and children.

## Place

- Library facilities are important community hubs providing community meeting space often open in the evening and on Saturdays when other local facilities are closed. Sessions for under 5s and their families, social interaction for older members of the community, opportunities to volunteer or participate in work clubs are available as well as access to information, including health information and local information.
- A wide range of council services are delivered through the network of libraries for example adult learning, including learning specifically designed to get people back into

work, youth provision, councillor surgeries, benefits advice and many other advice sessions.

- Many libraries are now co-located with other services, sharing premises, staff and resources in leisure centres, schools and other facilities, leading to increased efficiency and collaboration in the delivery of library and archive services.
- Libraries role as cultural hubs will be developed, working with a range of cultural partners, establishing them as venues for cultural activity and engagement.

### Children and Access to Services

Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives offers a free universal service to all children and young people in Manchester. We are a key partner with schools in raising educational attainment, and play a fundamental role in fostering a culture of life-long learning. This is particularly pertinent to Manchester given the number of disadvantaged children and the high levels of deprivation in many wards.

Our children's offer includes:

- class visits with schools
- author visits
- reading group activities
- holiday activities – a chance to engage in learning activities when schools are closed
- Summer Reading Challenge
- Targeted engagement work with schools

- 16 storytimes per week for under 5s
- Bookstart gifting programme
- Homework resources and homework clubs
- Dedicated PCs for young people
- Digital Children's Libraries and Tech Petting Zoos
- Coding clubs

### **Manchester Central Library – Rebirth**

In 2008 a decision was taken to transform Manchester Central Library with £48,000,000 investment to refurbish the iconic city centre building. The refurbishment and physical transformation of Central Library was completed in 2014 and the building has seen its rebirth as a beautiful architectural gem in Manchester's urban landscape. The library was closed for a period of four years and the success of the transformation is clearly evident with the creation of a world class original modern library fit for a world class city.

Alongside the physical redevelopments, the services provided have undergone fundamental transformation to ensure that Central Library is fit for purpose to fulfill its role in supporting the cultural and creative life of the city region, adding to the vibrancy and attractiveness of Manchester as a place to live, study, work and visit.

Manchester Central Library reopened on 22 March 2014 and has welcomed 1.4

million visitors in its first year. Central Library has become a major cultural destination and a must see visitor attraction in the city with a particular focus on creating a one-stop shop and a centre of excellence for family and local history, telling the story of Manchester and its people, through print, digital, photographic images and film.



Central Library underpins the overall library network, acting as a hub to support our neighbourhood and community outreach libraries. The overall regeneration of St Peter's Square, the creation of the second city crossing, extended Metrolink tram service and the cross city bus scheme will greatly improve access to Central Library from across the city and the wider region.

### **Manchester Central Library Development Trust**

Since the independent charity - 'Manchester Central Library Development Trust' - was registered with the Charity Commission in December 2012, over £800,000 in grants and awards from local and national charitable trusts and foundations has been secured to enhance facilities and services in Central Library for the benefit of Manchester communities. These grants and awards would not have been available to the library without the establishment of the independent charity.

The Trust recently produced their first annual report and accounts for the year ending 31 May 2013 which will be available to view on their new website, due to be launched on 30 September: [www.manchesterlibrarytrust.org](http://www.manchesterlibrarytrust.org)

A number of successful Central Library tours and receptions have taken place to raise awareness of the major transformation with the city's business community and philanthropists. Opportunities and proposals have been developed to engage this audience in future funding or in-kind support.

### **Information and Business Services**

The Information & Business Service acts as an "Information Hub", answering more complex and in-depth enquiries. Staff provide an Information Enquiries service - in person, by telephone and via email (including the Greater Manchester Ask About Business phone

service). This part of the library also houses a Quick Reference collection, newspapers and journals with typical enquiries relating to

- Business information and access to work
- Citizens rights
- Personal financial information (including debt and access to benefits)
- Local and community information
- Access to 24 Hour Library resources including: Oxford Reference; Go Citizen; Community Information; Enquire
- Initial point for research facts and figures (science, technology, history etc)
- Information for young people to support learning/homework
- Specialist support for visually impaired people to access information and services

The service hosts the new Manchester Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC), enhancing and building on the services provided by the Commercial Library (established in the city since 1919). This exciting partnership with the British Library brings additional resources, funding and marketing, and is part of the “Enterprising Libraries” project supported by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

