Living Knowledge

The British Library 2015–2023

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A note on Reporting and Governance

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

Cover photo by Tony Antoniou

Foreword

Baroness Blackstone, Chairman

In 2023 the British Library will celebrate fifty years as the national library of the United Kingdom. This publication sets out our vision for the kind of organisation we want to be by the time we reach that milestone. It describes a Library that will have transformed itself in response to the profound changes in technology, research and information services which were outlined at the beginning of this decade in our *2020 Vision*, while remaining true to the Library's founding principles and purposes.

As we have been preparing *Living Knowledge* in recent months, we have considered what it means to be a national library in a digital age and what the British Library's role is as one of the UK's great public assets.

The British Library has a duty to preserve, store and make available content of all kinds in digital and physical formats. We know of course that there is still more to do to improve access to knowledge and cultural opportunities across the whole of the UK. We are committed to playing our part to address this gap.

This publication sets out the British Library's ambitions for growth, innovation and development over the next eight years and beyond. It is based on six statements of purpose; explaining how our public funding supports research, culture, education and economic prosperity, for the benefit not just of the UK but of users and partners around the world.

We are indebted to those who support the British Library through financial or other means, and to the thousands of people who use our Reading Rooms, public spaces and online services every day. The title *Living Knowledge* reflects the constant growth in the British Library's collections, our contribution to the knowledge economy, and our staff's commitment to make our intellectual heritage accessible to everyone, for research, inspiration and enjoyment.

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

View from inside the King's Library at St Pancras. Photo by Tony Antoniou

Introduction

Roly Keating, Chief Executive

Five years ago, the publication of *2020 Vision* – and its accompanying strategy plan for 2011–2015, *Growing Knowledge* – was an influential and important moment in the evolution of the British Library. I was working in broadcasting at the time, and remember being struck by its acute analysis of the great digital shift that was transforming my own industry. The very fact of my presence in this role now is an indication of how sharp *2020 Vision* was in its portrait of a technology revolution that blurs historic boundaries between sectors, institutions and professions.

It's one of many tributes due to my predecessor Dame Lynne Brindley that the prospectus set out in *Growing Knowledge* has been delivered so effectively in the past few years. Since joining the Library in 2012 I have had the privilege of overseeing delivery of a succession of major projects: the long-awaited move to Legal Deposit collecting of born-digital UK content, including the web; the epic programme to save the national newspaper collection and make it accessible in new ways; the partnership with the Qatar Foundation to launch a digital portal of primary sources on Gulf history and Arabic science. None of these would have been possible without the clarity and direction of the Library's long-term vision.

As we refresh and expand that vision now, we have set our sights a few years further into the next decade. At first sight the choice of 2023 as a planning horizon may seem a little arbitrary, but anniversaries can sometimes have real meaning, and in this case a focus on our 50th birthday as an active institution serves, among other things, as a reminder that among the family of great institutions the British Library is still surprisingly young: a child of the 1970s, a near-contemporary of Microsoft and Apple, a dynamic organisation still in some ways shaping its identity from the multiple collections and institutions that came together to form it.

The Library was born out of a courageous post-war vision to create a new kind of national institution, directly in the service of research and innovation. At its heart were and are the matchless collections inherited from the Library of the British Museum. But the genius of the Library's founders was to combine that Enlightenment heritage with a determination to keep pace with science and research in all its forms, supporting and underpinning the whole ecology of information services in the UK.

That is why it was born with its distinctive mix of locations in the North and South of England: in Yorkshire, the National Lending Library for Science and Technology, now the Library's document supply service, at Boston Spa in the geographical centre of the UK – truly the Library at the heart of the system; and in London, Colin St John Wilson's remarkable, hard-won, visionary building, in a location that was questioned by early commentators but which is now quite literally at the centre of the greatest and fastest-growing concentration of research, cultural and information organisations anywhere in Europe, the Knowledge Quarter of St Pancras, Bloomsbury, Euston and King's Cross.

If this fusion of science and culture, of old and new, of high-level research and popular engagement, was in some ways ahead of its time, that time has surely come now. The UK, in common with many developed and developing nations, is shaping an industrial strategy that puts investment in knowledge, innovation and creativity at the heart of its recipe for long-term, deep-rooted economic growth. Competitive success in such a world depends upon the freest possible flow of ideas, inspiration and information, and libraries – not just this one, but the whole, inter-connecting system across the UK, public and academic – are the vital enabler of that.

This short publication lays out the key strategic priorities for the British Library on its journey to its 50th anniversary and beyond, and sets them in a framework of six purposes which explain, as simply and clearly as we can, the enduring ways in which the public funding we receive helps to deliver tangible public value – in custodianship, research, business, culture, learning and international partnership.

Even more perhaps than *Growing Knowledge*, what follows is an ambitious prospectus for growth and continued development, driven by a vision of the British Library in 2023 as the most open, creative and innovative institution of its kind in the world. These are times of historic disruption in the whole global system of information and publication, and it seems right that the great knowledge institutions – with their historic remit to think and act with a view far into the future – should play a full part in shaping the changes that lie ahead.

Above: Roly Keating speaking at the Knowledge Quarter launch at the British Library, 4 December 2014; Right: Aerial photographs of the British Library sites at St Pancras in London and Boston Spa in Yorkshire

The changing context

2020 Vision painted a vivid picture of what the external environment might look like at the end of the current decade. Four big themes emerged: of constant and rapid change in technology; of increasing expectations from information users and more diverse sources of provision; of a more collaborative, less linear approach to learning and scholarly communications; and of a world in which knowledge institutions will need to reinvent and reposition themselves to create efficiency and demonstrate their value.

Five years on, all these trends continue: the pace of technology change has not let up; the expectations of digital service quality among researchers and information users have continued to grow; collaborative research models are becoming increasingly common. But the landscape is complex: our observation of the sectors we work in – research, higher education, culture, information services – has identified a number of other trends that have matured since *2020 Vision* and *Growing Knowledge* were published, and which in different ways will influence our priorities for the future:

- First, it is now clear that we are living through a revolution in the creation, analysis and exploitation of **data** in all its forms, from the vast scientific and social datasets typically badged as 'big data' to the innovations already being derived from analysing digitised cultural content in the humanities. We are only just beginning to appreciate the distinctive and dynamic roles that libraries have to play in this revolution: as curators of vast and rapidly growing collections of digitised historic items and born-digital content; as creators and analysers of new datasets; as experts in setting standards, improving data and enabling links in a complex digital landscape; and as centres for cross-disciplinary working and business innovation.

  In December 2014 it was announced that the British Library at St Pancras had been selected as the location for the headquarters of the Alan Turing Institute, a major new research centre for data science backed by £42 million of public investment.

- At the same time, the idea of **openness**, in multiple ways, is having a profound effect on the landscape of information services and cultural provision. The Open Data movement has been influential in the unlocking of publicly-held information for analysis and re-use by researchers, businesses and the public. In academic research, the scientific community is working through the complex process of making research data discoverable and accessible. Open Access to research publications has developed faster and more extensively than many envisaged, with growing volumes of publicly funded research made available openly on the web, and a vast range of journal content made freely available on the premises of public libraries via the *Access to Research* pilot.

  This move to greater openness has a social and ethical dimension too, with growing consensus on the need for arts and cultural institutions to make their collections and activities open and accessible to everyone across the UK, whatever their social background or geographical location.

- Related to this is a growing interest in, and understanding of, the importance of **creativity and culture** as contributors to economic growth and wellbeing. Major recent programmes of study into the idea of cultural value – supported by, among others, the University of Warwick and the Arts & Humanities Research Council – have explored the systemic links between the provision of arts and culture and the wider health of society and the economy.

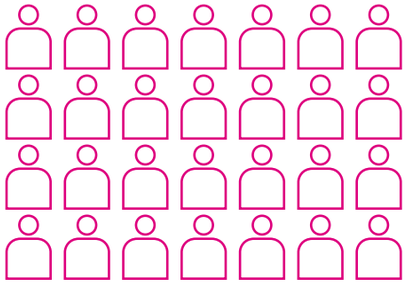
  There is a growing body of evidence to indicate the value of libraries in this context. An economic evaluation by Oxford Economics published in 2013 found that the British Library delivers an economic value of £5 for every £1 invested and generates a net economic value of £419m for its users and UK society as a whole. The recent Sieghart Independent Library Report for England highlights the value of public libraries to local communities.

Left: *Circles of Life*, 2014 data visualisation by Martin Krzywinski commissioned by British Library to illustrate genetic similarities between humans and other animals; Right: *Nix* by student team Gothulus Rift from University of South Wales, winners of the 2014 *Off the Map* competition to create virtual environments derived from British Library collections. Based on the image of Fonthill Abbey (far right) by John Rutter, 1823 (BL 191.e.6–81)

- A further insight emerging from that report, which our own analysis confirms, is that at a time when the provision of knowledge and culture is increasingly digital and screen-based, the value and importance of high-quality **physical spaces and experiences** is growing, not diminishing. We have seen a 10% increase in visits to our St Pancras building in the past 12 months alone.

  The more screen-based our lives, it seems, the greater the perceived value of real human encounters and physical artefacts: activity in each realm feeds interest in the other. For libraries in general, and the British Library in particular, this means that far from there being a simple cost-saving 'switch-out' from physical estates to online services, increasing investment is certain to be needed in both realms: alongside our still-expanding physical collections and on-site services, the costs of storing, preserving and making accessible the nation's rapidly growing digital collection will continue to increase.

The British Library receives over 1.6 million onsite visits per year



- Finally, the past five years have seen continued and significant challenges to the budgets and operating models of libraries in general, and **public libraries** in particular, with cuts at local authority level affecting services across the UK. This period has also been one of innovation and refreshment in the relationship between the British Library and the public library system, with new partnerships to deliver business advice services and cultural programming initiatives, and the incorporation into the Library in 2013 of the Public Lending Right, which provides payment to authors in return for loans of their work from public libraries. At a time of continuing change for libraries in both technology and operating models, our challenge is to find new ways for the British Library to play its traditional supporting role at the centre of the library system as a whole, across the public and academic sectors.

Growing Knowledge predicted correctly that by 2014 the British Library's Grant in Aid would be at its lowest level in real terms since the Library's inception. We now have a clear understanding of the likely climate for public funding over the next strategy period, and that further hard decisions about investment priorities lie ahead. We do not underestimate the scale of this challenge; but we face it, along with the other challenges identified above, with confidence in the case we can make to the public, Government, philanthropic donors and potential commercial partners for the value we build for the UK and the importance of the six purposes that guide us.

Photo by Tony Antoniou

The British Library's purposes

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

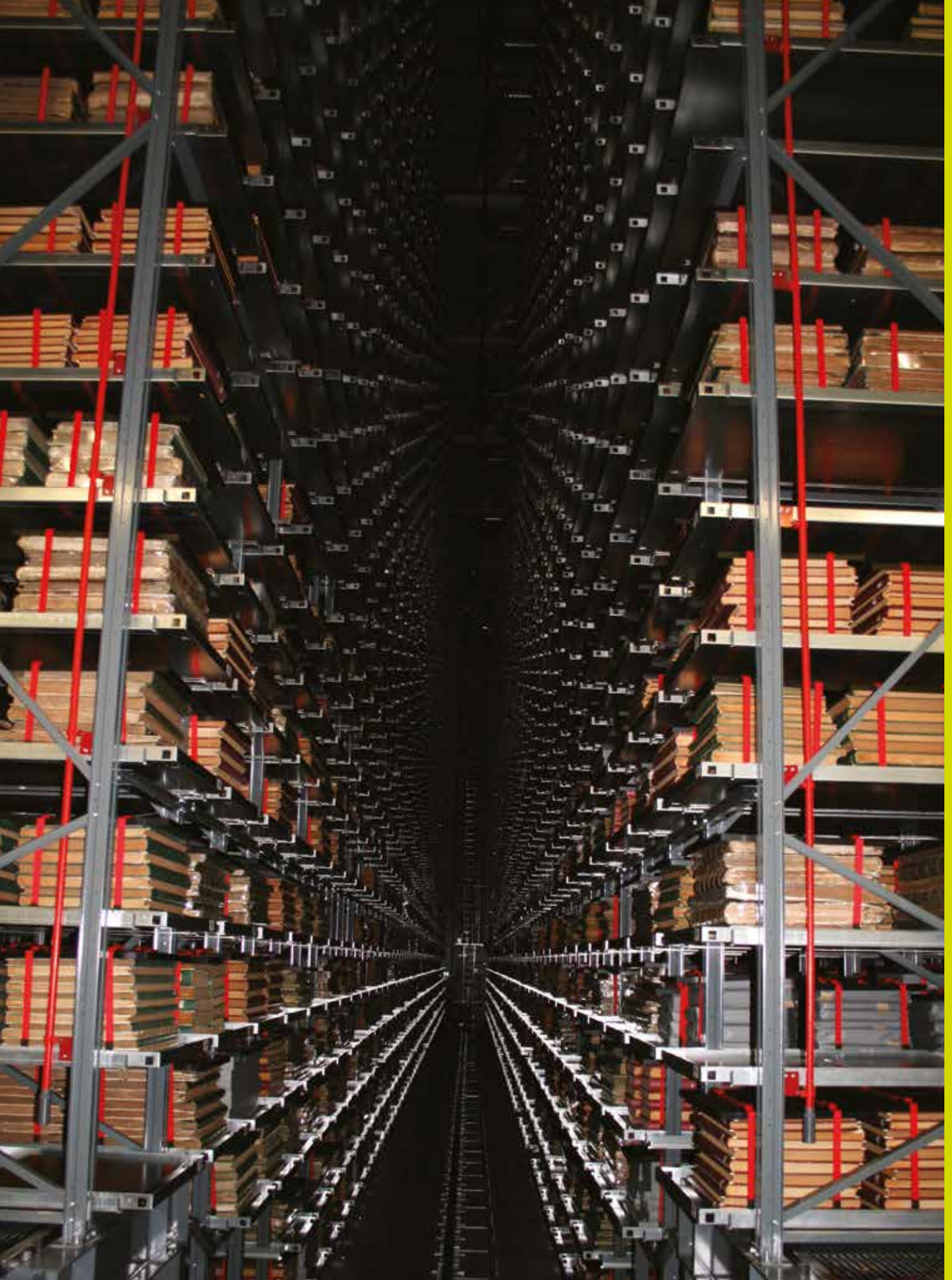
2 Research
We support and stimulate research of all kinds

3 Business
We help businesses to innovate and grow

4 Culture
We engage everyone with memorable cultural experiences

5 Learning
We inspire young people and learners of all ages

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



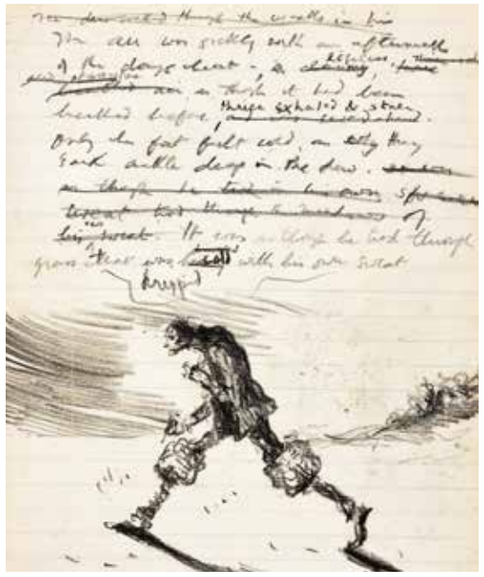
Custodianship

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

The National Newspaper Building in Boston Spa, home to over 750 million newspaper pages. Photo by Katie Betts

