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Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee	7 March 2016
Subject: London Metropolitan Archives – digitisation update	**Public**
Report of: Director of Culture, Heritage and Libraries **Report author:** Geoff Pick – Director, London Metropolitan Archives	**For Information**

Summary

This report provides an update on the project, entitled **London's Memory, Digitally** (LMD), to develop digitisation at London Metropolitan Archives. It stems from the report and policy approach agreed by this Committee at its meeting on 27 January 2014 and a subsequent update in January 2015.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that Members note the report and in particular the next steps in the programme, notably:

- The continuing project with Ancestry and the contract review for LMA's commercial digitisation programme
- The planned approaches to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Wellcome Trust
- The launch of the upgraded Collage website for graphic collections (images, maps and film)

Main Report

Background

1. In January 2014 a report was brought to your Committee outlining a vision for future large-scale digitisation of the collections at London Metropolitan Archives, to open them up to the world. The report noted that *"over the past decade a transformation has taken place within society driven by the increasing importance of the digital world in every aspect of our lives. Notably, information, communication, knowledge and content of every kind that used to be transmitted in writing and in print is moving, or has moved, to digital platforms"* and services of all kinds are being remodelled as a result. As part of this move, documentary heritage (including archives, photographs, maps, pictures, and films) is steadily being digitised by many institutions to make their content much more widely accessible online and the City of London, through its stewardship of London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), has already made good initial progress in this area through a number of separate projects.

2. This work has been drawn together to develop a strategic policy initiative under the title London's Memory, Digitally (LMD). This aims at a transformative-scale digitisation programme to make LMA's holdings, one of the country's outstanding archival collections and one of national and international significance, much more accessible to the world at large. It will also transform in the long term how all of LMA's services are delivered and is one of the key drivers in the separate project currently at the Gateway 1-2 stage on the review of future accommodation for LMA. Those projects is particularly looking at how other major institutions in the UK and abroad are developing their services in the digital context and how this change will affect their physical 'estate'.

Current Position

3. London's Memory, Digitally has a number of strands including particularly
   - Contracts with commercial partners
   - Significant bids to external funders such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Wellcome Trust
   - Partnership programmes, for example with academic and community partners
   - Development of the Collage website for access to LMA's graphic collections

4. On commercial partnerships there are two aspects: an addendum to the current contract with Ancestry which will lead to the public release of at least half a million more digitised images; and the setting up of the next contract for the commercial digitisation programme, with Ancestry or another provider (the current contract is due for revision in 2017). On the latter, market testing processes are now taking place, led by the Chamberlain's department together with senior LMA and Comptroller's staff and the first round of results are being evaluated.

5. On the addendum to the current contract, Ancestry staff have been on site at LMA since November and are digitising a number of collections, broadly with an end date of 1924 to comply with data protection requirements. The records that will be digitised include:
   - applications for admission to membership of the Stock Exchange
   - School admission, discharge and creed registers
   - City of London and Tower Hamlets Cemeteries registers
   - Game Keepers Licences (from the Middlesex Sessions)
   - Trade directories
   - Additional Church of England and Non-conformist registers for baptisms, marriages and burials
   - Additional Boards of Guardians registers
   - Additional City of London Freedom records

6. As reported in January 2015, a strategic analysis of all of LMA's holdings (some 6,200 collections comprising an estimated 300 million individual plans, letters, pages, photographs etc) has been undertaken and the detailed construction of priority digitisation packages begun. This work has focused on the material that would have the most impact and which could be digitised early in the programme (taking a number of factors into account such as format, condition and ownership). The prioritisation has also followed the similar criteria used by other large institutions such The National Archives in the UK and the Smithsonian in the USA. The package that has been assessed as meeting the highest criteria for initial external funding bids is **The London**

Child, further details of which are provided in Appendix 1. This will be used in formal approaches to both the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Wellcome Trust. In line with City procedures, both approaches are subject to a Gateway 1/2 report, currently in hand.

7. In the partnership programme, the following projects are being undertaken or have been completed during the past year:
   - **Wellcome Trust**. LMA worked in partnership with the Wellcome Library which funded the digitisation by LMA of 78,000 pages of the archives of St Luke's Hospital as part of an ambitious project to make 800,000 pages of mental health archives available online via the Wellcome Library's website. Saint Luke's Hospital for Lunatics was founded in 1750 by City of London philanthropists with the intention of curing 'lunacy' and making treatment accessible to poorer people.
   - **British Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZOuk)** WIZOuk has commissioned the digitisation of part of its collection by LMA and 13,000 pages have been completed so far.
   - **Digital Panopticon**. LMA has digitised 8,100 images from archives of the Middlesex Sessions for the project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, 'The Digital Panopticon: The Global Impact of London Punishments, 1780-1925', which investigates the penal outcomes and life histories of those convicted at the Old Bailey and sentenced to either imprisonment or transportation. The project is managed by a consortium of academics based in England with the University of Sheffield as the lead.
   - **Training Ship Exmouth**. LMA has digitised 13,000 images of archives of the Training Ship Exmouth for an academic partnership based at the University of Sussex.
   - **Guinness Trust** LMA completed the digitisation of over 2,000 images from the Guinness Trust brewery collection for the Trust.

