

AGMA STATUTORY FUNCTIONS COMMITTEE

Date: 18 September 2020

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
Sheena Macfarlane, Head of Cultural Services, Oldham 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.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

The following is a list of the background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100D (1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents, which would disclose exempt or confidential information as identified by that Act.

None.

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 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 temporarily the Manchester Jewish Museum.
- 1.4 In 2012 a feasibility study commissioned by AGMA recommended the creation of a formal Partnership to provide an overarching strategy and development plan for the local authority archive and local studies services in Greater Manchester. There are significant potential benefits to be gained in terms of collaborating on service improvement and future sustainability.
- 1.5 At the Statutory Functions Committee in June 2012, the Committee agreed to provide governance to enable the Partnership to be set up. It also agreed to create an officer group to lead the work of the Partnership and report to the AGMA Statutory Functions Committee. GMCRO provides strategic leadership to the partnership. The Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership was formed, as a result and consists of representatives of each of the 10 GM authorities.
- 1.6 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+ - six 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
- + Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre (The University of Manchester)
- + Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society.

The Partnership received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund from 2013 to 2017.

+ Manchester Jewish Museum have temporarily re-located to Central Library in 2019 and are therefore also temporary members of the Archives+ partnership, until they move back to the transformed Museum in 2021

2.2 Archives + for everyone

Archives+ has pushed the boundaries of what archive services can do and who they engage with. Each partner has their own knowledge and skills to make us better together.

It is now six years since Central Library re-opened following significant transformation. In 2019, over 2 million people visited the library, 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 project, each Archives+ partner reached only 15,000 people annually. The family history helpdesk run by the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society helped approximately 2,000 people in the first 6 months of this report.

Audience development is about more than numbers through the door. Through the Activity Programme the project has reached a far wider audience than similar activity undertaken previously:

- + The age of people engaged in the Archives+ activity programme is far wider and more evenly spread.
- + 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 Greater Manchester County Record Office.
- + The numbers of families and young people engaging with archives has increased significantly.

2.2 **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

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

"This has become my favourite place in Manchester." Customer

"This is what Libraries should be like. No shush we're reading as a party of Primary school pupils came with their packed lunches. It was easy for me to joinI was soon delving into my family history alongside a volunteer. There are banks of computers along with books and archives. A top class facility befitting the splendid Victorian Architecture. Modern Manchester, up to date with a glance back at our history. Tripadvisor review Dec 2019

"The Central Library is an iconic building in the heart of Manchester City Centre. It is a fascinating place to visit with a wonderful archive." Tripadvisor

3.0 **Archives+ and GMALSP over the last 12 months**

The 12 months since the last report in September 2019, has been in two distinct parts. Pre-Covid from September 2019-Mar 2020, and dealing with the results of the Covid pandemic, since then.

3.1 **September 2019 – March 2020**

This was a great 6 months for **Archives+**.

Over 2 million people visited Central library, in 2019 making it the most public visited library in the country.

The exhibition area of Archives+ housed several exhibitions. The exhibitions commemorating 200 years since the Peterloo Massacre proved extremely popular from May to Autumn 2019. In December an exhibition was created to celebrate 100 years since the Addison Act. The Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919 effectively launched the building of Council housing estates in this country. The exhibition moved from Manchester Central Library to Wythenshawe Forum Library in early 2020.

In 2018, The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre (The University of Manchester) was awarded **£357,000** from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Coming in from the Cold project from 2018 to 2021. The project is progressing well, supporting local community groups who have been awarded funding from the HLF, develop their archives. Manchester Libraries and Archives has been 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, which runs from 2019 to 2022, is now fully underway with the three staff beginning in post in February 2019. We are digitally preserving and making available thousands of at risk sound recordings, many of which are part of the North West Sound Archives held in Manchester Central Library. Collections of sound archives held across Greater Manchester and the North West are incorporated within this project. Many of these recordings are oral

histories, providing a fascinating insight into the lives of residents of Manchester and the North West, increasing awareness and pride in our communities. We will improve access by making it easier for people to find and listen to audio archives, engage the public in audio archives through events and activities and provide opportunities for residents to volunteer as part of the project. As part of this project, we will work in partnership with the MMU's Manchester Voices project which has recently been awarded £700,000 by the Arts & Humanities Research Council.

Manchester Jewish Museum have received £2.9 million to transform their museum in Cheetham Hill. Since July 2019 and until 2021 the Jewish Museum is located within Central Library. The 'Wandering Museum' is housed within Central Library, in City Library, and enables visitors to see highlights of their collection. The museum received higher numbers of visits (from September 2019 to July 2020) than at its permanent home. The majority of visitors have little previous knowledge of the museum. Most have limited understanding of Jewish faith, history and culture - so being in the library is significantly increasing awareness of the museum. The majority of visitors are 'young adults', which is an age group that traditionally, the museum struggles to attract.

We have been working with Manchester Art Gallery and the University of Manchester on the Manchester Together Archive. This project (supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund) aims to develop a digital archiving platform to support the digitisation, development and interpretation of more than 10,000 items that were left in the spontaneous memorials in St Ann's Square and elsewhere in Manchester after the Arena attack on 22nd May 2017.

This was a great 6 months for the **Greater Manchester and Local Studies Partnership** Action Plan.

