

AGMA Statutory Functions Committee

Date: 19 December 2022

Subject: Greater Manchester County Record Office and Greater Manchester Archives & Local Studies Partnership

Report of: Neil MacInnes, Head of Libraries, Galleries and Culture, Manchester City Council, Sam Elliott, Head of Service, Bolton Council and Philip Cooke, Citywide Services Manager, Libraries and Archives - Manchester City Council

Purpose of Report:

The Committee is asked to consider the progress of Archives+ and the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership.

Recommendation:

The Committee is requested to note the progress of Archives+ the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership.

Contact Officers:

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Equalities Impact, Carbon, and Sustainability Assessment:

Risk Management

No risks identified in the report – the report is an update for noting.

Legal Considerations

There are no legal implications contained within this report.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

No consequences relating to Revenue Finances – the report is an update, for noting.

Financial Consequences – Capital

No consequences relating to Capital Finances – the report is an update, for noting.

Number of attachments to the report: 0

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Not required.

Background Papers

None.

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution?

No.

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency? No.

GM Transport Committee

Not appropriate.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Not appropriate.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Greater Manchester County Record Office (GMCRO) is operated by Manchester City Council (MCC) on behalf of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA). GMCRO was opened by the former Greater Manchester Council (GMC) in 1976. Since 1986 GMCRO has since been supported by all AGMA districts and other joint AGMA authorities. 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 in accordance with the statutory requirement of the Public Records Act 1958 and 1967, the Local Government (Records) Act 1962 and the Local Government Act 1972.
- 1.2 GMCRO was previously based at Marshall Street in Manchester City Centre and moved to Manchester Central Library in early 2014 as part of a wider archive partnership called Archives+. Archives+ had made archives more accessible by creating exciting interpretive exhibition spaces 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 the City Region's history. Manchester's iconic Central Library reopened after a four-year closure in 2014, £50m transformation programme and is now one of the most popular libraries in the United Kingdom.
- 1.3 The Archives+ partners include the North West Film Archive (Manchester Metropolitan University), Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre and Trust (The University of Manchester), the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society and Manchester Histories.
- 1.4 In 2012 a feasibility study commissioned by AGMA recommended the creation of a formal Partnership to provide an overarching strategy and development. The Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership was established by Statutory Functions Committee in June 2012, with the Committee agreed to provide governance. It also agreed to create an officer group to lead the work of the Partnership and report to the AGMA Statutory Functions Committee. The Partnership consists of each local authority archive and local studies services in Greater Manchester, with the aim of achieving significant benefits through collaborating on service improvement and future sustainability. GMCRO provides strategic leadership to the partnership.

1.5 The Archives+ Partnership and GM Archives and Local Studies Partnerships (GMALSP) are held in high regard nationally as a model of best practice. Officers from our partnerships regularly speak at national archives conferences.

2.0 GMCRO and Archives+ - eight years on

2.1 Our Partnership

The Archives+ Partnership consists of the following organisations, which are located at Manchester Central Library

- Manchester City Council – Libraries and Archives
- Greater Manchester County Record Office
- North West Film Archive at Manchester Metropolitan University (NWFA)
- Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre (The University of Manchester)
- Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society.
- Manchester Histories

2.2 Archives + for everyone

Archives+ has pushed the boundaries of what archive services can do and how to engage. Each partner has their own knowledge and skills and working together, this enables us to offer an excellent service to Greater Manchester residents.

It is now eight years since Central Library re-opened following significant transformation. In the last 12 months, over 1.2 million people visited the library, with it becoming busier throughout the year, as people returned to the city centre following the Covid pandemic. Prior to Covid over 2 million people visited annually, making it the most visited public library in the country.

As a focal point of the library, Archives+ has gone from strength to strength. Prior to the initiation of Archives+, each partner, not based at Central Library, reached only 15,000 people annually.

Audience development is about more than numbers through the door.

- The age of people engaged in the Archives+ activity programme is far wider and more evenly spread than is usual for an Archives service
- Peaks in the age of engagement with archives are now at ages 6–10 years and 26–59 years, rather than over 55 years old, which is the most common age usually for visitors to archives services.
- Approximately 70% of visitors are White, compared to the previous almost 100% White audience at the previous location for the Greater Manchester County Record Office.
- The numbers of families and young people engaging with archives is high
- The activity programme has returned to its pre-covid level, with increasing numbers of people engaging with activities.

2.3 **A sense of ownership**

Archives+ is something people want to be part of. Community groups are constantly depositing their archive collections and holding exhibitions in Central Library. The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah's Heritage Lottery Funded Coming in from the Cold project has increased engagement with community groups relating to ethnic minority community groups and increasing diversity of collections and engagement from minority communities is an ongoing priority.

