

Libraries in Leeds Unite

Submitted by: Libraries in Leeds

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Books Up North

Home to over fifty libraries, the city of Leeds has good reason to celebrate the wide spectrum of support the information and knowledge sector offers its communities, businesses and public organisations. With libraries often forming health, academic, arts and heritage subgroups, the Libraries in Leeds network is a unique umbrella organisation in that the common feature of its members is their geographical location.

Not only does the city accommodate a thriving public library service, the oldest surviving members' Subscription Library, four universities and a Conservatoire, it is also the home of national records for DHSC, UKHSA and Royal Armouries. The British Library is also working towards establishing a permanent new site in the city centre of Leeds, powered by its existing site at Boston Spa, near Wetherby. Not forgetting the collections of regional and national importance preserved by the Morley team of the West Yorkshire Archive Service, librarians at the Henry Moore Institute and curators at the Thackray Museum of Medicine.

Over the past twelve months the Libraries in Leeds network has been quietly supporting each other, sharing best practice and knowledge. This autumn is its first public festival. Everyone is warmly invited to learn, be inspired, get creative and have their say about the future of the public libraries in their city.

With distinguished guests such as Sue Williamson MBE, former director of libraries at Arts Council England, Emma Smith, Professor of Shakespeare Studies at the University of Oxford, and Dr Nick Barratt, genealogist and consultant researcher to the popular BBC series "Who Do You Think You Are?", the talks programme is entertaining, relevant and informative.

Chief Knowledge Officer for NHS Knowledge and Library Services and Chair of the CILIP Board of Trustees Sue Lacey Bryant will be discussing how to access reliable health information and highlighting the dangers of misinformation. Also, taking place on Wednesday 6th will be a talk on the University of Leeds designated Cookery Collection, supplemented by a Cheese and Drinks reception close to the current exhibition "Becoming the Brontes" which will also be open to visitors.

From Monday 4th to Friday 8th September various libraries are offering a number of Backstage Tours, where people can get a sense of a librarian's working life at some of the city's libraries and archives. And the launch of a unique exhibition will enable some of the city's treasures to be viewed side by side in digital collection for the first time.

Saturday 9th September is the day for families with a range of drop-in activities at the Central Library including the special screening of "I Believe in Unicorns", a stage performance by Danyah Miller of Michael Morpurgo's much loved story that celebrates the power of books and the sanctuary of libraries. Meanwhile at the Creatorspace at the University of Leeds families can sign up to a two-hour 'Get Creative' session and enjoy seeing their ideas become reality. The festival events are either free or listed on Eventbrite as 'Pay What You Decide' to encourage maximum accessibility for everyone.

Not only is the purpose of the festival to raise awareness about the rich collection of resources that are based in Leeds, but the hope is also that local people will understand that the libraries are theirs to enjoy visiting and using. The Libraries in Leeds network's website usefully highlights each member's opening hours, visiting policy, contact details, location and a brief description of their offers.

As diversity, equality and inclusion are key to the sector's continued success, Leeds Beckett University is hosting an event during #Libraries Week on Thursday 5th October called "What's it like to work in an academic library?" where a panel of employees from three of the city's universities will be talking about their different roles and answering questions about their work.

"University of Leeds Libraries are proud to be part of and sponsor the inaugural Libraries in Leeds Festival. The festival celebrates the thriving libraries sector in the wonderful city of Leeds, highlighting the importance of libraries as critical social, knowledge, innovation, and cultural infrastructures. I look forward to our communities making the most of this festival and enjoying the wonderful collections and experiences that our sector offers."

Masud Khokhar, University Librarian and Keeper of the Brotherton Collection, University of Leeds

"Leeds Libraries are pleased to have been one of the founding members of the Libraries in Leeds network. We value the opportunity that this vibrant and innovative network brings for our staff teams to meet and collaborate but also the opportunity through this festival to promote to residents and other stakeholders the rich diversity of the city's library network."

Andrea Ellison, Chief Librarian of Leeds Libraries

"We are thrilled to be involved in the Libraries in Leeds Festival as we work towards deepening the British Library's roots in Yorkshire and establishing a permanent new site in Leeds city centre. Libraries have a powerful unifying influence and we want to ensure as many people as possible, wherever they are, can discover and use the national collection and our services as part of the wider network of libraries and archives that make Leeds such a vibrant city."

Sally Halper, Director of Research Services at the British Library

Follow the latest developments on social media:

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-ENDS-

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Notes to Editors

About Libraries in Leeds

Libraries in Leeds is a collaborative network that incorporates the libraries and archives based in the city of Leeds, working together to deliver a unique range of services in support of the city's key priorities. www.librariesinleeds.org

About the British Library

We are the national library of the UK and we are here for everyone. Our shelves hold over 170 million items – a living collection that gets bigger every day. Although our roots extend back centuries, we aim to collect everything published in the UK today, tomorrow and far into the future. Our trusted experts care for this collection and open it up for everyone to spark new discoveries, ideas and to help people do incredible things.

We have millions of books, and much more besides. Our London and Yorkshire sites hold collections ranging from newspapers and maps to sound recordings, patents, academic journals, as well as a copy of every UK domain website and blog. Our public spaces are a place to research, to meet friends, to start up a new business or simply to get inspired by visiting our galleries and events. We work with partners and libraries across the UK and the world to make sure that as many people as possible have the chance to use and explore our collections, events and expertise. And we're always open online, along with more and more of our digitised collection.