### **Media Lounge and ICT**

The Central Library complex acts as a digital hub for the city of Manchester, offering a range of high-tech ICT services, free to all. Central Library has been awarded funding from Broadband UK (BDUK) to be a demonstrator project for the benefits of superfast broadband to SMEs and start ups. This addition to our business services offers a range of activities and information to local businesses including drop in sessions and workshops on cloud computing, using social media for marketing, and using the internet to improve efficiency and communication. It also offers the chance to get “hands on” with the latest communications technology including state of the art videoconferencing, 4K video camera and TVs, and

Google Glass. 3D printing will also soon be available for businesses to experiment with and learn about the collaboration opportunities it presents.

The library is a hub to support digital learning and development in a customer friendly environment, supported by knowledgeable staff, to support the ambitions of the city in terms of skilled and empowered citizens.

The media lounge has a key role in encouraging and developing innovation in the city providing a vibrant community learning space within the Central Library complex that seeks to inspire collaboration and creativity. It is an area dedicated to providing a technology rich space where people can come to learn, create and enjoy. Specifically there are three target audiences that have been identified as key users of the service:

- Creatives (including musicians, photographers, visual artists, etc)
- Potential employees in digital media
- Entrepreneurs & innovators

The Media Lounge has close synergies with other library services. For example, the Henry Watson Music Library has software to create music, therefore a customer could write and record their music in there, then go to the Media Lounge to share, collaborate, design the artwork, upload their music to their website, etc. Similarly, an entrepreneur using the Business & Intellectual Property Centre in Central Library could use the Media Lounge to create an online marketing campaign or design their branding or access the 3D printers.

### **Services for Children and Young People**

Thanks to substantial grants made to the Central Library Development Trust we have been able to provide a high quality environment within the children's library and an exciting programme of activities and events that inspire Manchester's children on their learning and literacy journey.

The funding provided by the Garfield Weston Foundation has enabled an extensive fit-out of the children's library area to transform the space from a traditional looking children's library to an exciting, changing place through the use of technology and projections. Through digital interactives children are able to explore books, reading and authors and be inspired by our special collections relating to children.

## **Events Programme**

The establishment of Central Library as a key cultural and visitor destination has been paramount to the success of the transformation programme. Central Library previously had a wide ranging number of events, activities and exhibitions which were, in the main, of an adhoc nature.

The introduction of the new ground floor performance space (which can be split into three zones), the new lower ground floor exhibition space, first floor exhibition cases and the restoration of the heritage committee room, reception room and the tremendous City Librarian's office, alongside three new meeting rooms, has given us an excellent opportunity to develop the library as a venue which can host a range of different activities, organisations, people and cultural outputs, as well as the opportunity to promote the collections.

## **Virtual Library**

Manchester's library service is leading the way in the digital revolution by using technology to provide virtual library services to its customers. The virtual library, primarily housed on the city council website, is one of the most visited sections of the council website and continues to grow. Library members have access to some of the most premium on-line resources via these web pages. This includes

a range of dictionaries, encyclopaedias, news archives and other information sources. These resources, which are also accessible via the new mobile phone application, are becoming increasingly popular.

The online collections include access to music resources, a range of Oxford publications, Who's Who, British Standards, Citizenship and Driving and back copies of the Guardian, Observer, Times and a range of national, regional and international English language newspapers.

Over nine million virtual visits have been made to our 24 Hour Library service. This includes 7.5 million visits to our unique archives and local history records, plus 44,000 log-ons to [www.manchesterzoom.com](http://www.manchesterzoom.com), a website where local community groups advertise their forthcoming events and meetings.

Our business resources to support entrepreneurs and small businesses – hosted at [www.askaboutbusiness.org](http://www.askaboutbusiness.org) – have also proved popular, receiving around 46,000 visits and 75,000 people have accessed general reference resources, including 6,600 visits to the online Driving Theory Test service.

The e-book service and e-audio collection issued close to 35,000 items in 2014/15, while 8,000 customers have downloaded our library app. The app, available at [www.yourlibraryapp.co.uk/manchester](http://www.yourlibraryapp.co.uk/manchester), allows users to search Manchester's extensive collections of books, ebooks and audiobooks from their smartphone or tablet. It can also be used to scan the barcode of any book, to see if Manchester Libraries has a copy – and if the book is in stock, members can then reserve it for collection from their nearest library.

