



Cultural Collections & Galleries Audience Development Strategy

August 2024 – July 2029

Laura Beare
Audience Development Manager

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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

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Statement of Purpose – 2029 Vision

Who are we in 2029?

We are a socially minded organisation that makes a positive impact in the lives of our audiences and local communities. Situated at the heart of the University of Leeds, we connect people around the world with our globally significant collections, while reflecting on the most important issues of our time. We put our audiences, from Gallery goers to Cultural Collections users and digital visitors, at the centre of what we do.

1. Where are we now? Background and Context

1.1 Cultural Collections and Galleries – University of Leeds Libraries

Cultural Collections and Galleries, at the University of Leeds Libraries, is the home of the University of Leeds' world-class cultural collections. Part of the Library service and comprising of two public-facing galleries and a research centre, the Library Cultural Collections and Galleries (CC&G) department serves the needs of a range of audiences. Providing access to our collections is central to this strategy and the work across the team.

The cultural collections consist of hundreds of thousands of rare books, manuscripts, archives, textiles, coins, artworks, public art, and objects. This includes five [Designated](#) collections, recognised by Arts Council England as nationally and internationally important. The collections are accessed via The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery (SABG), the Treasures of the Brotherton (TOB), the Brotherton Research Centre (BRC) and online. The collections hold [Archive Service Accreditation](#), while SABG is an Arts Council England [Accredited Museum](#) and both Galleries are accredited by the [VisitEngland Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance scheme](#).

1.2 Scope of strategy

This strategy covers a five-year period, August 2024 – July 2029. For the first time, this strategy is a cross-team approach with the following areas included in the scope of the plan:

- Programming (exhibitions and events)
- Community engagement
- Visitor services
- Marketing and communications
- Researcher engagement
- Digital engagement

The strategy will also enable audience focussed decision-making in other areas, including digitisation prioritisation and collections development.

1.3 Where are we coming from?

Over the last five years (2018 – 2023) CC&G has undertaken a huge amount of activity, following a number of previous unconnected strategies. Information and data on this activity has been gathered and reviewed, ahead of this new holistic strategy, in an Audience Engagement Report, written by consultant Emma King (available on request).

As detailed in the report we are coming from a place of change, including a complete refurbishment of our Research Centre, a major overhaul of one of our stores to improve access to collections; a

merging of our Visitor Service team to work across our 3 sites; and a period of major disruption due to COVID-19. Following this period of disruption and change, this strategy will guide us into a period of ambitious audience development.

1.4 Strategy in context

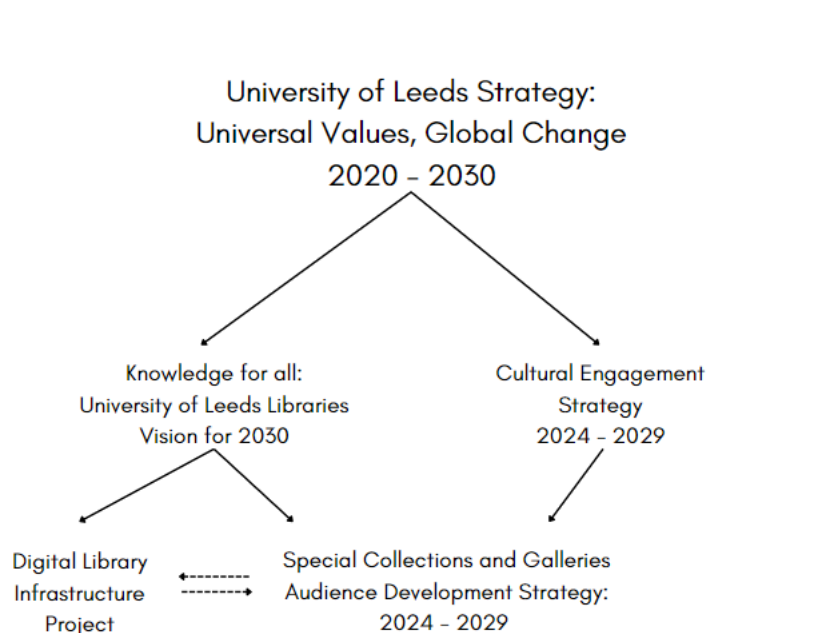
1.4.1 University of Leeds context

A vital context for CC&G is being part of a university. This unique position is summarised by the University Museums Group thus:

‘University museums and collections play an important role spanning the Higher Education and Cultural sectors, and linking universities with their local, regional, and national communities. [...] University museums occupy a unique position within the museum sector in that they can collaborate internally with other university departments, enrich student teaching and learning across the curriculum, and co-produce research [...] public engagement programmes and exhibitions. But they are also distinct from other departments of their parent universities, receiving some funding from them but also heavily dependent on external funding from grants, commercial income, and philanthropy.’¹

University of Leeds Strategy

With this university context in mind, this plan directly feeds into several key strategies across the University of Leeds.



