

## AGMA Statutory Functions Committee

Date: 2 October 2023

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

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

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### Purpose of Report:

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

### Recommendations:

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 appropriate.

### **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 nearly ten years later is one of the most popular libraries in the United Kingdom. GMCRO is a National Archives accredited Place of Deposit. That accreditation was awarded again in April 2023 following a thorough assessment, and the service was commended for its excellent facilities and its approach to engagement and partnership work.
- 1.3 The Archives+ partners are 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+ - nine 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 nine years since Central Library re-opened following significant transformation. In the last 12 months, over 1.32 million people visited the library, an increase of over 10% on the previous 12 months. Prior to Covid 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 (through educational visits) 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's currently number 10 visitor attraction on Tripadvisor. Central Library and Archives+ host and curate exhibitions that often bring Manchester and elements of its history, and its people, to life. Here are a couple of reviews that demonstrate this.

Tripadvisor June 2023

“A superb centre providing services to the citizens and visitors, the great Neo-Classical edifice was opened by King George V in 1934. ...It is tremendous within. A glamorous Reading Room with exquisite ornate features was full with studying and researchers....Over a number of storeys multitudes of volumes and collections are kept here in trust for the country.”

The following is a review from Google Dec 2022

“The architecture in/out is stunning, the facilities, the employees, the study room, and the kids spot is absolutely amazing. And obviously all the books you can possibly imagine. The best library I have ever been! ”

## 3.0 **Archives+ over the last 12 months**

- 3.1 This has been another very successful 12 months for the Archives+ partners individually and as a partnership. The partnership have worked together for several events and exhibitions, including Festival of Libraries 2023 and the exhibition celebrating the Queen that was joint between Manchester Archives and NWFA, plus the development of the Sound and Vision pods detailed below in 3.3.

### 3.2 Exhibitions

This has been a particularly rich year for Archives+ exhibitions, including Manchester Voices (analysing the accents of Greater Manchester), the various exhibitions in the Manchester Histories Hub, the Manchester Hip Hop Archive that was displayed in Spinningfields throughout August and September and the current Manchester Ship Canal exhibition. Curated by Martin Dodge from University of Manchester, the exhibition contains visually striking adverts created by commercial artists in the twentieth century to promote the Manchester Ship Canal and the Port of Manchester around the world.

### 3.3 Exhibition refresh area including Sound and Vision pods

An extensive refurbishment and refresh of the Archives+ area at Central Library has taken place this year. Using Manchester City Council capital funding much of the equipment has been replaced to ensure that the technology is fit for purpose for at least the next six years. The software that provides the content for the interactives has also been updated to enable content to be added more frequently. The film kiosks have been updated too. Now branded 'Sound and Vision' additional content can be accessed from each pod – including North West Film Archives, Sound archives, Manchester Voices, and the British Film Institute's BFI Replay website.



3.4 The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre (AIURC) and Education Trust has continued to experience increased demand for Anti-racism and Black/Global Majority History material and resources. The Centre continued to take in community led heritage project output collections from the heritage funded "Coming in from the Cold" project which was extended to March 2024. The last year also saw an increase in requests for Oral History training and project development support surpassing that of pre-pandemic levels demonstrating a thriving Global Majority Heritage sector across Greater Manchester.

In the last 12 months a full programme of events have included successfully partnering with Young Identity and KYSO youth organisations to co-deliver a "Carnival at 50" programme for Black History Month 2022. This was followed by the first Islamophobia awareness programme co-delivered with Muslim Writers North and featured workshops with poet Suhaiymah Mazroor Khan and a sold out vibrant event celebrating IWD 2023 in partnership with SAMOS CR a Latin American collective based in Manchester.