2.4 **Feedback and quotes about Manchester Central Library**

Manchester Central Library is as popular as ever for its visitors. It is currently number 13 of 'Things to Do' in Manchester on TripAdvisor. Central Library and Archives+ host and often curate exhibitions that often bring Manchester and elements of its history to life. Here are a couple of exhibitions that demonstrate this.

TripAdvisor October 2022

"I came in here to marvel at the lovely building and visit the free exhibitions. There was a nice one on the late monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, plus an exhibition surrounding prostate cancer and its impact on the LGBT+ community."

TripAdvisor November 2022

“Two interesting and free exhibitions in the library at the moment. A small collection of photographs from the Sex Pistols first ever gig in Manchester and directly opposite a local artist called Jean Hobson who does colourful cityscapes and other art related to Manchester and its history.”

The following is a review from Google Nov 2022

“It is called a "library", but it is also a lovely historical museum in the heart of Manchester. We were looking for another museum ...we found this place by chance, but we had a such good time here! Spacious, clean, and tidy. Study space is available so there are many students here. In some open space, we experienced the voice record of Manchester, the interesting story behind Manc accent. This area is highly recommended since it is so fascinating! We wish we could have one in Leeds!”

3. Archives+ over the last 12 months

- 3.1 This has been a very successful 12 months for the Archives+ partners individually and as a partnership. We have come together for several events and exhibitions, including an event for Festival of Libraries 2022 and the exhibition celebrating the Queen that was joint between Manchester Archives and NWFA.
- 3.2 The Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society Helpdesk has been extremely busy throughout 2022. Over 4300 customers have been assisted compared to 3300 pre-pandemic. This increase is because Manchester Central Library was one of only 3 places in the country to be able to offer access to the 1921 Census for free as The National Archives Northern Hub, digitally via Find My Past. Since becoming available in January, over 300,000 1921 Census records have been viewed for free, that would have otherwise been charged for. From November 2022, each authority is able to pay Find My Past to increase their subscription, allowing customers to access the 1921 Census for free from their venue. MLFHS hosted a Local and Family History Fair in March which attracted many more visitors to explore the stalls of fifteen local and community organisations. Face to Face meetings and events resumed following Covid. The Society's Project Volunteers made further progress

with several key projects including the digitisation of the registers of the Royal Manchester School for the Deaf and Dumb, which will now be completed in time for the bi-centenary of the School in 2024, and the project to digitise the biographies of fallen railwaymen of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Company.

- 3.3 The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre (AIURC) and Education Trust has seen increased demand for Anti-racism and Black/Global Majority History material and resources. A full events and activities programme has been delivered for residents, schools, communities, and researchers, and participated in nearly 100 different workshops, conferences, events, locally, regionally, and nationally. A full programme of events was delivered for South Asian Heritage Month and Black History Month. The Trust also continues its NLHF-funded project Coming in From the Cold project, supporting community heritage projects until August 2023. There has been a renewed demand for support from community groups following the pandemic. In September The Trust published its report If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes - <https://www.racearchive.org.uk/download/if-nothing-changes-nothing-changes-september-2022/>, looking how heritage organisations are engaging with anti-racism and work on equity, diversity and inclusion and has drawn attention nationally and internationally.
- 3.4 The NWFA's film digitisation capacity has increased, with the acquisition of two high-spec film scanners, funded by a grant from the AHRC's Capacity of Collections scheme – a Cintel Scanner C Drive and a MWA Nova-Spinner. The NWFA have continued to support BFI including adding 1,000 titles to the BFI Replay platform. Public access exhibition work in the year included supporting the Platinum Jubilee and the Queen and Manchester exhibitions.
- 3.5 Manchester Histories is a new member of the Archives+ Partnership, as it has set up a new histories and heritage hub in the lower ground floor of Manchester Central Library. The histories & heritage hub is a welcoming and inspirational space that will have a focus on wellbeing and will showcase lesser-known histories through exhibitions, performances, installations, workshops, and events, supporting the work of the HiDDEN group, a network of smaller historic buildings, museums, and libraries with rare collections and archives such as the Working Class Movement Library, Victoria Baths, and the Police Museum.

3.6 Manchester Libraries and Archives was awarded £485,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to be the North West hub of the British Library's Unlocking the UK Sound Heritage. The project ran from 2019 to May 2022. The hub digitised over 4,500 tapes despite the disruption caused by Covid. Greater Manchester collections that have been digitised include the Bolton Oral History Project held at Bolton History Centre and the Oldham Oral Histories held at Oldham Archives. Parts of the following collections have been digitised: Stockport Sound Archive held by Stockport Archives, the Manchester Studies Oral History and Here To Stay immigration collection held at Tameside Local Studies and Archives and 200 concert recordings held by the Royal Northern College of Music. The project also ran outreach programmes and offered training and support for the heritage sector: <https://northwestsoundheritage.org/>. To ensure this work is sustainable a successful bid was made to The National Archives Networks for Change Fund, to establish a regional sound network to improve sound archiving skills and equipment regionally. We have also worked closely with Manchester City of Literature on the Re:Sound project which brought artists, community groups and sound archives together to create new creative work in Manchester, Bolton, and Salford.