Firstly, it speaks to the University's ten-year strategy [Universal Values, Global Change](#). This strategy has 3 overarching themes: community, culture, and impact. Within these 3 themes there are a number of aims on which this strategy will directly impact:

¹ University Museums Group Survey Report COVID-19: Beyond the Crisis?, May 2021 <http://universitymuseumsgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Covid-19-Beyond-the-Crisis-July-2021.pdf>

- We will engage and collaborate with the local community and civic partners, with a focus on the public good and driving benefit to the region in the context of post-pandemic recovery.²
- We will create a campus environment that encourages interaction and physical activity and fosters a sense of belonging.³
- To provide a transformative, research-based educational experience for students from diverse backgrounds, who develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed and make a positive impact in the world.⁴
- We will be at the centre of the global research and innovation community. We will deliver transformational fundamental and challenge-led research to advance knowledge and tackle major issues, to improve the future of our world.⁵
- We will use digital technologies, data and digital approaches effectively, creatively, innovatively and in a research-informed way to enhance our students' learning and experience, to provide and enrich learning opportunities for individuals globally, to enhance our research activity and impact to tackle global challenges, and to improve the University's processes, infrastructure and physical estate.⁶

Library Vision

Supporting the University of Leeds Strategy, the Library Vision, [Knowledge for All](#), is another key guide for this Audience Development strategy. The Vision includes four strategic programmes: Digital Futures; Open Higher Education; Sustainable Environments; and Enriched Experiences. In particular, this strategy will align with the following strategic priorities laid out in the Vision:

- Strategic priority 2: Develop a holistic, user-focused, personalised digital experience for our users through audience and behaviour mapping, data analytics, and machine learning. [Digital Futures]
- Strategic priority 16: Develop and support a cultural learning and engagement programme that uses our wonderful galleries, special collections, and public art to their fullest potential and creates global impact through hybrid exhibitions. [...] Ensure that we are recognised as a cultural leader across the sector and region. [Enriched Experiences]
- Strategic priority 17: Adopt user experience approaches to co-produce our integrated physical and digital services with our users, providing an experience that makes a positive difference and adds value to their mission. Develop our behavioural analytics capacity to support decision making. [Enriched Experiences]
- Strategic priority 20: Provide an accessible and inclusive user experience, with a focus on widening participation. Extend access to our buildings, facilities, collections, and public art in ways that support the needs of diverse audiences from around the globe. [Enriched Experiences]

Cultural Engagement Strategy

Another plan supporting the University of Leeds strategy is the [Cultural Engagement Strategy](#), with the vision of a 'thriving, dynamic and interconnected cultural ecology across the Leeds city region with the University of Leeds at its heart.' The Cultural Engagement Strategy has 4 strategic objectives that this Audience Development plan will actively enable:

- Support research development and knowledge exchange with the cultural sector.

² <https://spotlight.leeds.ac.uk/enabling-strategy/index.html>

³ <https://spotlight.leeds.ac.uk/enabling-strategy/index.html>

⁴ <https://spotlight.leeds.ac.uk/strategy-student-education/index.html>

⁵ <https://spotlight.leeds.ac.uk/strategy-research-and-innovation/index.html>

⁶ <https://spotlight.leeds.ac.uk/strategy-digital-transformation/index.html>

- Support the delivery of a transformative student education.
- Enhance student and staff experience.
- Nurture audience, community and public engagement through cultural activities.

Digital Library Infrastructure Project

This Strategy will be implemented in tandem with the Digital Library Infrastructure Project (DLIP). DLIP will impact and inform many elements of digital engagement, a key aspect of this strategy. DLIP is a long-term project as part of the Libraries Digital Futures strategic programme. The outcomes of the project include:

- A refreshed Cultural Collections website.
- Significantly improved quality of experience when viewing online digital content.
- More of our incredible collections available digitally online.
- Greater reliability of access.
- A trusted access environment for content that cannot be openly available.