It has never been easier to access library services digitally. 22 per cent of all renewals are now made online, along with 69 per cent of reservations. Around 70 per cent of all borrowing in our libraries is now completed by members using self-service

machines, giving our staff more time to engage with people who need their help and support – rising to 85% at busier libraries.

## **Archives +**

Greater Manchester County Record Office (GMCRO) is operated by Manchester City Council on behalf of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA).

GMCRO houses 4 miles of archives and seeks to identify, collect, preserve, and promote the widest possible public access to the documentary heritage of Greater Manchester. Manchester City Council also provides its own citywide archives and local history service, Manchester Archives and Local Studies.

They collect the records of Manchester's communities, societies, organisations, places of worship, businesses, local government, local history books and photographs. Central Library is also a treasure chest of exceptional rare and early printed books and fascinating special collections.

The redevelopment of Central Library presented the opportunity to celebrate and showcase Manchester's original archive treasures, by bringing together these two archive services based in the city centre and complementary partners into Archives+, a combined archive offer for Manchester and Greater Manchester.

Archives+ offers a wonderful, purpose-built showcase and repository for the region's archive and family history. For the first time, thousands of the region's records are together under one roof to create an unrivalled collection and first rate customer access and engagement services. This includes working in partnership with other archive and family

history providers in the region and sign-posting residents and visitors to the rich cultural and heritage offer across Greater Manchester.

Manchester City Council submitted a Round 2 application for Archives+ to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) in June 2012. This application was successful in securing a £1.55m Heritage Lottery Fund grant. The elements of Archives+ funded by the HLF raise awareness of and provide easy access to our histories for the broadest possible audiences, including existing and new ones, through interpretation spaces in Central Library, making best use of the latest digital technologies and an outreach/education programme. The new audiences include families, schools, tourists, young people and placed based communities.

### **Archives+ Digital and Physical Exhibition**

Archives+ has created exciting interpretive exhibition spaces in Central Library to provide new ways for more people to discover the richness and relevance of archives, share their own stories and have a personalised experience of Greater Manchester's history.

The Archives+ exhibition has proved very popular in its first year. For example:

- Approximately 70% of Central Library visitors have visited the Archives+ exhibition.
- North West Film Archive and BFI Mediatheque film viewing pods: 8,800 sessions and 37,500 films viewed.
- Postcard interactive (where you can email a friend a historic postcard): 5,840 postcards sent.
- 25% of visitors to Central Library are from outside the North West.
- 90% of young people find Central Library 'young people' friendly.

- 30,000 Family / local history sessions on PCs.
- 3,000 visitors to the Family History Help Desk (run by volunteers from the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society) and over 1,000 visitors to family history events run by them.
- A 120% increase in customers consulting original archives and rare books – over 8,200 items viewed.

A new citywide learning and outreach programme has helped people learn about and enjoy this nationally important collection. The programme has delivered over 300 events and activities to 20,842 people including 2,520 families and 2,299 young people across the City and region.

### Collections Development

One of the aims of the service is to ensure its collections reflect Manchester in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In 2014-2015 we have taken in a number of key archives and collections. These include:

- **Local community collections** – a range of collections have been identified that relate to the rich and diverse communities of Manchester, celebrating the life of the city
- **Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre** – archives of the Asian Youth Movement, Lisapo Congolese oral histories; North Manchester Black Resource Centre archives and Black Arts Alliance book collection.
- **Building Control archives** – the records of the Council's Building Control going back to c.1890 are now held at Central Library. They were previously stored in the Town Hall Extension basement. This archive is of high architectural and historic significance and we are exploring external funding opportunities with the University of



Manchester. The photographic collections of the Town Hall Photographer are also being transferred to the library – these cover the 1950s-2000s and are an outstanding photographic record of the City and the work of the Council.

The North West Sound Archive (NWSA) records, collects and preserves sound recordings of the life, character, history and traditions of the North West England and have recently been transferred to the custody of the Greater Manchester County Record Office at Manchester Central. These sound collections complement the paper records, photographic collections and film archives already held at the library.

Since November 2014 birth, marriage and death registers for the City of Manchester over 100 years have been stored at Manchester Central Library and family historians are now able to order certificates at the library.