GMALSP has continued to work effectively together, for the benefit of all 10 GM authorities. The GMALSP action plan 2017-20 was completed and a workshop was held in January 2020 to agree future priorities for the 2020-23 plan. Highlights of work from Sep 2019-Mar 20 include:

Artivists:GM

16th August marked 200 years since the Peterloo Massacre. Commemorations included the Artivists:GM project which was funded by GMCA: Great Place and co-ordinated by Manchester Histories. Each authority selected some materials from their archives that related to Peterloo, or one of its themes 'Freedom of Speech, Protest, Democracy'. Manchester Histories commissioned an artist for each authority (each authority's artist receiving £1k from Great Place) who created some, inspired by the archive material. The art forms are varied, including live performance, visual, interactive and digital. A sharing event was held on 26th September, which showcased the huge variety of work. GMALSP practitioners are going to use the learning from the project, when commissioning artists in the future, to bring their collections alive.

Digital Preservation

GMCRO created a Digital Preservation Archivist post to support this area of work in July 2020. The Digital Preservation Archivist is supporting all GMALSP members to ensure they are

approaching digital preservation in an effective manner.

3.2 **March 2020 – September 2020**

On 23rd March Manchester Central Library closed due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Therefore there was no physical Archives+ service until Manchester Central Library reopened on 20th August.

All GMALSP archives services also closed in March 2020. Some have reopened, with others having plans to reopen at various points over the next couple of months.

Even though services were physically closed, Archives+ and GMALSP continued to operate, and in some ways were more important than ever.

Virtual enquiry service

All Archives+ partners and most GMALSP members continued to offer a virtual enquiry service. This provided continued access to important material held throughout the various archives.

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

All Archives+ partners put out calls for collecting of Covid-19 stories of people's lives during lockdown. As lockdown will be in place for some time in some form, this will be a long term exercise.

NWFA have asked for films and have received some extremely interesting videos. This is a developing area for NWFA and will be a useful way to develop processes around born digital material.

AIU RRRRC are focusing on the Covid stories of BAME people and have put a huge amount of work in to developing ethical ways to do this. Their work takes into consideration the disproportionate impact of Covid on BAME communities. AIU RRRRC have recently been awarded £40,000 from the Resourcing Racial Justice Fund to further develop this archive. Manchester Libraries and Archives have been focusing on the city's response to Covid and the impact felt by the council and community. This work has included a lot of work on born digital records such as staff emails and capturing websites.

Many of the GMALSP Partners are also collecting stories around Covid. Trafford have worked with schools. Tameside Archives have worked with an artist. Stockport and Wigan have been collecting material from residents and their respective Councils. The GMALSP authorities have been supported in this work by the Digital Preservation officer providing training in digital preservation, for example capturing emails and websites.

Black Lives Matter

The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre and Educational Trust have provided support to organisations across the country as the profile of race discrimination have increased over the last few months.

This has ever intensified the need for each GMALSP's archives to be able to tell the story of its BAME residents and communities

GM Lives Replacement

GM Lives, which is the web portal for GM Archives, is not fit for purpose, therefore we need an alternative solution to showcase GM Archives in a much more effective, customer focused way.

Significant progress has been made with this. Using the Library Management System contract, 3 GM Authorities have now migrated their Archives data. Trafford and Manchester have joined Stockport on the system. It is likely more authorities will follow. A web front end will soon be developed to provide access to a joint catalogue/portal to all authorities archives that are on Spydus. This will be funded by the New Burdens funding received by GMCRO. This funding is awarded for the transfer of the public records from across Greater Manchester to GMCRO on behalf of services which are not approved Places of Deposit.

Recovery and Reopening

Archives+ within Manchester Central Library reopened to the public on 20th August 2020. 365 visitors used the library on its first day re-opened. Many of those used the Archives service, with microfilm machines busy and several visitors viewing archive material in the search room.

The library was opened in a manner to ensure the safety of staff and customers. Each authority is reopening its own service in a timetable that suits the local needs of their authority. GMCRO have provided advice and guidance to GMALSP members including advice on quarantining and conservation from the Conservation Officer.

4.0 Future Priorities

4.1 In January 2020, a workshop was held with all GM authorities to decide on the priorities for the 2020-23 GMALSP plan. The National Archives presented at this workshop. The following is a summary of the priorities agreed at this workshop, plus the priority for Archives+ and our post-Covid recovery priorities:

- **Reopen our physical archive services.** Providing full access to archives for our residents and researchers and supporting the recovery of the region
- **Collection of Covid Archives.** All partners to continue to collect stories and make these available in an effective manner.
- **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, using some of the techniques used as part of the Covid stories collecting.

- **Digital by Design.** We will continue to work with partners to digitise our collections and make them available online, through GM Lives replacement.
- **Digital Preservation.** GMCRO is supporting each of the GMALSP authorities to decide on the most appropriate set of actions to benefit each authority's archives collections, and our customers.
- **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
- **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. Do this virtually and physically when possible.
- **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
- **Partnership.** We will continue to build capacity by working in partnership with the Archives+ partners and the local universities
- **Unlocking the UK Sound Heritage project.** This project will continue to digitise 'at-risk' sound recordings across GM and the North West and begin to make some of these available to customers.
- **Coming in from the Cold Project.** The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre will continue to deliver this project and support community groups across GM.
- **Manchester Jewish Museum.** Continue to grow sustainable partnerships with other Archives+ partners that will prove beneficial when the Museum moves back to its permanent home in Spring 2021
- **The Archives+ exhibition area** in Central Library requires refreshing as it has been in place for over five years. Capital funding has been secured from Manchester City Council to achieve this.

6.0 Recommendation

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