

## Appendix 7: Cultural and Creative programme

Manchester Libraries are a vital part of the city's cultural and creative infrastructure, often providing access to residents' 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 creative and cultural organisations and community 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.

A major achievement this year was the launch of the new new Creative Space on the first floor of Wythenshawe Forum Library last October. The space has delivered a multifunctional creative resource offering high-quality, small-scale performance, exhibition, sound/music production, cinema and activity facilities for residents and partners in the area and further afield.

The space was awarded £199,000 using public funding through the UK Government's Library Improvement Fund, which is delivered by Arts Council England and supports libraries to extend and modernise services. The project received an additional contribution of £64,000 in match funding from the City Council.

Management of the space is supported by a Library Service Development Coordinator officer, and it is already being well used. Some programming highlights from the first 4 months of operation include:

- Regular activities for young people with Music Evermore (11-16 years old) and Wythenshawe Youth Theatre (7-18 years old) with an average of 50 attending weekly.
- The Community Media Crew, a performance and film company for adults with learning disabilities, premiered their play, *The Day Centre*, to an audience of over 100 people.
- An orientation visit by staff and pupils of Special Educational Needs school, Pioneer House in Northern Moor. Students had the opportunity to go on stage and use the microphones, sound system and to record in the podcast studio. The Creative Space will be hosting monthly class visits with Pioneer House.

- Hosting Happy Somedays podcast with Josh Deegan, the first, of what is hoped
- to be an ongoing partnership, featured an interview with Rowetta (formerly of the
- Happy Mondays).
- Paint Pots, an established self-taught art group at the library, exhibited some of
- their unique artwork on an autumnal theme in the exhibition space.
- Block Cinema, the long established, volunteer led, independent cinema, which offers a wide range of films at accessible prices, launched a weekly cinema offer in January.

Over the coming year relationships with local, community and creative groups will continue to grow, alongside developing relationships and activities with the city's cultural organisations and hosting many of the annual events put on by library staff. New grant funding opportunities are also being researched to support project work. The podcasting studio will be programmed, with support from a £5k grant from Libraries Connected Microgrant funding stream.

The Creative Space at the Forum Library will complement the Wythenshawe Culture Hub (described below) by supporting smaller scale work with the potential to grow, engaging communities and local creatives in activity to explore their interests, develop skills, spend social time together and inform the development of the hub.

A highlight from last year was the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of The Festival of Libraries - a multi-art form celebration of creativity in our libraries over five days in June 2024. The festival is a City of Literature initiative, partnered by libraries across Greater Manchester and is funded by Arts Council, England. During the festival over 100 events took place in libraries, with 1000s of people visiting a huge variety of events and exhibitions. Many of these took place in Manchester Libraries, including the Embassy of Utopia at Central Library, fun days at North City Library, Longsight Library and Forum Library and the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday Sunday Funday at Central Library.

Festival of Libraries won the Manchester Culture Award for Best Event for the 2023 festival, Manchester libraries are pleased to be part of this initiative, which delivers high quality creative and literary content and reflects how, as a UNESCO City of Literature, Manchester believes passionately in the value of libraries.

**Highlights of the cultural programme:  
February 2024 – January 2025  
Traditional Chinese Arts - Longsight Library**



Dragons Voice are ran a fantastic Age Friendly well-being project ***Be Your Creative Self*** for the Chinese community at Longsight Library. Artist and Calligrapher Jolene Lam is running 6 weekly traditional Chinese arts sessions in the run up to Chinese New Year (2024).

During the first session, participants wrote couplets in Chinese calligraphy. The couplets, which consist of 4 or 5 characters, are hung as decorations on either side of doors or the single characters on doors or windows. All of the characters and words are expressing lucky wishes and meaningful sayings used at Chinese New Year to wish each other health, wealth & prosperity.

This project brought together members of the Chinese community, exploring traditional Chinese arts with a Cantonese speaking artist supporting cultural heritage. It culminated a celebration event and launch of animation and toolkit on Sat 17 February 2024 at the library, which was open to everyone.

## Baby Opera - Central Library



Central Library hosted an amazing performance by the English Touring Opera. The performers provided a wonderful opera experience for 17 babies under the age of 18 months and their parents and carers.

Feedback included:

"Brilliant. Olive absolutely loved it. Engaged from start to finish. Thank you"

"Perfect musical and sensory experience for babies. Loved it"

## Festival of Libraries – Didsbury Library



As part of our Festival of libraries celebrations, Didsbury Library had the fantastic Playscapes: How to build a Galaxy show, which is an immersive performance installation that combines dance, motion and visuals. A group of children and their teachers attended Southern Cross Specialist School, everyone really enjoyed watching the show, it was a spectacular, engaging session with performers and light shows.

After the show attendees participated in a workshop where they had the opportunity to wear one of the motion capture suits, therefore able to learn techniques from the performers and then put on a mini show themselves. It was wonderful to see the children grow in confidence and absorb themselves into the workshops, the teachers also could not resist and put on a little show wearing suits.

## **Community Arts North West - North City Library**



In May, North City Library hosted a wonderful music event with Community Arts North West. The performance started with a local community group Obado who had worked with artists to create some songs of their own. Their enthusiasm radiated from each one of them and they took turns to take the lead during each song.

The band then took to the floor led by Sarah Yaseen, Emmanuela Yogolelo and Meduulla where they performed some powerful songs to the captivated audience. After these performances there were family crafts to take part in, information stands and plenty of cake and refreshments to enjoy!