Custodianship

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



Above top: Psalter of Henry VI *c.*1405 (British Library, Cotton Domitian A. xvii, f. 50); Above: Page from Mervyn Peake's *Titus* notebooks; Right: Vinyl collection. Photo by Tony Antoniou

This is our first and core purpose, the one on which all the others depend. Our founding Act exhorts us to be 'comprehensive', and unlike a museum collection, ours grows all the time, by very large volumes: each month, by some 0.8 kilometres of new physical items, and 6.8 new terabytes of digital content. Exact assessments of the current scale of the collection are hard to make: varying definitions of the word 'item' yield varying estimates of between 150 million and 200 million items, including books, journals, newspapers, patents, maps, prints, manuscripts, stamps, photographs, sound recordings, digital publications of all kinds and over 2 billion pages of UK web content. Everything we do at the Library is underpinned by our responsibilities as custodians of this extraordinary resource, guaranteeing access to it for future generations.

For these reasons, the fulfilment of this purpose is, and is set to remain, the single biggest claim on our resources. We depend upon, and nurture, a wide range of specialist skills: in ingest, cataloguing, metadata, preservation and conservation (both physical and digital), and the scholarly and curatorial expertise needed to understand, interpret and develop the diverse and complex collections we hold, increasingly deploying techniques of digital scholarship and conservation of a sophistication unthinkable even a decade ago. In many of these fields we have a *de facto* professional leadership role for the sector as a whole.

The years ahead are set to bring new challenges. If the last decade was dominated by our programme to save and transform the national newspaper collection, the next great preservation challenge will be our **audio and recorded music** collections. The British Library's sound collection is growing by 4,000 recordings every month. Of the 42 different physical formats which hold our 6.5 million audio items, many will be unreadable within about fifteen years through technical obsolescence, and unless action is taken, many precious recordings will be lost for ever. Our clear and urgent goal is to digitise to preserve as much as possible of the nation's rare and unique sound recordings, not just those in our collections but also key items from partner collections across the UK. In so doing, we aim to raise understanding, useage and public enjoyment of audio heritage more generally.

Another partnership – with the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales and the Libraries of the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Trinity College Dublin – lies at the heart of our single greatest endeavour in digital custodianship, the comprehensive collecting under Legal Deposit of the UK and Ireland's output of **born-digital content**, including the archiving of the entire UK web. Begun in April 2013, we are at the earliest stages of a journey that is set, over time, to transform what it means to be a national memory institution. Our challenges for the next phase of the project are to develop the scale and accessibility of the collection, and to ensure a proper level of investment in its future storage and preservation.

Technology is also transforming our custodianship of physical collections. In the past ten years, two major new facilities have been built at our Yorkshire base in Boston Spa, which store – and make easily retrievable – vast parts of our collections at the highest possible levels of efficiency. Having previously developed successful partnerships in collection management such as the UK Research Reserve with university libraries, we now believe that as well as continuing our long-standing work with higher-education partners, there are further significant efficiencies and economies of scale to be achieved at national scale, by investing in Boston Spa as a **shared service centre** for the ingest, storage, access and digitisation of print collections from cultural and public sector organisations across the UK.

Our priorities for 2015–2023 to support our Custodianship purpose are to:

- Address the growing preservation and access challenges for our historic audio and recorded music collections
- Work with our UK Non-Print Legal Deposit partners to develop the national collection of born-digital content and ensure its long-term preservation
- Develop our collection management capacity at Boston Spa in Yorkshire to offer shared services that help deliver efficiencies for other public organisations.

Research

We support and stimulate research of all kinds

Researchers using the British Library's public spaces, 2014. Photo by Tony Antoniou

Research

We support and stimulate research of all kinds

25 million images
have been released by the British Library under open licence terms since 2012. Open licences allow copyright expired material to be reused for any purpose

Above: *Crossroads of Curiosity* by artist David Normal, who used images from the British Library's Flickr Commons collection of over 1 million 19th century book illustrations as the basis of his installation at the 2014 Burning Man Festival in Nevada, USA; Right: The Newsroom at St Pancras

A strong research base is vital to a healthy economy, and since its foundation the British Library has occupied a central position in the UK's infrastructure of research and innovation. In fulfilling our purpose as the national research library we contribute directly to the innovation that feeds economic growth, putting our collections, expertise and spaces at the service of anyone who wants to do research.

Our goal is to support the active creation of new knowledge in any field of human enquiry, across the sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities, as well as cross-disciplinary research that defies traditional boundaries. We believe that innovation can come from any source, and are as committed to the needs of citizen researchers and private individuals as we are to those of academics and career researchers.

Between now and 2023 we will evolve our spaces and services to keep pace with the **changing needs of researchers**. While protecting the unique spaces that our Reading Rooms offer and which provide an ideal environment for many, we will facilitate new ways of working. Just as many university libraries have transformed their spaces over the past five years, with new environments for collaborative or informal working, so we have begun to create new generations of research spaces such as the multimedia Newsroom in St Pancras. As demand grows, we will open up more varied study environments and ensure that our on-site services meet our users' need for the widest possible range of content made easily and instantly available.