1.4.2 Wider cultural context

Within the wider Yorkshire region this strategy follows on from Leeds 2023, a year celebrating culture in Leeds, and precedes Bradford UK City of Culture 2025. This sandwich of cultural programmes provides a strong foundation in which the work of CC&G sits. Alongside these cultural celebrations, plans are being laid in the city of Leeds for both the National Poetry Centre⁷ and a British Library centre⁸. These new cultural venues will join a strong arts, culture, and heritage ecology, one which CC&G will be a prominent member. However, alongside these exciting new possibilities, there have been a number of concerning closures in the Leeds art and culture scene, including The Tetley and Thwaite Watermill.

Looking beyond the regional context, the cultural sector nationally is slowly recovering from COVID-19 with visitor attractions in England reporting a 42% increase in the volume of total visits from 2021 to 2022, but still not reaching pre-pandemic numbers.⁹ The cultural sector is also being affected by the cost-of-living crisis, with Wave 9 of the Cultural Participation Monitor (CPM)¹⁰ reporting that 35% of people are participating less in arts and culture than they were 12 months ago.¹¹ An early output of Wave 10 of the CPM indicates that focusing on local audiences will be critical for engagement planning in the coming years, as will flexibility around early evening opening times.¹²

⁷ <https://www.nationalpoetrycentre.org.uk/>

⁸ <https://news.leeds.gov.uk/news/major-step-closer-to-british-library-site-at-temple-works-in-leeds>

⁹ <https://www.visitbritain.org/research-insights/england-visitor-attractions-la>

¹⁰ <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/evidence/cultural-participation-monitor>

¹¹ <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/evidence/cultural-participation-monitor/key-insights>

¹² <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/asset/4373>

SWOT analysis

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a unique and diverse range of cultural collections that offer a strong foundation for audience engagement and development. • We have three high quality spaces for audiences to encounter our collections, TOB, SABG & the BRC. • We have a multifaceted offer from exhibitions to the Public Art Trail, to digital resources, research support and events and engagement activities. This allows us to target a variety of different audiences. The majority of this offer is free. • The University setting provides an impressive and beautiful city centre home with ease of access by public transport. • We consistently offer excellent customer service, providing an experience which encourages repeat visitors and word of mouth promotion. • We have a strong five-year foundation of audience evaluation in the Galleries, which is ongoing, to inform our planning. • We have increased our audience engagement capacity through creating new Associate Curator roles and an additional Learning Co-ordinator position. • We have a depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise within our team, which we are passionate about sharing. • We have implemented a strong student engagement strand of activity over the past 3 years, which we can build on going forward. 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Parkinson Building housing the Galleries places some restriction on their external visibility, and the mentality of non-university audiences that the building 'is not for me' is still a prevalent attitude. • The Galleries and Research Centre are physically separated, which can cause difficulties for joint up working and messaging. • We are not in control of all the 'wraparound' visitor experience including Wi-Fi; the cafe and its opening hours in the Parkinson Building atrium; the central reception desk and onsite security; how signage inside and outside the building can be used. • The Galleries and Cultural Collections websites have to use the University's content management system and brand identity – this makes development of the website restricted and can be off putting for the general public. Additionally, the websites for Cultural Collections and Galleries are separate. • Accessibility information on the website, for planning in-person visits, is limited, which is off-putting to audiences with different access needs. • There is no onsite car parking available to visitors, apart from blue badge holders, who need to contact us 2 days in advance of their visit. • There is a lack of consistent audience data gathering in the Research Centre, which is vital for informing future planning. • Many internal procedures are manual and/or inefficient, which impacts negatively on customer experience and staff time. • The Galleries are fairly small compared to the size of collection, in particular the temporary exhibition spaces are constraining to some of our more ambitious programming aims.
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are situated in a culturally minded city, which has just emerged from the 2023 city of culture project. There are ample collaborative prospects in this cultural ecology, and opportunities to support local artists. 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recent global pandemic has short- and long-term effects in relation to audience behaviours, for example a trend for delayed bookings for ticketed cultural activity has emerged.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We benefit from a range of internal and external partners who advocate for culture, for example the newly formed Museums Development North, The Audience Agency, the University's Cultural Institute, and the University Museums Group. • The Library has invested in the Digital Creativity and Culture Hub (DCCCH), which fosters digital creativity and re-use of our cultural collections. • The Galleries successfully maintained VisitEngland Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Accreditation in 2022, a nationally recognised scheme which provides a report on opportunities for improvement. • The Galleries undertook an external accessibility audit in 2022, which has informed an accessibility action plan to improve our service. • We have a breadth of academic contacts we work with, many of whom have external contacts and community-facing projects, which gives us potential conduits for new audience engagement internally and externally. • Upgrades to various facilities, in including enabling the Sheppard Room for multimode activity, and the refurbishment of the Research Centre, offer increased potential for different types of engagement. • The upcoming Bradford 2025 year of culture offers opportunities to engage and develop audiences across the region. • The National Poetry Centre coming to the University of Leeds is an exciting opportunity to collaborate and develop audiences. • As part of the Library, the service benefits from the wider organisational changes being facilitated by the Cultural Shift Groups, particularly around Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). As part of this wider focus on EDI, we are involved in a strand focussed on inclusive learning. • The Digital Library Infrastructure Project (DLIP) is an innovative opportunity to improve our digital presence, storytelling, and discoverability. Additionally, it is allowing us to re-think the way in which we communicate, collaborate, and provide access to our collections and information we store about our collections to prepare for growth and engagement, both now and in the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost-of-living crisis has led consumers to be cautious about how much they spend on their leisure time, since other financial concerns such as paying for education, buying, or maintaining a home and for some, being able to afford to buy groceries, are a higher priority. • The current staffing provision and model, especially around front of house, can be adversely affected by people handing in their notice, going on annual leave, and taking sick leave. This has previously led to unplanned service closures. • Events and marketing budgets have not been increased, beyond statutory inflation, in five years. These restricted budgets limit our audience development ambitions. • There is a financial crisis in the higher education sector, with cuts happening across the country. The University of Leeds therefore is in a period of financial uncertainty. • The Stanley & Audrey Burton Gallery lost its annual Research England HEMG funding from 2024-25.
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2. Where do we want to go? Defining our Audiences