3.7 The Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People were successful in their bid to the Wellcome Trust, in partnership with Archives+, to catalogue, digitise and make accessible their Disabled People's Archive. The project started at Archives+ in October 2021 and has already produced a basic list for every box in the collection, established policies for cataloguing, digitisation, and access, advised on Archives+ search room accessibility and supported events such as International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) 2022. Highlights of the collection are now available at: <https://disabledpeoplesarchive.com/in-the-archive/>.

3.8 **Manchester Voices**

Manchester Metropolitan University have undertaken research into the accents and dialects of Greater Manchester. The research outputs will be permanently displayed at Manchester Central Library, being launched in October 2022. The exhibition is fascinating and proving really popular with visitors across the region, and can also be viewed at <https://www.manchestervoices.org/>

3.9 Greater Manchester County Records Office take in new collections on an ongoing basis. An example is the Marketplace project, an oral history initiative capturing the living stories of Manchester's markets, was deposited with Archives+ in August. The Pankhurst Centre's 'A Room of Our Own' archive documenting the history of the Pankhurst Centre and Manchester Women's Aid was deposited in September with an accompanying exhibition launched at Central Library in October. Manchester's Books of Condolence and the tributes to Queen Elizabeth II left at St Ann's Square have now been collected by Archives+ and will be stored at Manchester Central Library. Books of Condolence have been collected across Greater Manchester by each authority's archives service. An exhibition of the Queen and her visits to Greater Manchester was displayed at Manchester Central Library following the death of the Queen. In July 2021 we successfully gathered in, and preserved messages placed on the Marcus Rashford mural in Withington. The mural was defaced following England's loss in the final of the European Championships. In the following week, the mural was covered in messages of hope and support from local residents and visitors from across the country. The messages were preserved by Harwell Restoration, and we are working with stakeholders to decide next steps in making these messages accessible.

4. Greater Manchester and Local Studies Partnership over the last 12 months

4.1 GMALSP Action Plan 2020-2023

GMALSP partners have continued to work effectively together, for the benefit of all 10 GM authorities.

4.1.1 Digital Preservation

The GMCRO Digital Preservation Archivist supported all partners to ensure they are approaching digital preservation in an effective manner. Some authorities have reduced the risks around digital records by storing records on backed-up server space provided by GMCRO.

4.1.2 Creating Covid-19 archives: Collecting Manchester people's stories

All Archives+ partners and GMALSP authorities have collected COVID related archives, of varying forms, including Council records, stories from residents,

accounts of the disproportionate impact of Covid on BAME communities. This is currently being mapped and options regarding joint working being assessed.

4.1.3 Increasing the diversity of our collections

The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre and Educational Trust have provided support to organisations across the region and country. This has intensified the need for each GMALSP's archives to be able to tell the story of its Global Majority residents and communities. Ensuring our collections more closely represent Greater Manchester's current communities remains a key priority.

4.1.4 GM Lives Replacement

GM Lives, which is the web portal for GM Archives, is not fit for purpose, and for a number of years an alternative solution to showcase GM Archives in a much more effective, customer focused way.

Significant progress has been made with this. Using our Greater Manchester Library Management System contract, three GM Authorities have now migrated their Archives data. It is likely a few more authorities will follow in 2023. A web portal will soon be developed to provide access to a joint catalogue to all authorities archives that are on the system. This will be funded by the New Burdens funding received by GMCRO from The National Archives.

4.1.5 GMALSP worked in partnership with BBC Archives for the celebration of the Centenary of the BBC in October. As part of BBC100 each authority was provided with video clips from the BBC archive and BBC Radio Manchester clips from the GMCRO collection. All the clips are also now part of the Archives+ interactive exhibition at Manchester Central Library.

4.2 Here are a few examples of great developments in individual service's archives

4.2.1 Wigan & Leigh's state-of-the-art archive facilities were opened in June 2021 at the newly renovated Grade II listed Leigh Town Hall. A programme of community engagement has been developed including tours of the permanent exhibition; exhibition windows, co-curated with local community collectives including LGBT+ Group 'Leigh Explorers;' and the temporary 'Our Town' exhibition. In Spring 2022,

the service's 100+ strong team of volunteers were awarded the Archive Records Association's volunteering award for the 'Revealing Wigan Archives' project.

