

Culture Heritage & Libraries: Outturn 2014/15: Highlights

The year just gone has seen a number of exciting developments in our services, and in selecting a list of highlights we had to choose what had to be left out, not struggle to fill the space. Top of the list might be the glass walkways at Tower Bridge, which have been planned for some years and finally came to fruition in November with a packed press launch – these have really given the Bridge a new Wow factor as a visitor experience, and ticket sales almost doubled in the months thereafter. But it could be argued that the changes in Guildhall Art Gallery are at least as impressive – the new Heritage Gallery opened there in September, and the complete rehang and refurbishment of the entire Gallery which was presented to the world in January has been a great success. These all help to enhance the Square Mile as a visitor destination, something which we promote in many ways, through our individual attractions, our City Information Centre beside St Paul's, and through a wide range of partnership working. Tourism is vital to the economy as well as the reputation of the Square Mile. We were glad to see that the latest of a succession of charity art trails round the City, with Shaun the Sheep popping up in different guises, proved particularly popular.

The report also flags some successful grant applications for a wide range of projects, supplementing the regular work of the libraries and archives in supporting individuals and communities of all kinds in their daily lives. The City's libraries have been strengthening their links with other Corporation departments to help deliver agendas around health, wellbeing and employability and these are all areas where we will continue to put emphasis. As always, a lot of the department's work is delivered not through set-piece highlights but through consistent high quality services to many thousands of satisfied users, and it's important to ensure that this regular activity is sustained and valued.

In conclusion, Culture, Heritage and Libraries continues to develop its profile and deliver important parts of the overall work of the City Corporation. Looking forwards, we are expecting a year of significant anniversaries (Magna Carta, already the focus of some activity in 2014-15, and Shakespeare), and the formulation of plans for the Great Fire events in 2016. These historic milestones are valuable as opportunities to commemorate the past and learn from its heritage, but also to celebrate the City as it is today.

David Pearson,

Director, Culture Heritage & Libraries

On 2nd July 2014, **Barbican Music Library** presented “An audience with Pete Frame” to launch the Rock Family Trees exhibition. Pete Frame is a legendary rock journalist and historian and author of several books of Rock Family Trees. This unique event (Pete had never spoken in public before) quickly sold out and was a real coup for the library.

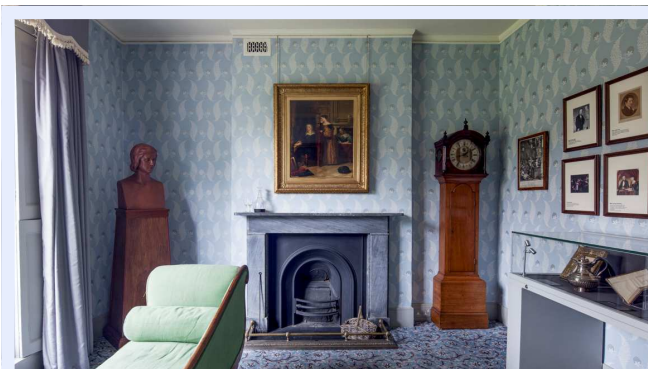


Shoe Lane Library held its first **Community Fete** in November 2014. Staff provided homemade refreshments, a raffle, tombolas for adults and children plus many other games, activities and competitions for all ages. There were a good spread of craft stalls offering a wide range of merchandise as well as other stalls from the local church, AgeUK and City Advice. City Police were in attendance too and free health assessments for city residents and workers were available. In total, nearly £1,000 profit was made.

Funding was secured by the **City Business Library** to provide the City of London and neighbouring boroughs with a professional **job club** to help London residents find sustainable employment in a supportive environment.

The funding was used to enlist the services of external recruitment specialists, all with a track history of success as well as providing support for the delegates with travel costs and refreshments. The three-day programme covered job search strategies, CV workshops, City Business Library resources overview for job seekers, Linked in strategies for job searching and interview techniques.

In total, the City Business Library supported 74 delegates from a variety of London Boroughs to help build their confidence and make a robust career plan to find meaningful employment. The programme was extremely popular and well received and over 70% of delegates have since found sustainable employment.



Keats House was awarded a grant of £95,500 by Arts Council England to enhance the experience of visitors through improved displays and interpretation.

Iconic manuscripts and artefacts are now on display in the house, complemented by an introductory film, audio recordings of Keats's poetry and interactive exhibits for families.

The **Cultural and Visitor Development** team worked closely with the Artichoke Trust and with many of the Square Mile's cultural providers, both in and beyond the Corporation, to present a feasibility study on mounting a major programme of public activity to mark the 350th anniversary of the Great Fire of London in 2016. This led to a well-received report and the City Corporation's agreement to invest £300k in the project as founding sponsor. The team continue to play a leading role in coordinating the planning activity and liaising with Artichoke.



Guildhall Library's exhibition *Celebrity Cooks: Mrs Beeton and her Contemporaries* celebrated the work of the famous cook. Mrs Beeton was born on Milk Street, only a short walk from the Library. Her story is a fascinating one, which stretches from her first book, the *Book of Household Management* in 1861, right up to the 1930s. Guildhall Library owns the largest collection of cookery books in a public library in the UK. This collection became the basis for the exhibition.

Guildhall Art Gallery

In 2014 Guildhall Art Gallery underwent a transformational rehang of its permanent collection. The £600,000 renovation project has improved the visitor experience by illuminating the artworks with a new state-of-the-art lighting system, and creating more flexible exhibition spaces.

The new thematic rehang comprises a radical redisplay of the Victorian Gallery with sections on 'Home', 'Beauty', 'Faith', 'Leisure', 'Love', 'Work' and 'Imagination'. Many of the works have never been on show before. The Rehang secured significant interest in both the national and specialist press, including features in the *Guardian*, *Evening Standard*, *The Times*, *Apollo* and *The British Art Journal*, as well television and radio coverage. Since the official launch of the rehang in January 2015, visitor figures have risen by an average of 39% on the previous year.

A whole series of related events were staged including, *A History of the English Cookbook from Beowulf to Mary Berry* by Dr. Peter Ross, Guildhall Library, which attracted over 100 people. Marjory Szurko, Oriol College, Oxford not only gave her talk *A Taste of Spring*, she also cooked recipes dating from the past 600 years. It truly was an edible exhibition. The exhibition was extremely popular, attracting over 5,000 visitors with all talks sold out.



Tower Bridge

The Tower Bridge glass floor was launched to the public in early November 2014. Delivered on time and on budget, the new feature contributed to an additional circa 73K visitors over target in the last five months of the financial year, equating to an additional £500K in admissions and £100K in retail income. The feature has also achieved record levels of publicity, achieving a half page and photograph in every national newspaper the day following launch and the most positive visitor feedback for any feature at the Bridge in the exhibition's history. In addition, business performance for 2014/15 was also bolstered by a new online ticketing system, in combination with the launch of an entirely new website for Tower Bridge. With the industry standard being around 4% of total admissions, online tickets have accounted for an average of 7% of admissions income since launch, peaking in the month of November at 17%.



Grants - London Metropolitan Archives (LMA)

2014/15 has been an unusually successful year for the external funding programme at LMA, with 11 requests leading to 10 successful awards. In particular, we were pleased to receive support from Earls Court Olympia who have deposited their archives including posters and publicity material for the Ideal Home exhibitions and other events. This exciting and substantial archive charts the organisation of exhibitions, shows and events at Olympia and Earls Court from the 1880s onward; as well as minutes, annual reports and accounts, the collection includes important and regularly requested series of show catalogues, agreements and photographs. The support given will enable LMA to catalogue this collection to full standards and make it available to the public.

In July 2014 LMA was awarded a grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund of £86,000 for *Speak Out London – Diversity City*. This is an LGBTQ oral history project running from September 2014 to August 2016.

London Metropolitan Archives worked with colleagues at Tower Bridge to acquire an outstanding set of 50 photographs of the early phases of construction of the bridge. The images, some of which were recently displayed at Guildhall Art Gallery, came to light in 2011 after they were rescued from a skip by the caretaker of a building which was due to be turned into flats. Apparently created by John Wolfe Barry's firm, these photographs from 1892 offer a unique perspective on an iconic London landmark. The images will be added to Collage as part of the redevelopment of the website in 2015/16.



Cultural Visitor Development

Working in partnership with the British Library and Inner and Middle Temple, the Visitor Services team has delivered an extensive campaign on a cost shared basis to promote London's Magna Carta 800 offer. The campaign sees a full printed programme distributed across London with channels secured with partners at the Supreme Court, Royal Courts of Justice, and through Radisson Blu Hotels and the publisher Guy Fox. In addition, support from What on Earth Books and Amnesty have helped to deliver a robust programme of activity which, in the City, will centre around the Heritage Gallery, Guildhall Art Gallery, a City Guides guided walks programme and the Guildhall Library - the latter of which will work with the Guildhall School to produce a Son et Lumière in Guildhall Yard as part of the London Open House weekend.



City Information Centre (CIC)

The Christmas to Easter period has seen steady footfall growth for the City Information Centre with Easter Saturday becoming one of its busiest days since opening in 2007 and a massive 2,991 visitors being served. This success is due in part to the popularity of the Shaun the Sheep exhibition in the City (a project negotiated and led by the Visitor Services team) and the work the CIC has been doing to position itself as an essential asset for London and the nation. Other related headlines related include the third Tourist Information Centre exchange in March that the Centre has undertaken in the national programme of exchanges it instigated last year. To date, exchanges have been realised with Greenwich, Windsor and Belfast, with Derry, Oxford and Guildford scheduled for 2015.



The new City of London **Heritage Gallery** opened to the public on Friday 12 September

2014. The permanent, purpose-built exhibition space at Guildhall Art Gallery will showcase a rotating selection of documents from the archives of the City of London. Headlining the opening display was the City's 1297 copy of Magna Carta, and documents illustrating London's response to the outbreak of the First World War. Since opening a number of other documents have also either been displayed or are programmed e.g. the King John mayoral charter (of 1215) and, the 1613 Shakespeare Deed.

There is also a very popular large backlit copy of the Agas map of the City and surrounding areas dating from the end of the sixteenth century as well as a touchscreen computer for members of the public to use.

Guildhall Library recently acquired The Arabella Boxer collection consisting of the library and working papers of the renowned food writer Arabella Boxer. The donation represents the first tranche of Arabella's books and papers, the rest will follow as a bequest. Arabella has been a highly successful and influential food writer for over fifty years and her book on English Food has been described as the most important book ever published on the subject. The collection incorporates archival material including letters, contracts, research material and a series of articles written for Vogue magazine. The collection is clearly our most important food related acquisition since the purchase of the Elizabeth David Collection over 20 years ago and confirms Guildhall Library as the leading centre for the study of food history.