This strategy takes a holistic approach to audiences across our service, with the understanding that audiences can fall under several categories. In the process of defining audiences, we are also clear on who we are not targeting. We are not specifically targeting children and family audiences. To aid in understanding our target audience's wants and needs the Audience Agency's [Audience Spectrum](#) segmentation system will, at times, be referred to. A key principle underlying this plan will be consistent monitoring and evaluation of audiences.

To think more widely about defining our audiences this strategy asks the question of our target audiences:

- More (increasing numbers)
- Broader (diversifying demographics)
- Deeper (extending experiences)
- Sustain (maintain an established audience group)

2.1 Target Audiences:

There are three main areas, under which our target audiences fall:

1. University community
2. Leeds locals
3. Our four walls and beyond

1. University Community

Students

There are more than 39,800¹³ students at the University of Leeds. Most students are under the age of 21 at 65%, with students aged 21 – 25 at 25%.¹⁴ The student experience is central to the University's Strategy and Library Vision. This audience group would be classed as Experience Seekers, in particular the E2 subsegment, under the Audience Spectrum segmentation tool. In the University's direct postcode (LS2) there are 83% Experience Seekers, with them also making up the majority of audiences in following surrounding postcodes.¹⁵ Experience Seekers are 'A younger-leaning, lively and active cohort of busy, mixed prosperity professionals, from a wide range of backgrounds and at a variety of different life stages', with the E2 subsegment being 'Students and graduates with adventurous attitudes in diverse urban areas.'

We interact in a number of different ways with students across the CC&G service. There has been a student engagement project, with a focus on Gallery activity, in place since 2021. The project saw some key improvements including increasing awareness of the Galleries across the student community; a focus on a career development strand of activity; and the implementation of a student wellbeing strand. This project is the foundation on which our student engagement activity will grow.

In the Research Centre we support the student education experience in several ways, for example offering sessions as part of core modules, and the collection itself providing a ripe research ground for dissertation topics. There are key departmental relationships already established, but there is a lot of scope to extend our student support beyond the regularly engaged schools, such as History. There will also be a necessary shift in how we provide learning opportunities in line with wider

¹³ <https://www.leeds.ac.uk/about>

¹⁴ <https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/equality-data/student-data/student-data-2024/>

¹⁵ LS1 (93%), LS3 (91%), LS4 (63%), LS5 (36%), LS6 (69%), LS7 (26%) and LS18 (21%).

[Curriculum Redefined](#) work. In addition, we support many post-graduate students from the University and beyond who are undertaking independent research in a wide variety of disciplines.

Going forward we will look to target students in several ways:

- **More:** we want to increase the general visibility of our service to the whole student community, utilising partnerships with Leeds University Union, the Student Communications team, and academic and departmental links, alongside dedicating marketing budget to further this aim. A focus will be on wellbeing and social activities, fostering a sense of belonging. This targeting will be towards general visits to the Galleries, and an understanding of what the Research Centre can provide. Our baseline in the Galleries, from the last 5 years, is around 25% of our audience is made up of students.
- **Deeper:** our previous research has shown that development opportunities are a key driver for our student audience. To allow for a deeper engagement with our service we will create opportunities to gain experiences, such as paid internship programmes; working with DCCH to provide opportunities to engage with collections in a richer digital way; and working with academic schools and department to provide placement opportunities. Providing a deeper experience also includes the use of the Research Centre as part of student teaching, enabling a transformative educational experience.
- **Broader:** we want to broaden our student audience in a number of ways. Firstly 14% of students identified as disabled in 2023/24 (see EDI section below), whereas our general gallery data showed that only 10% of people visiting the Galleries identified as D/deaf or disabled person, or have a long-term health condition.¹⁶ It is an area for improvement across all audiences, not just students. We also want to target students from under-represented groups, for example by working with the [Plus Programme](#) to provide engagement opportunities; utilising the wider work around representation in the collections to create projects and internships around under-represented groups ([trialled with the LGBTQIA+ collections project](#)); and creating opportunities in our exhibition programme to engage with a diverse range of students. Finally, we currently mainly target arts and humanities students, but we would like to broaden this out to other schools.

Staff

With over 9000 members of staff¹⁷ at the University of Leeds this is a key audience for us to target and develop. As the University Strategy states: 'We can only make a positive difference to the world if our university community is strong'. So, by providing a service that embodies the principles of support and collaboration we can look to develop an offer for this target audience. Without postcode data for the staff community, we are not able to utilise Audience Spectrum segmentation system, however we can utilise equality data to see that our staff community comes from a diverse range of backgrounds.¹⁸

Our interaction with staff members has previously been multifaceted. For example, we have collaborative relationships with academic staff, either working on their own research projects or bringing their students in to use our service, alongside a wellbeing strand, offering spaces and events where all staff can take a break and partake in an activity with us.

¹⁶ Note: this figure includes all visitors, not just students.

¹⁷

<https://jobs.leeds.ac.uk/display.aspx?id=1697&pid=268#:~:text=We%20have%20a%20truly%20global,staff%20of%20100%20different%20nationalities.>

¹⁸ <https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/equality-data/staff-data/staff-data-2024/>

However, we currently have a low level of staff attendees, particularly in the Galleries, with only 9% of visitors being staff in 2023. There is scope to improve this in collaboration with other staff focussed campus initiatives. There is also scope in increasing the variety of academic staff who interact with our collections, beyond the already engaged departments – once we have a consistent monitoring system in place in the Research Centre, we will be able to expand on objectives around academic staff engagement:

- **More:** We need to continue and broaden our partnerships with researchers, academics and with wider staff engagement initiatives to encourage higher staff footfall in the Galleries. We need to continue relationships with key academics, who can act as advocates for the collection and Research Centre with their colleagues as well as collaborative co-creators, using our collections. Going forward, we want to measure our reach with our researchers and, taking a broad and inclusive definition of ‘research’, more proactively seek to collaborate and co-create with researchers, building on the track record we have already developed in relation to our exhibition programme and through our research fellowships

2. Leeds Locals

Culturally engaged Leeds locals

Leeds has a vibrant cultural ecology, in which CC&G plays a key role. Utilising the Audience Spectrum categorisation, we already have a high proportion of ‘Higher Engagement’ audiences (Experience Seekers, Commuterland Culturebuffs and Metroculturals) making up 55% of general Gallery attendees in 2023/24. This group of people are already more likely to attend cultural venues and keep up to date with the latest events in Leeds.

In the Research Centre, from analysing the weekly Researcher Roundups written internally, we anecdotally know that local societies use Cultural Collections to research talks, events and more.¹⁹

We have previously cultivated this audience through activities such as a changing exhibition programme; a regular schedule of events like lunchtime talks; maintaining strong relationships with local societies like the Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society; and promoting local research opportunities, like the Leeds General Cemetery Records.

- **Sustain:** As we have already developed this audience through previous strategies, we will look to maintain this group over the next 5 years, by continuing some of our established business as usual activity, such as targeting local Leeds advertising spots, and putting on a regular programme of events and exhibitions.

Migrants, Refugees & Asylum Seekers

We embarked on our ‘Welcoming Migrants’ project in 2022, and this strategy will continue and embed the project further.

The original driver behind the project was the strong collection holdings related to émigré scholars and artists. Now it is clear that this engagement is not only a crucial element of the strategy for Leeds University Libraries, but also that this activity contributes significantly to the wider University’s strategy, and its aim to gain University of Sanctuary status.