8. On Collage, the final testing for the new website is taking place at the moment and it should be publicly available at the end of February subject to final technical arrangements. The website had been originally constructed in the 1990s and the improvements that have now been put in place will significantly improve its functionality and ease of use. New galleries have been created to help visitors explore LMA's collections, leading them to anniversaries such as The Great Fire and themes including the First World War. New functionality includes zooming tools that present the images in far greater detail than was previously possible. The new 'London Picture Map' will allow users to see a selection of our images on a Google map, uniquely providing a geographically based visual record of a lost London for many buildings which no longer exist. Some 30,000 images have been re-captured and edited to improve significantly user access. In addition, 50,000 new images have been digitised and added from the following collections:
   - Metropolitan Print Collection (18th and 19th century prints)
   - Historical Portraits Collection (18th and 19th century prints)
   - 1920's photographs of London
   - The Christopher Schwarz Collection (photographs, 1970's-1980's)
   - Topographical clips from films (for the first time on Collage)

9. Research has also been undertaken on the framework for making documentary material available in parallel to the work that has been done on Collage and LMA's graphic collections. The long term ambition will be to link digitised images to the relevant entry in the archival catalogue and initial discussions have begun with the software provider to take this forward. Given the size and complexity of what is involved other, complementary, approaches are also being pursued, included an archival web viewer. A prototype has been created and is now being tested. It is based on a freely available model built initially by the Wellcome Trust and further developed by the British Library and a technical partner. It is already being used by large organisations such as the Bodleian Library and is likely to become the industry standard, with significant interoperability elements.

10. One of the most significant parts of any digitisation programme is the creation of what is often described collectively as metadata. Metadata exists to describe and give context to individual documents, photographs, plans etc and can cover things such as catalogues, indexes, descriptive and explanatory materials. One key aspect, and the subject of much contemporary research and experiment, is text recognition and in particular handwritten text recognition. LMA staff are currently engaging with colleagues in the UK and aboard to ensure that the City is fully part of the picture on the emerging technologies.

Conclusion

11. Work is moving forward in key areas and the most significant ambition of the next few months will be to engage in detailed with discussions with external funding bodies, particularly the Heritage Lottery Fund

Appendices

- Appendix 1: outline of the content of the proposed bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Wellcome Trust

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Appendix One: outline of the content of the proposed bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Wellcome Trust

London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) will focus on one major theme as the subject of the proposed funding applications for digitisation to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Wellcome Trust – **The London Child** from 1276 to the present day.

The earliest reference to a named child in LMA archives (found to date) is in Letter Book A in the City of London archive: John, William and Matilda Godard had been orphaned and arrangements for their care were made by the Court of Aldermen in January 1276. This reference is the starting point for an extraordinary journey from medieval London to the world City of the twenty first century tracing the role and part children and young people have played in everyday life of the capital.

The archives illustrate the changing role of children and young people in London life. In the medieval period childhood was a comparatively fleeting experience and children quickly became adults, either going into work or marriage at what would seem now a very early age. References to children in the archives are frequently linked to the management of property (in the case of orphans) or employment (apprenticeships). Close attention and careful scrutiny of archives can give us glimpses of what it was like to be a child in the medieval and early modern period – whether it is the boy playing on London Bridge in 1301 (who fell in the Thames); the boy king who paraded through the City before going to live in the Tower of London in 1483; the girl orphans whose estates were audited by the City London elders and whose marriages to unscrupulous guardians were forbidden; or the choirs of children who sang at the City's magnificent pageants and celebrations. In the later modern period more archives survive and by the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries children and young people moved to be more central to the life of the metropolis. The seismic changes to society brought about by the provision of compulsory education for all coupled with the improvements to housing, welfare and health provision have given us untapped riches in our archives about the lives of young Londoners.

However there are parallels between the modern and medieval child – for example in 1345 the Sheriffs were ordered to see that all men aged 16 and over joined the army going to fight in France and in the twentieth century we have similar records of young men under 18 leaving London to go and fight in France too. The more troubling contexts of abuse and exploitation are sobering constants alongside happier ones around play and leisure; the love and care of adults; and the support and help for destitute and sick children. Digitising archive collections for **The London Child** will enable new audiences, both children and adults, to explore and research these stories; to learn and to go on to interpret and retell them in the twenty-first century.

Archive collections from across LMA's holdings will be drawn upon to be digitised and will include those of the City of London Corporation; the City of London Court of Orphans; over 150 hospitals including the Foundling Hospital; metropolitan local government organisations such as the London and Middlesex County Councils, the Metropolitan Asylums Board, the Middlesex Sessions, the School Board for London and the Inner London Education Authority; and the London Boards of Guardians.