#### **Digital Archive: more accessible online**

The service has a digitisation programme to make as much of their archive collections and catalogues online. To date these include:

- **Family history digitisation.** Working with both [findmypast.co.uk](http://findmypast.co.uk) and [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk) to digitise over 10,000,000 of our most popular family history records including rate books, workhouse records, school records, church registers, burial registers and prison registers. In 2014/15 over 4.1 million images & transcripts were viewed. Free access to these resources is available in any Manchester library.
- **Photographs** – over 100,000 old photographs of Manchester are available on both our Local Images Collection ([www.images.manchester.gov.uk](http://www.images.manchester.gov.uk)) and the

Archives+ Flickr photostream<sup>1</sup>. In 2014/15 5.7 million images were viewed on the Archives+ Flickr Photstream.

- **Catalogues** - Greater Manchester Lives is a one stop shop catalogue and digital portal for archives, local studies, and photographic collections held by archives in Greater Manchester. It now holds almost 1,000,000 catalogue entries and over 100,000 images. In 2014-2015 it received 23,592 unique visits and 101,028 page views.
- **Archives+ blog**– the Archives+ blog publishes stories and content from the collections researched and created by volunteers. In 2014-2015 it received 37,188 views.

## Future priorities

The following is a summary of future priorities for the library service.

- **Income / commercialisation** – there has been success in creating new income streams through retail, the café, licensing / reproduction, and family history research. We are currently exploring further avenues for commercialisation and raising income for Archives+ and Central Library.
- **Fundraising and Sponsorship Opportunities.** Sponsors are actively being sought and grants applied for to enable us to continue to develop an activity programme for Central Library and allow us to take its resources and collections out to communities across Manchester. We are working with the University of Manchester on potential funding bids to help digitise our archives and collections.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.flickr.com/people/manchesterarchiveplus/>

- **Neighbourhood Focus.** Continue to develop strategies through digitisation and engagement that allow Central Library's archives and collections to be taken out to communities and neighbourhoods across Manchester. In particular with young people, families and schools.

- **Cultural programme.** To build on the success of Central Library as a key cultural venue in the city and encourage artists to use the collections as creative inspiration for artwork. To help establish neighbourhood libraries as cultural hubs within their communities.

- **Digital by Design.** We will continue to work with partners to digitise our collections and make them available online.

- **Digital Preservation.** The archives of the future are being 'born digital'. Ensuring valuable digital information remains usable over time is a key challenge for archives. We are working with archive services across the North West to produce standards and tools around this

- **Enablement.** Continue to recognise and utilise the benefits of volunteers and the voluntary sector in bringing a wide range of skills and experience to the wider library service. Continue to try and diversify the volunteer base – in particular with young people, developing skills and helping to create positive pathways to work. Continue to help activate community and voluntary heritage projects at neighbourhood level.

- **Learning.** Continue to work with schools, young people and partners to ensure the archive collections are used as an inspiration for learning, developing new skills and creating a strong sense of place.

- **Partnership.** Continue to build capacity by working in partnership with the our partners and the other nine districts in Greater Manchester.

## Conclusion

Manchester's Library Service has transformed itself, change has been rapid and the service is now highly regarded and seen as playing a vital role in the heart of every neighbourhood and community in the city. Manchester's libraries have seen a significant transformation over the last decade. Part of the improvement has been the significant capital investment in library buildings. The vision for a modern, quality, sustainable and comprehensive public library service has been delivered through a programme of modernisation, refurbishment and replacement of library buildings with a focus on co-location, digital development, wider community engagement and partnership thus ensuring the best use of resources and investment opportunities, resulting in 70% of the library estate now being significantly improved.

The jewel in the crown of Manchester City Libraries is the transformed and extended Central Library which re-opened in March 2014, after a four year £48,000,000 programme of renovation and refurbishment which underpins the city wide library offer. The library now boasts the new Archives + centre of excellence which utilises digital technologies to promote the collections to new audiences with a particular focus on children, schools, families and our diverse communities, The library also houses the Henry Watson Music Library, one of the finest music collections in a UK public library and has developed a cultural programme of events and activity attracting 1,400,000 visits in its first year of opening.

These are exciting and challenging times for Manchester City Libraries, both in terms of building on the excellent work that has already been done, and in terms of future development with new buildings, new partnerships and new technology within the current climate of austerity.