These changing researcher needs are felt most strongly in the digital space, and we will continue to develop the quality, simplicity and use-value of our **online services**. The imminent re-brand of our document supply service as British Library On Demand marks the beginning of a programme of change whose ultimate goal will be to unify all the Library's online provision of content and information in a single, simple service proposition: 'content from the British Library and its partners direct to your screen.'

Also set to evolve in the decade ahead are the ways in which libraries support the research community, across all disciplines. By the end of the next strategy period we intend that our engagement with research excellence in the UK will increasingly include active participation in the research process, harnessing the power of the **data analytics** revolution that is enabling researchers to use our digital collections at scale. This will mean building on the success of projects such as the Mellon Foundation-funded BL Labs, which stimulates innovative use of our digitised collections, and also opening new collaborative avenues through major partnerships such as the Alan Turing Institute.

Underpinning this ambition is the Library's own capacity and strong track record in research and scholarly innovation as an **independent research organisation**. This is an aspect of our work we intend to develop even further in the years ahead, in close partnership with others: the stronger we are in our own research skills, the more effective we believe we will be in supporting UK research as a whole.

Our priorities for 2015–2023 to support our Research purpose are to:

- Ensure that the Library's on-site facilities and Reading Room services keep pace with the changing needs of researchers
- Develop our remote access services to become a trusted and indispensable resource for fact finding, research and analysis for researchers everywhere
- Leverage the Library's collections and expertise to drive innovation in large-scale data analytics, for the wider benefit of UK research
- Work with partners to increase the Library's capacity as an independent research organisation.

Business

We help businesses to innovate and grow

Kathryn Parsons speaking at the *Inspiring Entrepreneurs* event *Internet Icons*, February 2014. Photo by Luca Sage

Business

We help businesses to innovate and grow

The Library's commitment to supporting industry is enshrined in our founding Act. Our goal is to support innovation and economic growth across the UK through the provision of research, patents and advice to all forms of business from multinationals to SMEs, social enterprises and the creative industries.

Our document supply service has served UK industrial research and development for over four decades, and our Business & IP Centre at St Pancras provides advice, training and *pro bono* support for new and growing businesses, helping entrepreneurs, inventors and designers develop, protect and commercialise their ideas, and enabling social enterprises to increase their impact. Since its creation in 2006 it has helped to create an average of 550 business and 1,200 jobs each year and generated £8.80 per £1 of public money invested.

Looking ahead, our key priority is to secure and grow the **partnership of regional libraries** that is bringing Business & IP Centres to major city centres beyond London. At the time of publication, new Centres are about to open in Liverpool and Sheffield, completing an initial cycle of expansion that began two years ago in Newcastle and now also comprises services in Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester. Our ambition is that there should be at least 20 such Centres in UK city libraries by the end of the decade.

Since its creation in 2006 the Business & IP Centre has helped to create an average of **550 businesses** and **1,200 jobs** per year for the London economy and **generated £8.80 per £1 of public money invested**

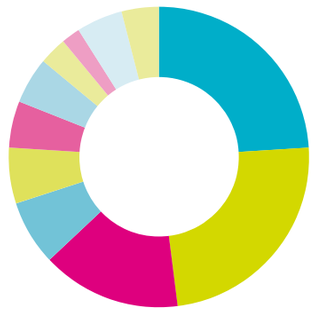
Above and below right: *Inspiring Entrepreneurs* events at the British Library. Photos by Luca Sage

Cities are at the heart of growth, and within a mile radius from our London building, in an area bounded by Bloomsbury, Euston, King's Cross and St Pancras, is one of the greatest urban clusters of knowledge-based organisations and businesses in Europe, underpinned by world-class transport connectivity. This insight led to the creation of the **Knowledge Quarter** partnership, which was launched in December 2014 by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Our next challenge is to ensure that the Library's own campus at the heart of the Quarter adapts to support this rapidly growing community of creative businesses, start-ups and knowledge-driven innovators, providing spaces and services that help these businesses to grow and achieve commercial success.

Our priorities for 2015–2023 to support our Business purpose are to:

- Work with partners to secure funding to grow the network of regional Business & IP Centres to a total of 20 UK city libraries
- Develop and open up our St Pancras campus to maximise its potential for knowledge exchange and innovation at the heart of the Knowledge Quarter.

Business & IP User Business Sector



- 24% Creative/Media/Tech
- 24% Professional Services
- 15% Retail/Wholesale
- 7% Education
- 6% Leisure/Hospitality
- 5% Health/Social Work
- 5% Manufacturing/ Engineering
- 3% Environment/CSR
- 2% Banking/Finance
- 5% N/A
- 4% Other

Culture

We engage everyone with memorable cultural experiences

Late event at the British Library as part of *Propaganda* season, 2013. Photo by Tom Lewis Russell

Culture

We engage everyone with memorable cultural experiences

Above top: *Lindisfarne Gospels Durham* exhibition; Above: *Knight v Snail II: Battle in the Margins* (from the Gorleston Psalter, England (Suffolk), 1310–1324, Add MS 49622, f. 193v.) from our Medieval Manuscripts blog which won the 2014 Arts and Culture National UK Blog Award; Right: Poster artwork by Jamie Hewlett for *Comics Unmasked: Art and Anarchy in the UK*

For many people, the Library's cultural purpose is the aspect of its mission they value most highly. The inherent cultural and artistic value of the Library's collections is beyond price – a vast compendium of the literary and intellectual arts of mankind, including countless items of exceptional rarity and beauty: rare books and maps; precious early photographs; unique sound recordings; the archives of literary, musical, political and scientific figures; a manuscript collection containing probably the greatest surviving collection of medieval art in the country.

