Greater Manchester Lives
The Power of Archives

Connecting us to the people and places we love
Insert quote from Chair of AGMA Statutory Functions Committee here.
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Making the case for archives

Archives have the power to enrich our understanding of the present through an appreciation of the past. They connect us to our families and the places where we live, work and study.

Archives play an important role in our communities and help to:

- Promote a sense of place
- Develop new digital skills
- Provide learning opportunities
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Support tourism and economic prosperity

This document highlights some of the key projects and initiatives that our archive and local studies services are delivering across Greater Manchester.

There is a huge appetite for family and local history, as programmes like *Who Do You Think You Are?* have demonstrated over the last decade.

Working with external partners and the local community we continue to build upon this interest and engage Manchester with its unique collective and personal histories.

What are archives?

Archives contain the original documents that tell the history of people, places and events that have shaped the world we live in today.

They include written documents, printed materials, images, maps, sound recordings and other media that bring the past to life in a unique way.

“What archives are a vital part of our cultural heritage. They help people, communities and nations make sense of the present and discover a shared sense of the past. (The National Archives, Archives for the 21st Century)”

What do archives and local studies services do?

We ensure that historically significant records are systematically collected, described and documented.

We preserve collections for future generations and ensure that they are set in a context that helps us all to understand them.

We work towards increased access by digitising our collections and catalogues. As with every other aspect of life today, the digital world is having a big impact on archive services.
Archives across Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP) is a formal collaboration between the ten local authority archive and local studies services in Greater Manchester.

This partnership provides an overarching strategy and development plan for the area, bringing benefits in terms of collective collaboration on service improvement and future sustainability.

Achievements so far

Since our inception in 2012 the Partnership has successfully...

• Increased digital access to our collections and catalogues
• Delivered staff training in social media, working with young people and leadership skills
• Involved volunteers with the creation of the GM1914 online blog which publishes weekly stories from our collections about the First World War
• Raised over £77,000 in external funding for archives across Greater Manchester

A number of joint policies and standards have also been developed across our services.

Our current priorities

GMALSP have identified the following priorities for archives and local studies across Greater Manchester for 2015–17:

Made in Greater Manchester
We have successfully secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project to raise awareness of industrial and business archives. Volunteers will play a key role, with plans for further joint recognition and training.

Digital Futures
Plans for a large-scale family history digitisation project, with support from a commercial partner are well under way. This is something we could not do as individual services.

Storage and Digital Preservation
Archive services in Greater Manchester face challenges with storage. Ensuring valuable digital information remains usable over time is a key issue for archives and we will work together to help solve this challenge.

We will also continue to work together to raise standards across Greater Manchester, with further shared staff and volunteer development, joint standards and advocacy.
Promoting a sense of place

Archives help to foster and promote a sense of community and personal identity.

Working together with external bodies we mark, record and preserve historically and locally significant moments for current and future generations.

Celebrating 450 years of Rivington and Blackrod High School

Bolton Library and Museum Services helped the school mark this historic milestone in 2016.

Students were given oral history training and visited Bolton History Centre to view collections and see how these could assist them in their research of the school’s history and its place in the community.

The school’s archive is now stored at Bolton Library and Museum Service and the service will continue to work with the school throughout their special anniversary year and beyond.

Ashton Munitions Explosion

In 2015 Tameside Local Studies and Archives secured external funding from the Ministry of Defence to engage the community with an understanding of the local consequences and impact of warfare.

Working alongside an artist they focused on the Ashton Munitions Explosion of 1917 to create an exhibition remembering those lost in the blast and what life was like in Ashton during World War One.

Unlocking Oldham

Oldham Local Studies and Archives are introducing Year 5 students from across the borough to the history of their town through archives.

They have also developed an Unlocking Oldham teaching resource that brings Oldham’s rich history to life as a cross-curricular unit of work that can be adapted for both KS1 and KS2.

Heritage in Hattersley

Tameside Local Studies and Archives worked with Hattersley Neighbourhood Partnership to help residents record memories of the post-war housing clearance programme of the 1960s and early 1970s.

The project included a book, film and exhibition and provided a permanent record of this important part of history that was missing from local archives. Residents also came together in a lasting social group that continues to enjoy and support their local heritage.
“I love history. We don’t do anything like this at school, it’s all about wars not local stuff.”

School pupil aged 13.
The Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership is bringing benefits in terms of collective collaboration on service improvement and future sustainability.

Greater Manchester

1. City of Manchester
2. Stockport
3. Tameside
4. Oldham
5. Rochdale
6. Bury
7. Bolton
8. Wigan
9. City of Salford
10. Trafford

- 10M family history records digitised
- 2M images of church registers from Greater Manchester were viewed online in 2015
- 86% of visitors to archives developed new skills or improved existing skills
- 97% of visitors to archives developed a greater understanding of their community, its history and people
- 268 people volunteered at archives across Greater Manchester
- 22,000 hours of time contributed by volunteers
Improving health and wellbeing

Archives make a positive contribution to people’s health and wellbeing across Greater Manchester.

With a wealth of historical documents and images at our disposal we are well placed to support a range of research opportunities for health professionals.

Making memories

Trafford Local Studies have been working with Trafford General Hospital to provide reminiscence packs for use with dementia patients.

Packs are themed and contain large images to help those with visual impairment. The materials provide a valuable and responsive resource for discussion by patients and staff to promote wellbeing and memory.

The project continues to grow and develop as part of a long-term sustainable plan. A student from Manchester Metropolitan University is now helping to run weekly sessions, enabling more patients to attend and be supported.

Mental health

Bury Archives worked with Greater Manchester West Health NHS Foundation Trust on the Safety in Numbers project.

Students from Bury Church of England High School worked with archivists and health professionals to research the history of Prestwich Asylum and explore how attitudes, care and treatment of mental illness have changed since Victorian times.

The project produced a Key Stage 3 learning resource that has been rolled out to schools across Bury. The resource guide includes a fascinating historical timeline of mental healthcare across Greater Manchester alongside individual case studies of patients and staff from the early 1900s.

“The pictures really appropriately target the needs of the dementia population, and I have really appreciated your understanding of this in selecting the best pictures. The local relevance is not something you could buy in any of the more generic reminiscence resources that are available online, and as a result they are a very precious resource to us.”

Trafford General Hospital

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Developing new digital skills

Archives were made for a digital world and can help develop the online skills of our residents.

We are increasing inclusion and building self-confidence among volunteers and the local community as the process of digitising our archives continues.

Creating an online memorial

Wigan Archives has a team of over 70 volunteers digitising, cataloguing and selecting thousands of records.

Their achievements include the creation of a new online war memorial for the Wigan Borough, recording and commemorating every individual from the area who died during the First World War.

Digital Salford

Salford Local History Library, with the help of a Heritage Lottery Grant, recently undertook a community digitisation project focusing on over 70,000 images and photographs.

Over the course of two years, 23 volunteers gave more than 1600 hours of time to scan images selected by members of the community that reflected the streets, buildings and areas important to them.

Building self-confidence

Oldham Local Studies use local volunteers to digitise and catalogue the Council’s photographic collection. By learning new skills they have witnessed a visible increase in the self-confidence of their volunteers.

Tameside Local Studies and Archives are running blogging workshops for residents, showing them how to set up an online blog for local history or even their own business idea.

“The response to Digital Salford has been overwhelming which demonstrates that the people of Salford have fully engaged with it... It is an inspirational project that has captured the imagination of local people and should be an example of how image collections are digitised for the benefit of the community.”

Paul – Digital Salford volunteer
Providing learning opportunities

Volunteering in archives provides opportunities to develop new skills, visit our venues and engage in archives research and conservation.

In 2015 a total of 268 people volunteered at archives across Greater Manchester, giving over 22,000 hours of time to archive services.

Marking the First World War

Created by volunteers GM1914 is an online blog publishing weekly stories about the First World War from archive collections from across Greater Manchester.

A total of 95 volunteers have so far contributed 6,000 hours, with the age of volunteers ranging from undergraduates to 70 year-olds. Three in five volunteers had no previous archives experience.

The project won the prestigious Archive Volunteering Award at the 2015 Archives and Records Association of the UK and Ireland (ARA) awards.

Supporting specialist needs

Wigan Archives are working on a number of projects with adults and young people with more specialist needs.

They currently support a group of young men with autism in regular volunteering and work with council and Job Centre Plus case workers to provide employment skills placements.

Staff are also working closely with Adult Services and the Community Knowledge Team to provide volunteering opportunities for residents suffering from social isolation, as part of the Wigan Deal.

Skills for the Future

Stockport are working collaboratively with other council services and local community groups to provide Skills for the Future training and work experience opportunities to people wanting a career in the heritage sector.

Trainees have undertaken an oral history project for Marple Civic Society and researched and produced a report into social media for Marple Local History Society.

The trainees have also helped to deliver educational visits to the Library as well as creating displays and participating in events around the Borough.
“It has given me experience and skills which prospective employers take into consideration when considering me for employment.”

Volunteer
Supporting regional tourism

Archives help to position and promote Greater Manchester as a world-class region in which to live, work and visit.

Archives+

Growing audiences and changing perceptions
Archives+ has created exciting interpretive exhibition spaces within the recently renovated Manchester Central Library. The exhibition provides new ways for people to discover the richness and relevance of archives, share their stories and have a personalised experience of the City Region’s history.

The Archives+ exhibition has already proved hugely popular. Manchester Central Library reopened in March 2014 and has welcomed over 3 million visitors in its first two years. Approximately 70% of these visitors have visited the Archives+ exhibition.

A quarter of all visitors to Central Library are from outside the North West, with 73% of these visitors contributing to the local economy through spending on shopping, food and drink and overnight accommodation.

There is also evidence to suggest that the exhibition has changed visitors perception of Greater Manchester. A majority of people (67%) reported that their impressions had been altered by something they had learnt in Archives+.

“I am proud to see my family documented in the history of Manchester and that my father was the first person to bring Sikhi to Manchester. Waheguru je khalsa, waheguru je ke fateh!!!”

“So weird seeing photos of our family which we don’t even have copies of! Feeling proud at the moment. chardia kala!!”

“It's great to see representation of the Polish community here in Manchester.”
“Oldham can point to a proud heritage of self made business millionaires that stretches back to the Industrial Revolution; yet it is an Asian business man that can claim the title of the town’s most successful business man – and it is Asian owned businesses of all shapes and sizes that are helping to take forward the local economy. It is a remarkable fifty year story of economic progress, and I am very pleased that it is to be recorded and preserved as part of Oldham’s history.”

Kashif Ashraf on the Cotton, Curry and Commerce project, Asian Business Association
Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP)

The National Archives

www.gmlives.org.uk