In June 2023, the Centre and Trust began the implementation of their new approach to community and public engagement that seeks to ensure Global Majority history and heritage is centred all year round and not just at certain calendar points of the year. It started with "Cultivating Compassion" which was launched in Refugee Week as the beginning of a year long conversation exploring how we can use our collections and resources to support formal and informal educators to encourage empathy driven and nuanced discourse with young people relating to refugeeism in the context of the increasingly hostile government and media narratives. This was followed with the launch of our South Asian Heritage Month programme for the year which will focus on exploring Sri Lankan diaspora history which is incredibly marginalised given the sizeable community we have across Greater Manchester, as well as working with young South Asian boys' groups to understand what safe spaces look like for them.



The Trust also built on the success of the report - "If nothing changes, nothing changes" published last year by presenting research findings at regional and national conferences. Furthermore, the Trust has been commissioned as Strategic Advisor on the Anti-Racist Wales national heritage support programme and has delivered several high profile commissions this year as a specialist advisor/consultant in the EDI and heritage sector.

3.5 The North West Film Archive has been busy with the final stages of the BFI Heritage 2022 project, submitting the last batches of metadata in May, bringing the total to 450 titles from NWFA available on BFI Replay. Three user toolkits have been produced for library staff nationally (Youth Culture through the Ages; Protest and Activism; and Liverpool '08: European Capital of Culture), highlighting NWFA content on Replay for educational and public learning sessions.

The new film scanners have enabled the team to begin a programme of digitisation for preservation, creating new 4K digital preservation masters from films affected with the vinegar syndrome.

Public access work in the year included screenings of local material in seven branch libraries across GM for Local and Community History Month in May, and a screening of BBC documentaries from the 'Long Live Our England' series to a sell-out audience at HOME Manchester – part of a joint project with the Yorkshire Film Archive called 'TV Time Machine'.

3.6 The Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society Helpdesk welcomed more than 3300 visitors in the last twelve months. Interest in the results of the 1921 Census Returns was sustained throughout the year, attracting many researchers from North America and Australia and New Zealand. Manchester Central Library continued to be 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. The support of Archives+ partners and the growing bond with a range of local and community groups ensured the continued success of the annual local and

family history fair, Discovering Family Lives, held for the third successive year in the spring. Collaborations with local groups continued with joint projects to preserve archives. The projects with the Seashell Trust and the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Society in respect of the Victoria Station War Memorial have been completed. Long term projects begun in the year included one to transcribe, scan and index the employment records in the custody of Manchester Museum of Transport, and another to digitise the Horwich Locomotive Works records.

3.7 The Manchester Histories Hub in the lower ground floor of Manchester Central Library, has been developing as a centre for heritage & wellbeing within the Archives+ partnership. It has hosted several Come & Chat workshops where people have had the opportunity to come together and chat and learn from one another about Greater Manchester's history and heritage using archives & collections. Workshop feedback from those taking part suggests the sessions have had a positive impact on their mental health, and new friendships have been formed combating social isolation and loneliness. The hub has also hosted several small exhibitions & events over the past year. This has included the Manchester Histories Salon, archives from the HiDDEN network, Rooms of Our Own, which celebrated the story of the women who saved the Pankhurst Centre and Manchester City of Literature, International Mother Language Day Exhibition, showcasing their international connection to the other UNESCO Cities of Literature and celebrating Manchester's creative work.

3.8 The Heritage Lottery Funded Unlocking the UK Sound Heritage ran from 2019-2022. One of the legacies of the project is the installation earlier this year of a listening desk in Manchester Central Library. The listening desk pictured below features recordings from the project, which can be played and mixed together into unique soundscapes. Some of the sound archives digitised through Unlocking Our Sound Heritage are now available in our Sound and Vision kiosks.



3.9 The Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People were successful in their bid to the Wellcome Trust in 2021, in partnership with Archives+, to catalogue, digitise and make accessible their Disabled People's Archive. The project continues and highlights of the collection are now available at:

<https://disabledpeoplesarchive.com/in-the-archive/>.

3.10 The Royal Northern College of Music (RNCM) has been awarded over £200,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a new archive project, Throwing Open the Concert Doors. As the digitisation partner on the project, Archives+ will digitise over 1,350 concert tapes, host volunteers and help to continue the training and awareness work around at-risk sound archives that Unlocking Our Sound Heritage started.