The role of those who shape our public programme and cultural engagement activities is to create events, experiences, talks, exhibitions and performances that interpret this collection in ways that reach, delight and engage the widest possible public. There is also an increasing role in supporting the creative industries to re-interpret content and data.

Our challenge in the decade ahead is to help even more people discover and enjoy the Library's exhibition and events programme, and to be even more **creative and diverse** in the range of artistic experiences we commission and co-create. We want the Library to be a hub of ideas, debate, discussion, dialogue and experiment. In the short term, we will be inventive and unpredictable in the use we make of our existing spaces and buildings; in the longer term we will seek to raise support to expand and improve our galleries to allow us to show more of what we have, in better conditions, and in versatile spaces that let us do justice to our rapidly growing digital, audio and multimedia collections.

Equally important is sharing our collections and creativity with **audiences across the UK** and beyond. Our collecting remit means we hold unique content of relevance to almost every locality in the UK, from historic maps to more than two centuries of local newspapers. We know from the huge success of *Lindisfarne Gospels Durham*, during the summer of 2013, how significant a loan from our collection can be when situated within a different geographical or cultural context or displayed with related material: we will seek to develop an expanded programme of loans, collaborations and exhibitions, working with public libraries and other partners. And we will look beyond the UK to ensure that audiences overseas have increasing opportunities to see and appreciate items from our collection.

Our priorities for 2015–2023 to support our Cultural purpose are to:

- Grow the profile, diversity and creative impact of the Library's cultural activities, both on-site and online
- Develop an increased programme of loans, touring exhibitions and digital collaborations, with public libraries and others, that open our collections to new audiences across the UK and internationally.

Learning

We inspire young people and learners of all ages

A-Level students taking part in a *Terror and Wonder* exhibition workshop, 2014. Photo by Richard Eaton

Learning

We inspire young people and learners of all ages

Above top: Teachers' conference held in partnership with the English and Media Centre; Above: Research skills workshops aimed at Primary students. Photos by Richard Eaton; Right: 18th- and 19th-century authors featured on our *Discovering Literature* website

The Library and its collections have a potent and unique educational value for life-long learners as well as school students. At a time when people increasingly experience the world and acquire knowledge through digital screens, an encounter with an original handwritten document or primary source can have an almost magical power and aura.

We know the value of such experiences, and have sought in recent years to maximise the numbers of children and young people who are able to visit the Library in person for educational visits. An important part of our mission is to inspire the researchers of tomorrow, and we aim not just to tell stories but encourage a spirit of questioning and enquiry.

Our learning mission extends beyond schools and those in formal education. We actively seek to engage with local communities. Our Learning pages are already the most used parts of our website, and though usually devised with the close support of teachers and educators, they frequently succeed in reaching people far beyond their target audience. For many of us, the desire and need to learn stretches throughout our lives, and the British Library is strongly placed to fulfil that need.

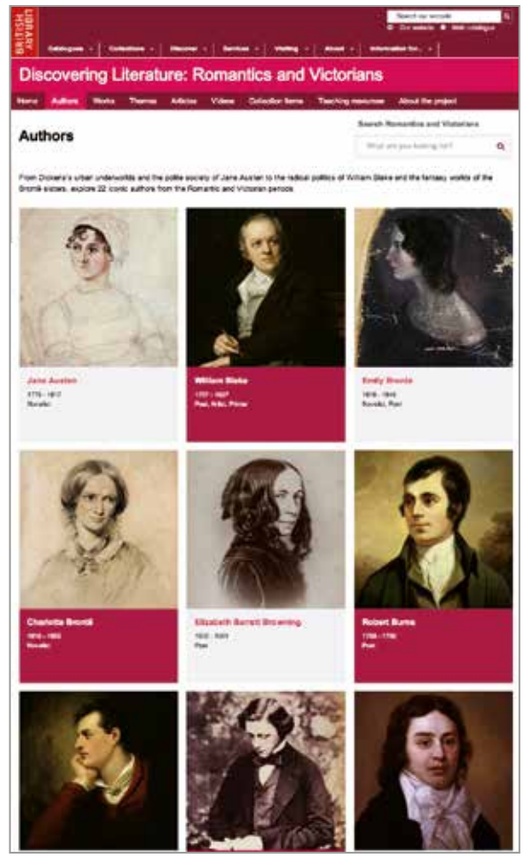
In the last three years our reach to school students has grown by 70% to **32,826 for onsite visits** and doubled to **3 million for online** visits.

As we shape our learning priorities for the next decade, we will need to address issues of scale and resource in our **on-site offer**. Our reach to school students grew in 2014 to a record 32,826, but our ability to expand further is sharply constrained by the capacity and nature of our dedicated learning spaces – a purpose that was not seen as a priority when the building was first designed. Similarly, though the success of occasional family days has shown strong appetite, we have not to date been able to build a consistent offer for families with children. As part of our programme of improvement and transformation of our St Pancras estate, we will seek a step-change in our capacity to serve children, families and the local community.

In the online space, we will seek support to invest further in those parts of our site that deliver highest value to learners, including *Discovering Literature*, which presents selected digitised primary sources relating to key works of English literature. The site has had over 300,000 unique visits in its first six months. Our goal is to expand it to cover more of the canon of English literature and establish its profile and reputation as an indispensable resource for learners worldwide.

Our priorities for 2015–2023 to support our Learning purpose are to:

- Improve and expand our on-site capacity to grow the numbers of school students, young people, families and local communities able to engage with our collections
- Expand the range of teaching resources and primary source material available online.



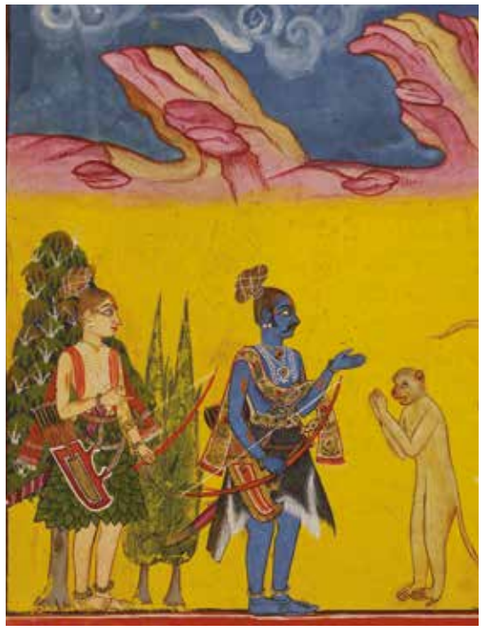
International

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

Africa Writes Festival, July 2013. Photo by Benjamin Elwyn

International

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



The international community of libraries is a powerful and resilient network of institutions with shared values and missions. This is an ancient idea as well as a modern one: scholarship has always sought, sometimes against the odds, to reach across boundaries of language, politics, faith and geography. The digital era has delivered tools and platforms that are bringing this network together in compelling new ways. Initiatives such as Europeana and the Digital Public Library of America unite disparate collections across continents and nations, and similar projects are emerging in both developed and developing nations.

The British Library has a distinctive and important role to play alongside others in this global system. For reasons of history – cultural, imperial, mercantile – our collection is perhaps the most international of its kind anywhere in the world, with rare or unique items reflecting all major language groups and faith traditions. We have both growing opportunity and growing responsibility to use the potential of digital to increase access for people across the world to the intellectual heritage that we safeguard.

Amid the many calls on our international resources in the next strategic period, we will focus especially on those parts of the world where for historic reasons our collections are strongest, not least in **South Asia and the Middle East**. Our Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Government sets out a bold vision of collaboration which we look forward to fulfilling, and our partnership with the Qatar Foundation is set to deliver a vast and expanding resource of digitised primary sources relating to Gulf history and Arabic science.

Closer to home, our relationship with partners in **continental Europe** has deepened with our close involvement in Europeana's 1914 – 1918 project, which movingly unites unique content from formerly combatant nations. We will work closely with the national libraries of Europe both to meet public appetite for engagement with European culture, seen in the growing success of events such as European Literature Night, and to ensure that our shared collections play a full role in the emerging global family of distributed digital libraries.

Finally, at a time when wars and civil emergencies have too frequently put archives and library **collections at risk**, the work we do, often with limited resources, to support fellow institutions during and after conflicts is becoming more urgent than ever – a global dimension of our professional leadership role. The Endangered Archives Programme, which we run with generous funding from the Arcadia Fund, has just reached its tenth anniversary, and represents a model on which we hope to build for the future.

Our priorities for 2015 – 2023 to support our International purpose are to:

- Increase our engagement in those regions of the world, including South Asia and the Middle East, whose cultures and histories are reflected most strongly in the Library's collections
- Take a professional leadership role in the national library network of Europe to contribute to the development of a global distributed digital library
- Grow our capacity to support other institutions whose collections are at risk from war or civil emergency.

Left above: Folio from the Mewar *Ramayana*, a manuscript split between the UK and India, digitally reunited in 2014; Left: *Magpie from the Na't al-Hayawān* by Aristotle and Ibn Bakhtishu', *c.*1220 AD (British Library, Or. 2784), digitised as part of the British Library's Qatar Foundation partnership; Right above: *Endangered Archives*: Bamum script and archives project; Right below: *Endangered Archives*: digital documentation of manuscript collection in Gangtey