4.2.2 The Collaborate and Innovate funding programme awarded an Archive Testbed Fund grant to Bury Archives in July. This has assisted with the creation of a body of artwork, inspired by the *Prestwich and Whitefield Guide*, to attract new audiences and develop contemporary methods of celebrating the local community.

4.2.3 Trafford Local Studies received £5,000 of grant funding from TNA's Testbed Fund, to support innovative public engagement activities across the borough for HM the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. In July, Trafford served as the first host city for the Women's football EUROs, with Trafford Local Studies leading the borough's heritage programme which included 8 film interviews between current and former female football players, 20 oral history interviews; a digital exhibition on the Centre's website, an on-site exhibition, and public talks and events.

5. Future Priorities

5.1 Future Priorities for Archives+

- Archives+ partners will continue to work together, coming together particularly for resident engagement and events and exhibition.
- The Archives+ Exhibition area will benefit from a refresh due to Manchester City Council capital funding. This will make the equipment in the exhibition area sustainable for the next seven years. The refresh will also involve the development and rebranding of the film pods as 'Sound and Vision,' including NWFA material, the new British Film Institute Library product, some content from the Unlocking Our Sound Heritage and material from Manchester Voices. This work will be completed by May 2023.
- The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre (AIURC) and Education Trust's priority for the forthcoming year is to continue to deliver events, activities and access to Global Majority histories while providing ongoing support for community heritage projects through Coming in from the Cold. A key priority is to obtain further funding to enable the work of this project to continue beyond August 2023.

- Due to the Unlocking Our Sound Heritage project, the Greater Manchester County Record Office is now equipped to digitise sound recordings on a wide range of formats, raise income from engagement and digitisation projects, and start to share Greater Manchester's neglected and fragile sound recordings more widely online and using exhibition kiosks. We will use TNA's Network for Change funding to take forward the digitisation of Sound Archive material across Greater Manchester and the North West.
- The NWFA will continue to submit records for the BFI Heritage 2022, with the material becoming available on BFI Replay. The public offer at Central Library will be enhanced with the 'Sound and Vision' pods for which NWFA material is key and will include 3,000 new titles catalogued during lockdown.
- The Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society Helpdesk will continue to build on the success of 2022. A local and family history fair will be held in 2023, following 2022's successful event.
- Manchester Histories will use the histories and heritage hub at Central Library to deliver a series of workshops and informal social sessions exploring archives with people from marginalised communities or those facing mental health challenges, homelessness, or social isolation. It will host a variety of new exhibitions, such as Rooms of Our Own, Pankhurst Centre archive, telling the stories and voices of campaigners and project workers from the 1970s to 2014 and for International Mother Language Day in February 2023 the start of a doll's house installation about the home in Arabic, plus 11 comic art panels from other Cities of Literature.
- The Disabled People's Archive will continue detailed cataloguing of the collection., alongside digitisation, transcription and more public outreach and supporting Archives+ events.

5.2 Future Priorities for GMALSP

5.2.1 In January 2020, a workshop was held with all GM authorities to decide on the priorities for the 2020-23 GMALSP plan. The next strategic workshop will be held in February 2023, following which a 2023-2026 will be produced. Priorities for the next 12 months include:

- **Diversity and Inclusion and contemporary collecting.** Ensure we make our archives more representative of the diverse populations within Greater Manchester. Diversify our volunteer base and increase the diversity of audiences. Develop approaches to contemporary collecting, Work together on certain collections for example Local Authority records, Adoption and Care records.
- **Digital by Design.** We will continue to work with partners to digitise our collections and make them available online, through several authorities going live with Archives web catalogue and a GM Archives catalogue being produced.
- **Digital Preservation.** GMCRO is supporting each of the GMALSP authorities to decide on the most appropriate set of actions to benefit each authority, including preserving digital records in backed up server spaces.
- **Engagement, Advocacy and Events.** Ensure archives services use local, regional, national, and international commemorations, celebrations, and events to increase the profile of archives and increase audiences. This includes GM Festival of Libraries in June 2023. Communities and Local History month each May, Black History Month each October.
- **Learning.** Continue to work with schools and partners to ensure the archive collections are used as an inspiration for education, life-long learning developing new skills and creating a strong sense of place.
- **Income Generation.** Ensure a multi-stranded approach to raising income and providing sustainability.
- **Procedures, Policies and Raising Standards** – GMALSP work with each other to ensure high levels of customer service and preservation of archives, and authorities continued applications for The National Archives accreditation and re-accreditation.

- **Partnership.** We will continue to build capacity by working in partnership with the Archives+ partners, the Hidden museum network, the local universities, and BBC Archives

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress of Archives+ and the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership.