

## Appendix 7: Cultural and Creative programme

Manchester Libraries are an important part of the city's cultural and creative infrastructure, often providing access to resident's first cultural experience. Libraries are the most visited cultural venue in the city. The Central Library cultural programme, Library Live, is complemented by activities across all libraries, including three libraries badged as Creative Spaces – North City, Longsight and Wythenshawe Forum. The cultural and creative programme has been developed through several successful Arts Council England funding grants, establishing strong relationships with the city's cultural organisations and groups and supporting library staff's skills and confidence in programming creative events.

Alongside the busy events calendar delivered by library staff, such as cultural festival days, Sunday Fundays, school holiday crafting, Holiday Activity Fund sessions, weekly storytimes, author events, age friendly groups etc, the cultural programme provides access to other high quality creative experiences and opportunities on residents' doorsteps, as well as an introduction to the citywide offer. The cultural programme is delivered in partnership with the city's cultural organisations and artists, supported and informed by library staff.

Some examples of this activity include:

Beswick Library is continuing their four-year partnership of community engagement with the Royal Exchange Theatre which so far has included staff and customers actively participating in their Ambassador programme, Chatty Cafe, Young Ambassadors and Elders group. In August 2023 staff and volunteers from Royal Exchange Theatre produced the very successful East Manchester Community Festival at the Den, their pop-up theatre, which was co-hosted by Beswick Library and neighbouring East Manchester Academy. The programme continues with GM-wide Ambassador get-togethers, social events, free theatre seats for community participants and Young Company workshops.

The Force of Nature project, facilitated by Community Arts Northwest, supported Manchester-based women musicians Sarah Yaseen, Emmanuela Yogolelo and Meduulla to create music around the themes of climate change and climate justice in the Global South. First performed at Festival Square for Manchester International Festival 2023, the performance is now touring to North City Library and Longsight Library accompanied by a series of workshops engaging communities in creative climate conversations, song writing, singing and music making in each library.

Manchester Histories has established a hub in Manchester Central Library, it is a welcoming space that has a focus on wellbeing and highlights lesser-known histories and heritage through exhibitions, performances, installations, workshops, and events. The Hub also promotes the HiDDEN Network, a group of smaller historic buildings, museums, and libraries with rare collections and archives such as the Working-Class Movement Library, Victoria Baths, the Transport Museum and the Jewish Museum.

The library service has secured a grant of approximately £200k from the Arts Council's Libraries Improvement Fund (round 2) programme. The investment will contribute to a transformation of the first floor of the library in 2024, to create a flexible community creative and social space. It will be equipped for small scale live performances and screen presentations, as well creative, digital and music activity and engagement. The space will be a resource for young people as well as the wider community. The library is engaging with colleagues delivering the Cultural Hub planned for Wythenshawe Town Centre as part of the Levelling Up Round 2 initiative to ensure complimentary.

### **Highlights of the cultural programme: Feb 23 – Feb 24.**

#### **Jill Furmanovsky 'Photographing the Invisible' Exhibition, 50 years of rock photography.**

For the last 50 years, Jill Furmanovsky has been photographing music's greatest icons. In March 2023 Jill opened her retrospective exhibition, guest curated by Noel Gallagher, 'Photographing the Invisible' at Manchester Central Library displaying some of her most famous works and hidden gems from her extensive archive.

#### **Manchester City of Literature's Festival of Libraries.**

This celebration of Greater Manchester's 133 libraries featured a vibrant programme for all ages that highlights the library network's full offer, across wellbeing, culture and creativity, digital and information, and, of course, reading. Events were held in most of Manchester's Libraries including family fun days at Central Library, North City, Longsight and Wythenshawe Forum. The festival featured the 'Look for a book' initiative which engaged people with reading in non-library venues.

#### **Manchester Celebrates World Book Day 2023**

Thousands of free books were given away on Manchester's trams to celebrate World Book Day in March 2023. Commuters across the Manchester Metrolink network were in for a treat as the books went out to help promote a love of reading amongst children and their families.

#### **Empathy Day 2023**

550 children from across the city were invited to the National Cycling Centre (Velodrome) to be part of our exclusive author event celebrating Empathy Day. Manchester Libraries and Read Manchester hosted the live schools event with Empathy Lab, who brought top children's authors Rob Biddulph, Sophy Henn and Rashmi Sirdeshpande to the Velodrome, hosted by poet Paul Jenkins.

#### **Black British Book Festival**

Manchester was one of cities taking centre stage in a summer tour to celebrate the Black British Book Festival. The festival is Europe's largest celebration of black literature with storytelling, workshops. Central Library hosted the festival on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> September with talks from key black authors including Jackie Kay, Kehinde Andrews, Ore Agbaje-Williams and Lola Jaye.

### **Chorlton Book Festival**

Chorlton Library was preparing for an exciting refurbishment, so events were popping up all over town in 2023 bringing the folk of Chorlton a smaller but perfectly formed festival for 2023! Highlights included creative writing workshops, fantasy writers, diaries of a football fan, local history walks and spoken word performance night.

### **Brushstrokes of Bridgerton**

A special evening discussing the TV show, colour-blind casting, changing the narrative and discovering more about the panels experience within the world of theatre, TV and film. Panel members included Keisha Thompson, Contact Theatre, Kevin Dalton-Johnson, International artist and curator, Cllr Prof Erinma Bell MBE DL, Peace Campaigner and Carol-Ann Whitehead, Ubuntu Festival Director.

### **International Mother Language Day**

Every February we celebrate UNESCO's International Mother Language Day (IMLD) with our partners Manchester City of Literature. It is a day to champion language diversity and its connection to cultural and traditional heritage. During half term in 2023 libraries across Manchester held special events including dancing, food, storytelling sessions.

### **Central Library Author Events**

We work with local and national publishers and writers to programme our own diverse range of literary events. High profile authors we welcomed to Central Library include bestselling thriller writer Harlan Coben, Booker Prize winning author Douglas Stuart, queer fantasy fan favourite TJ Klune, Succession creator Jesse Armstrong and much-loved romance writer Tessa Bailey.

### **Manchester Literature Festival**

Once again, Central Library was the lead venue for the festival. Authors appearing in 2023 included Natalie Haynes, Karl Ove Knausgaard, Kate Mosse, Sebastian Barry, Sheena Patel, Simon Armitage, DJ Annie Macmanus, MP Lisa Nandy, musician Thurston Moore and comedian Doon Mackichan.

### **Fun Palaces**

Fun Palace events were held at four libraries across the city on Saturday 7 October for this national celebration of sharing passions and skills. Almost 2,000 people attended these hugely popular family fun days packed with creative activities.

### **South Asian Heritage Month**

This year's theme was 'Stories to Tell'. Manchester Libraries planned a range of events, including Chabba making workshops, Yoga classes, marionette puppet workshops and a new exhibition on the history of the Curry Mile.

### **Re:Sound**

Manchester City of Literature secured a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to deliver the Re:Sound project to allow young people in Manchester to connect with heritage through audio creativity. Manchester City of Literature and Unlocking Our Sound Heritage (part of Archives+) brought together six Manchester-based sound artists with six Manchester community groups to bring audio heritage and local history to life through dynamic soundscaping, collaging and music at Central Library.