We know there is a strong community of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Leeds. According to the 2021 UK census 9.7% of people in Leeds have a non-UK identity, and with this increasing to 28.9% of people when you look at the University and Little Woodhouse area, and 32.3% in Leeds City

¹⁹ Benchmark report p. 26 (Research Round Up analysis)

Centre.²⁰ On average, in 2023, 1155 asylum seekers were supported per quarter in Leeds by Migration Yorkshire²¹, with 274 refugees settled in the Yorkshire & Humber area in 2023, by Migration Yorkshire.²²

For this target audience group, we share the vision of the [Cities of Sanctuary](#) movement, “that the UK will be a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution.”

- **Broader:** By embedding the Welcoming Migrants work beyond project-based activity, for example using lessons learnt to improve our general gallery visitor experience and plan events and exhibitions, we hope participants engaged in the programme will become general local visitors.
- **Deeper:** By working with established local partners, such as Leeds Asylum Seekers Support Network (LASSN), MAFWA Theatre and The Highrise Project, as well as being open to new collaborations, we will continue to offer community projects which will allow deeper engagement with our collections and service.

3. Our four walls and beyond

Inspired creators

The bedrock of our service are our unique, eclectic, and special cultural collections. We want these collections to be a source of inspiration for audiences locally, nationally, and globally. This area of audience development is concerned with what people do once they interact with our service, and how this may be harnessed to further the reputation of the collection and organisation. Examples may include researchers publishing new material based on our collections or creating new projects using our collections; artists being inspired or commissioned to create new work, or journalists and media producers featuring our collections in their publications and on their platforms. This audience will be targeted through Research Centre researcher engagement initiatives, as well as more generally through our events programme, with creative workshops and activities encouraging our gallery goers to become inspired creators.

- **Broader:** As a new target area, we will be bold and experimental in how we approach this audience, and initially the aim will be to broaden opportunities for audiences to become inspired creators. We want to better understand the needs of our wider research community, to proactively encourage more research engagement and collaboration using our collections in new and different ways in the future.

Digital Audiences

Digital is a broad church, but a timely and pressing concern for both this strategy and the wider direction of travel for the Library and University. The development of digital audiences is intrinsically linked to DLIP, and the importance of developing a strong digital audience base goes hand in hand

²⁰ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/identity/national-identity/national-identity-all-4a/non-uk-identity-only?lad=E08000035>

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrljoiYmE5MTY0OWEtYzQ2NS00OGRlWI2ZDktNGZmZmVtMWI1NDAzIiwidCI6IjE2ODY0ZmFILT14NmUtNDcwNy1hNzhilWQ3MTgt4ZDYxNDhlNyJ9&pageName=ReportSection866677c8622d93e98ab1>

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https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrljoiYmE5MTY0OWEtYzQ2NS00OGRlWiZ2DktNGZmZTVmMWI1NDc0ZmFILT14NmUtNDcwNy1hNzhilWQ3MTg4ZDYxNDIhNyJ9&pageName=ReportSection866677c8622d93e98ab1

with improving access to our collections and wider offer. Digital accessibility also ties in with the equity, diversity and inclusion strand that is threaded throughout the strategy.

For the purposes of this strategy, we will think about digital audience development in two ways, detailed below. However, for both subsets a key objective will be to find the right metrics and evaluation methods in order to understand and develop digital audiences.

1. Digital engagement and promotion

With almost all of the target audiences detailed in this strategy there will be an element of digital engagement and promotion in order to develop them.

Strategies around digital promotion, including creating an excellent website experience and utilising social media platforms, will be key in increasing our reach with our target audiences, and ultimately encouraging them to engage with our physical offer. We have a solid background in digital promotion, and through this new strategy we will use the data gathered over the last 5 years to audit which platforms and what type of content are most suitable for our target audiences. A key area for improvement, identified through audience research, will be improving the CC&G websites.

However, alongside the target audiences already detailed, we will also target digital audiences who might not have, or may never, visit Leeds, due to factors such as accessibility needs and geographical location.

In terms of developing this digital-first audience, we have had some limited success in this area in the past, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Examples include virtual consultations for researchers who cannot make it to Leeds; developing online exhibitions via the Google Arts and Culture platform; and running online talks. What we learnt from this online engagement activity, was that it takes time and resource to do successfully, something that will be factored into this strategy. In general, we are entering a new digital era, where social media will not be the be all and end all of digital audience development, the rise of generative AI is changing the stage for search engines, and people are looking to engage more deeply.

With this in mind, to be digitally ambitious this strategy proposes doing less quantity of content, but produce more quality content, with an emphasis on cultivating deeper engagement on owned platforms, rather than relying on the changing algorithms of social media platforms. Audience centred storytelling will be at the heart of this content approach.

- **Broader:** we will be aiming to broaden the types of people who engage with our collection digitally by, as our statement of purpose says, 'reflecting on the most important issues of our time'. We will utilise content sharing platforms which will allow us to reach a broader audience, as well as improving our own platforms, for example through the storytelling strand of DLIP.
- **Deeper:** by focussing on quality over quantity, we will focus on creating content which will lead to a deeper understanding and engagement with the collection for the audience.

2. Digital collections discoverability and access

Over the next five years, with the support of DLIP outcomes we will increase the volume of collections accessible and available online. This will include both digital content (born digital and digitised) as well as collections data. Physical and digital access will be facilitated via a refreshed Cultural Collections website and enhanced catalogue which will focus on discoverability and re-use.

Alongside our own collection discovery platform, our digital content and data will also be surfaced on aggregator sites and there will be a move towards providing open, licensable and re-usable formats.

Additionally, we are moving towards supporting linked (meta)data descriptions and the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) for presentation of digital content, both of which will enable digital communities to have richer experiences with collections and to make connections between collections held across the world.

- **Broader:** Through this work we will broaden our digital audiences in a number of ways:
 - By using aggregators, and moving towards open, licensable and re-usable formats, we will be increasing the visibility and reach of our collections and broadening the types of audiences who can discover and use them (including supporting computational approaches and machine learning/AI).
 - By improving discoverability, particularly building 'generous interfaces' and providing access points that make links between collections and allow users to browse by people, organisation, place and subject, we will support engagement with non-traditional/academic researchers who want to browse and discover serendipitously.
 - By providing more content and data online we will remove barriers of access to audiences that would ordinarily be unable to travel to Leeds to gain physical access to these collections.
 - By providing more content and data at scale we will better support digital researchers to employ innovative digital techniques (machine learning/AI) and undertake research not previously possible.

2.2 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

A key strand that will intersect across all our target audiences will be creating physical and digital spaces that are equitable, diverse, and inclusive.

Internally, as part of the Library Forward Plan, there is a 'cultural shift that will embrace institutional values of inclusivity, integrity, collaboration and compassion in our activities'. Four different groups have been set up to embrace this cultural shift, including one focussed on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. The work of this Cultural Shift Group will be key to changing internal processes. For example, they will develop a structured support model for staff who join us from underrepresented groups, ensuring satisfaction, retention, and inclusion, and they will review the Library's recruitment and selection processes, ensuring they are inclusive and reflective of good practices.

Looking at our physical sites, this audience development strategy includes a focus on improving the access provision across our 3 services and updating the access information about our spaces online. From previous data, specifically for the Galleries, audiences who, using the social model of disability, identify as a D/deaf or disabled person, or have a long-term health condition, have remained stable at between 6.5 and 7.5% between 2018 – 2023. However, this is fairly low compared to regional data, with the 2021 census showing that 18.9% of people in Yorkshire & Humber identify as disabled²³. In the context of the University, in 2023, 7% of staff identified as disabled²⁴, and 14% of students identified as disabled in 2023/24.²⁵ Alongside the gap this data demonstrates, we also know

²³

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/disabilityenglandandwales/census2021>

²⁴ <https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/equality-data/staff-data/staff-data-2024/>

²⁵ <https://equality.leeds.ac.uk/equality-data/student-data/student-data-2024/>

from external assessments, such as the VisitEngland Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Accreditation Scheme, that this is a key area for improvement.

In terms of ethnic identity, the Galleries' data from 2022-23 shows that the proportion of White visitors is broadly comparable to both the University and the city population, and that the Galleries do well in attracting visitors who describe themselves as Asian or Asian British, but that Black populations are under-represented in the overall audience figures compared with both the university and the city population data.²⁶

A way to tackle this gap, and to ensure we are promoting inclusivity and equity in general, is through our digital content creation and programming offer. A focus will be put on highlighting stories and experiences from a variety of diverse communities and voices. This work will be supported by a wider collection development initiative around representation in the collection.

All our work around EDI we will embody aim 4 of this strategy, as we will actively seek to consult and work collaboratively with people with lived experiences, alongside utilising expertise across the University and wider cultural sector, such as working in partnership with the Disability Services team and participating in the Yorkshire Accessible Museums Network.

26. University of Leeds Library Galleries and Special Collections: Audience Engagement Research Report, 2018-23, Emma King pp.17 - 19.

3. How will we get there? Aims

The following five aims have been formulated to help develop the target audiences detailed above. Digital will be a key aspect that runs throughout all 5 aims.

1. We are a unique and active asset to the University of Leeds, its strategy and community, and we will position our offer as a core part of the staff and student experience.
2. We provide a warm and inclusive welcome for all and will actively seek out opportunities to improve inclusive experiences and diverse audiences.
3. Our offer is engaging and visible locally, nationally, and globally. We will provide experiences tailored to our target audiences and will enhance the wider University of Leeds Libraries' reputation.
4. We work collaboratively seeking out partnership working, and utilising consultative methods in our practice. We will have a focus on social purpose partnerships.
5. We are a dynamic, audience-orientated service, responsive to changing environments, driven by data and regular evaluation.

4. How will know we have got to where we want to be? Objectives

4.1 Approach to objective setting

Although the five aims detailed will largely remain the same throughout the five-year strategy period, changing objectives for each of the five aims will be set yearly. The objectives will have associated actions and targets and will be related to the library wide OKR framework. Timescales will also be assigned to the actions.

The actions and targets within each objective will be reviewed at least quarterly and will be adjusted based on the latest data and evaluation.

Through this system we will be able to remain flexible with our approach, while ensuring our work remains on track.

A yearly report on these actions, targets and objectives will be created and shared with Library Executive Team and will be used to inform the next year's objectives.

4.2 Year 1 objectives

Note: Actions and targets are not included here, as these will be more responsive and changeable throughout the year.

Audience Development Aim	Objective
1. We are a unique and active asset to the University of Leeds, its strategy and community, and we will position our offer as a core part of the staff and student experience.	1.1 Create a programme of participation and activities to increase and broaden student engagement across the service, and to provide opportunities for deeper involvement and development.
	1.2 Develop our staff focussed offer, to increase engagement
	1.3 Collaborate with colleagues across campus and be a key partner in culture on campus initiatives, including implementing the new Cultural Engagement Strategy
2. We provide a warm and inclusive welcome for all and will actively seek out opportunities to improve	2.1 Ensure the highest quality of visitor experience to our physical spaces - meeting and exceeding external standards, such as Customer Service Excellence and the VisitEngland Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme

inclusive experiences and diverse audiences.	2.2 Improve the accessibility offer across our service, online and in person, seeking out collaboration and consultation opportunities with experts and people with lived experiences.
	2.3 Seek out opportunities to embed representation and voices from different communities in our programming.
3. Our offer is engaging and visible locally, nationally, and globally. We will provide experiences tailored to our target audiences and will enhance the wider University of Leeds Libraries' reputation.	3.1 Provide an engaging and inspiring exhibitions programme, with an audience first approach, and a focus on reflecting on the most important issues of our time.
	3.2 Create a meaningful and relevant events and activities programme for our target audiences.
	3.3 Review and improve our provision for digital audiences. Including a digital engagement and promotions audit, leading to a new content approach plan; and supporting digital collections discoverability and access through the wider DLIP initiative.
	3.4 Refresh the image identity for the service, ensuring audience feedback is a key part of decision making
	3.5 Take a strategic approach to press and media partnerships, with the aim of reaching our target audiences and enabling inspired creators to access stories from our collections.
	3.6 Seek out partnership opportunities with other Leeds and Yorkshire cultural organisations, to share and reach new audiences within our target segments.
	3.7 Refresh the Public Art on campus strategy
4. We work collaboratively seeking out partnership working, and utilising consultative methods in our practice. We will have a focus on social purpose partnerships.	4.1 Continue to embed and strengthen the Welcoming Migrants project, with a focus on determining key outcomes in consultation with our partners, and creating a consistent evaluation method for the project.
	4.2 To enable objective 2.3, utilise consultation and co-production methodologies across audience focussed projects and programming, sharing decision-making processes with relevant community stakeholders, groups, and networks.
5. We are a dynamic, audience-orientated service, responsive to changing environments, driven by data and regular evaluation.	5.1 Continue to utilise Audience Answers system for Galleries evaluation, reviewing the data collected regularly to continually improve our service.
	5.2. Create a consistent approach to audience evaluation in the Research Centre.
	5.3 Following the creation of a new digital engagement content plan (3.3), establish a regular review schedule for our digital output, and utilise evaluation and data to continually produce audience focussed content.
	5.4 Take part in relevant sector-wide surveys, to ensure we are able to benchmark our services on a national level.
	5.5 Prepare for the forthcoming Museum Accreditation Return, utilising the framework to review our service.
	5.6. Plan and implement regular cyclical programme of consultation (i.e. focus groups, surveys, UX testing) focussed on our target audiences, and supporting the objectives detailed in this strategy.
	5.7 Set up a system to regularly review the actions and targets related to these objectives and create a yearly objective report to inform the following year's objectives.