## **Summer Reading Challenge and Holiday Activity Fund at North City Library**



North Area Libraries have had a wonderful time this summer with a packed programme for children and young people including activities for Ready, Set, Read, and the Summer Reading Challenge. Holiday Activity Fund sessions ran twice a week for four weeks at Miles Platting and Newton Heath Library with brilliant crafts, sport and fun things to do, plus a free lunch included.

Attendees made jewellery with Jesmonite, enjoyed STEM activities with NG Bailey building structures and model cars. Activities also included reading books together and having the opportunity to hold animals such as rats, land snails, centipedes, snakes and stick insects with Zoo Lab! Football freestyling skills with Mr Silky Skills were great fun, and local artists facilitated various creative activities for attendees to make and take home.

It was great to see so many children completing the Summer Reading Challenge again this year as well as participating in the Book Review competition over the summer. Library staff are now in the process of selecting the winners of the Grand Prize and goody bags for each library!

## South Asian Heritage Month Celebration - Withington Library



South Asian Heritage Month celebrations were held at Withington Library, organised by the wonderful Saheli group and library staff to celebrate South Asian culture and heritage. The event was vibrant and fun, offering attendees a chance to learn about and see traditional South Asian clothing, with people coming wearing traditional attire.

NHS staff contributed to the festivities by delivering two informative presentations on cancer and diabetes, providing valuable information and advice sheets for attendees to take home. The arts and crafts activities were as popular as ever, and the event featured delicious South Asian food from Lily's deli, including tasty samosas and bhajis. The Saheli group also brought desserts and lassi, which were a big hit.

## Creative Groups at Beswick Library



A lively cultural and creative programme took place at Beswick Library, with the staff launching the **Hello Saturday Craft Group** for children every Saturday in term time and two groups with partners at The Royal Exchange, Chatty Crafts for adults and Beswick Young Company for young people aged 11-16 who have opportunities to work with professional artists and to perform locally at the Royal Exchange Theatre.

The Chatty Crafts initiative also included trips to cultural organisations, like the Whitworth Gallery, and the group created an exhibition on the theme **EXTREME HOPE**, displayed at the Museum of Science and Industry. Alongside lanterns of hope, they made a banner which reads: **HANDS HOLDING HOPE AROUND A BIG BEAUTIFUL WORLD**

Both Chatty Craft the Beswick Young Company are Local Exchange projects. Chatty Craft was created by the local Royal Exchange Ambassadors for Beswick, Openshaw & Clayton.

## Black History Month activities - Hulme High Street Library



Alma Woodsey Thomas was the subject of our Black History Month activities for children and families. We had a fantastic time at Hulme High St Library learning all about such an amazing artist. Alma spent the 30 years of her working life as an art teacher in a secondary school. When Alma retired from teaching, she became a full time professional artist who despite being a woman who grew up experiencing segregation and racism became an amazing abstract artist who went on to have exhibitions of her work in prestigious galleries.

### Feedback included:

“Thank you very much for organising the workshop. It is great for Grandma and Grand-daughters.”

## Storytelling and Performances at Gorton Library



Children from All Saints Primary School in Gorton were treated to a fantastic interactive, Natures Fables themed activity with brilliant theatrical performer and storyteller Sophia Hatfield who explored flowers, birds, insects, the weather and common UK wildlife. Sophia sang, played accordion & ukulele and acted out the mini tales much to the delight of the two classes.

One of the feedback comments included the following from teacher Shawna:

"A big thank you for the author visit that Year 1 and Year 3 attended. Both classes absolutely loved it and the staff said it was a brilliant session."

## Creative Events - Forum Library



We hosted our first play called the 'The Day Centre' at the Forum Libraries Creative Space which was written and performed by the [Community Media Crew](#). This performance echoed and perfectly encapsulated the hyper local community aspect of our space. It was a roaring success with over 100 people in attendance which included the Lord Mayor and Lord Mayoress of Manchester.

For Self Care week both Mind Over Matter and Mercury Sounds made the most out of the Creative Spaces modern facilities. Maria who runs MOM hosted a mindfulness mediation session whilst Mary from MS used our performance space for a sound bath. Paint Pots exhibited some of their unique artwork in our exhibition space, and created an autumnal theme which added a touch of vibrancy to the space.

Pioneer House which is an SEND school based in Wythenshawe came to visit the Creative Space which they thoroughly enjoyed. Students had the opportunity to go on stage and use the mics and sound system available, the visit finished by recording some audio in the podcast studio. The Creative space at the Forum Library will also be hosting monthly class visits with Pioneer House, with the idea of creating a podcast down the line!

## Winter Welcoming Event - Longsight Library



Longsight Winter Welcoming at Longsight library and beyond was a fantastic fun occasion populated by local children and their families. Artist Emma Martin from Building the Bridge led lantern making workshops in the lead up to the parade. Wish Ribbons with local children's hopes and dreams were on display outside the library. On the highly anticipated day of the parade, we held a mini lantern making session in the library and each child who made one received a free book donated by Save the Children. We gave away well over a hundred books!

As soon as the winter light faded families made their way outside the library and all the big lanterns were distributed to carry. A giant snail representing the seasons led children and families around the streets of Longsight. The Lord Mayor of Manchester Cllr Paul Andrews, Andrew Gwynne MP, Cllr Suzanne Richards & Cllr Abid Chohan were all in attendance, opening the parade and enjoying the beauty of such a wonderful occasion.