3.11 Archives+ has been awarded £99.5k from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop a new website for the Manchester Local Image Collection and digitise 10,000 more images using local volunteers. The project will employ a Project officer who will lead on website development, volunteer management, and bring together online for the first time all the library's digitised local photographs.

## **4.0 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. GMALSP is working towards submitting a consortium funding bid to purchase hardware and software that will provide the tools necessary to collect digital archives and further digital preservation across greater Manchester. We are currently creating and implementing a process to collect Council created records across Greater Manchester. Manchester Archives are working on a project to migrate the Old Town Hall Photographers Images currently saved on CDs and collecting the relevant metadata. These will then be appraised, catalogued, and made available online.

#### **4.1.2 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 for all GM Archives services.

#### **4.1.3 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, four GM Authorities are live or will be soon with their Archives catalogues. It is possible more authorities will follow in 2024. 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.

- 4.2 Here are a few examples of great developments in individual authority's archives services:
- 4.2.1 Trafford Local Studies & Archive's 75<sup>th</sup> Windrush anniversary celebrations included a commemorative blue plaque unveiling for legendary calypso singer Lord Kitchener (real name Aldwyn Roberts) at his former residence in Stretford, the event included several speakers and a special steel pan performance. The day also included a Caribbean buffet and special author talk by Lord Kitchener fictional biographer and 2022 TS Eliot poetry prize winner Dr Anthony Joseph in Old Trafford. A special exhibition featuring items on loan from the BBC Film Archives, Lancashire County Cricket Club, National Jazz Archives, and personal collections was on display at the Local Studies centre, with an online exhibition featuring articles about the history of Windrush.
- 4.2.2 Earlier this year Touchstones Rochdale was successful in its bid for Arts Council England NPO funding and was also successful in securing money for a capital development project. The Local Studies centre was the first part of the building to close and over a course of eight weeks the centre was packed up and relocated to its temporary home at the former Sparthbottoms Community Centre. The service aims to the public in October, welcoming back existing customers and attracting new ones.
- 4.2.3 Wigan & Leigh's state-of-the-art archive facilities opened in June 2021 at the newly renovated Grade II listed Leigh Town Hall., Archives: Wigan & Leigh has almost completed a two-year lottery-funded programme of community engagement targeting previously under-represented audiences, in which thousands of residents have participated. It included family fun days, child-friendly tours for families, Key Stage 2 school sessions, a writing competition for under 18s, placements for Wigan & Leigh College students, and English lessons for Leigh-based asylum seekers that are based on our 1914 *Belgian Refugees Committee* archives. Their volunteer team won a 'highly commended' award in the 'Championing the Community' category of the BeWigan Awards 2022.

- 4.2.4 Over the last 12 months, Oldham Local Studies and Archives has progressed its barcoding and CALM documentation work in preparation for relocating the collections to a new repository in 2025. Items from the collection were displayed in Gallery Oldham's Sam Fitton exhibition 'Finding the Funny' and in the Oldham Stories gallery in sections about Dame Marjory Lees and Oldham Rugby League Football Club. A new archives officer joined the service in June 2023. In July 2023, the service received a Records at Risk grant from TNA to document and preserve digital archives from the Oldham Coliseum collection. Recruitment to the Digital Assistant post will start in the new year.
- 4.2.5 Bolton Archives & Local Studies Service was re-accredited as a National Archives place of Deposit in November 2022. Bolton Central Library is currently undergoing a major refurbishment. The Bolton History Centre has continued to operate a full service in the temporary library space and is due to reopen with the library in early 2024.
- 4.3 The GMCRO is currently in the process of purchasing the Assheton collection. This collection of historical importance has long been deposited with us, but the owner of the collection wanted to take the collection back to sell it. We have managed to raise £100k to purchase it and to engage customers with it. The funding has been secured from National Lottery Heritage Fund, V&A Purchase Fund, Friends of National Libraries, and the Manchester Central Library Development Trust. It is the oldest Greater Manchester Archives collection, including material from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century and relates to the Assheton family of Middleton.

## **5.0 Future Priorities**

### **5.1 Future Priorities for Archives+**

- Archives+ partners will continue to work together, coming together particularly for resident engagements, events, and exhibitions.

- 2024 marks several anniversaries in the Archives+ partnership. It is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the re-opening of Manchester Central Library and therefore the Archives+ partnership. It is the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original opening of Central Library in its current location. It is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People. The Archives+ partners will work together to ensure the anniversaries are celebrated and the power of archives is promoted. This will include at least one major event at Manchester Central Library.
- The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre (AIURC) will continue ongoing support for community heritage projects through Coming in from the Cold which is funded until March 2024. The Centre will continue the new approach to community and public engagement that seeks to ensure Global Majority history and heritage is centred all year round and not just at certain calendar points of the year.
- Due to the previous 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. This will include the RNCM digitisation project mentioned in section 3.8.
- NWFA is embarking on two major projects across the year, thanks to BFI National Lottery Screen Heritage funding. The first, due to last three years, will allow NWFA to undertake a full audit of current holdings, identifying gaps in the collection with respect to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and laying the groundwork for targeted collection development and audience facing activities to address them. The second project, running over the next 12 months, is designed to improve accessibility to moving image heritage, working directly with disabled and neuro-diverse people, and increasing fully accessible content for all users. Both projects will include the recruitment of project staff.

- 2024 will be the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society and plans will include celebratory events throughout the year, whilst supporting similar anniversaries of our partners. The Helpdesk service will continue to serve the Manchester public as well as overseas visitors, providing guidance and advice to family historians worldwide. The project to digitise the 100,000 employment records held by the Transport Museum will be the cornerstone of the society's project programme.
- Manchester Histories will continue to 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. Manchester Histories and partners are now working alongside a Research Associate from the University of Manchester to gather evidence on how heritage activity can improve well-being and to create a heritage toolkit that can be used in community & care settings across GM.
- 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 A workshop was held with all GM authorities in February 2023 to decide on the priorities for the 2023-26. The priorities for the next 12 months include the items below. The action plan is included as appendix 1:

- **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, and updating documentation regarding digital preservation.

- **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.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

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

## Appendix 1: GMALSP Action Plan 2023-26

Action no.	Workstream Priority	Action	Who	Status
1	Contemporary collecting / Digital	Produce guidance / process for collecting Council Records	MO / RH	
2	Contemporary collecting / Digital	Implement the process for collecting Council Records	ALL	
3	Digital	Use the Digital Preservation server space set up by Manchester	MO / ALL	
4	Digital	Draft bid to TNA Resilience Fund to create digital server space to help with digital preservation in each authority	MO	
5	Contemporary collecting / Digital	Progress TNA Pilot project to transfer relevant records from NHS to Places of Deposit in GM	DG / HK / MO / PC / TNA rep – MG	
6	Contemporary collecting / Digital	Take forward Newspaper audit and project, and digitisation proposal from Ancestry/newspapers.com	PC / MW / AC / JB / DM / RH	
7	Diversity in workforce	TNA apprentices project. Support TNA with bid, and host 2 apprentices if successful	PC / HK / JH	Bid unsuccessful. Work with TNA to evaluate and re-submit if possible

8	Events and Advocacy / Contemporary collecting / Digital	Identify bid writing skills across the consortium and develop a bid writing 'team'	PC / JW	
9	Events and Advocacy / Contemporary collecting / Digital	Submit joint bids and maximise income when opportunities arise – e.g. TNA Resilience Grant	ALL	
10	Events and advocacy	<p>Joint celebrations – linking with partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Manchester Histories 24 (celebration of universities)</li> <li>○ BBC Archives</li> <li>○ Ongoing Libraries / Museums events</li> <li>○ Local and Communities History Month</li> <li>○ LGA 1974</li> </ul>	PC / DG / JH / DM	