Enabling the vision

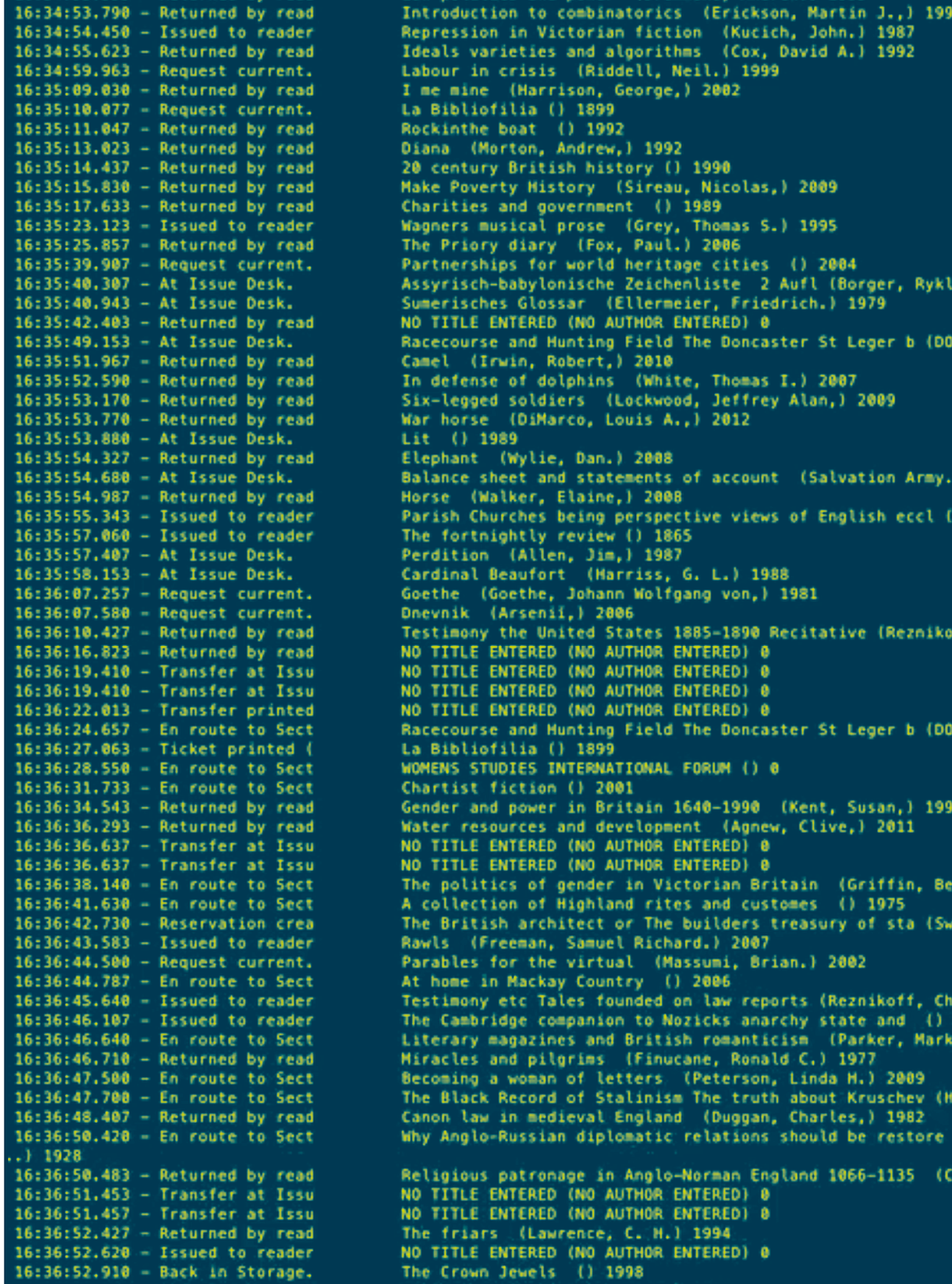
Delivery of the prospectus set out above will require further change in the way we work and organise ourselves and in the business models we develop to deliver our purposes. Major efficiencies have already been achieved; many more will need to be found, and our fundraising activities and commercial services will continue to grow. Internally, the culture change begun some years ago is already improving our ability to collaborate and work effectively both within the organisation and with our external partners.

In the spirit of the 'One British Library' programme of staff consultation we conducted in 2013, we will continue to focus on simplification of our internal structures and processes, for the benefit not just of our staff but also the many partners and stakeholders who work with us. Where possible, the priorities identified above will form part of larger, long-term programmes, including major transformation projects for our St Pancras estate and our audience-facing digital offer.

Our staff are the heart and soul of all of this: it is their expertise and dedication that makes the Library's services so valued by our users, and their resilience that will make the future changes possible, through a period when further change is inevitable. Our new People Strategy, adopted last year, is founded on a new statement of the values that will guide us as an organisation through the coming years of change. For those inside and outside the Library, we want to be seen as a professional community who:

- Put users at the heart of everything we do
- Listen, innovate and adapt to a changing world
- Treat everyone with respect and compassion
- Embrace equality, fairness and diversity
- Act with openness and honesty
- Collaborate to do more than we could by ourselves

Supporting all of this is our commitment to accountability and transparency. Our Board provides strong governance for the Library's executive leadership team, and has committed to an increased programme of Board paper publication. We also intend that the clear framework of purposes set out in this document will allow us to measure ourselves better, improving both our internal business planning and our accountability to the public whose funding and support makes the continued existence and success of this great institution possible.



Right: A two-minute snapshot of data from the British Library's book tracking and delivery system on 14 April 2014

"*Living Knowledge* sets out the British Library's vision for its future development as it looks ahead to 2023, the year of its fiftieth anniversary as the national library of the United Kingdom. It explains how the Library delivers public value – in custodianship, research, business, culture, learning and international partnership – and fulfils its mission to make our intellectual heritage accessible to everyone, for research, inspiration and enjoyment."

Roly Keating
Chief Executive, British Library

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