Heritage Lottery Fund pledges £1.55million for the transformation of Manchester Central Library

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The additional £1.55m from HLF for the Archives+ project will transform public access to archive and family history collections held by the local authority and complementary partners, so that people from across the community will be inspired to learn about and explore the wealth of history captured in the collection.

Archives+ will bring Manchester's history alive with interactive interpretation areas on the ground floor and exhibition showcases for rare books in the majestic domed Reading Room on the first floor. This will include viewing stations for film archives and exhibitions telling the story of different aspects of Manchester's history. A new community exhibition space will be created in the lower ground floor.

As part of the project, events will be offered through the archives and library, with hands-on activities and performances for families, young people and schools. New volunteer opportunities will also be created so that local people can get directly involved in the archives and the treasures.

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "We at the Heritage Lottery Fund are delighted to support the groundbreaking Archives+ project at Manchester Central Library. Every aspect of Manchester's development as the world's first industrial city is captured here in these collections, and thanks to this project visitors from near and far will be able to explore and learn about the city's fascinating history."

Councillor Rosa Battle, Executive Member for Culture and Leisure, said: "Our redesign of Central Library to transform it into a world-class centre is a step closer with the award of this additional funding from Heritage Lottery Fund to create a centre of excellence for our unique archive collection. Archives+ will give Mancunians and our visitors from around the world the chance to develop a fuller and richer understanding of the phenomenon that is Manchester and the people who have helped to shape its destiny over the centuries. It will bring together the largest and most important archives from different Manchester venues and it will give new audiences, including young people and schools, the opportunity to engage with and be inspired by the archives and treasures at Manchester Central Library."

The Archives+ collection includes items dating from the 12th century, and includes a wide variety of materials including rare books, special collections, parchment, paper, leather-bound volumes, photographs, glass negatives, and film.

Much of the collection relates to the industrial heritage of Manchester and family history. There are also important documents recording the city's social heritage, including the arrival of people of different nationalities, Manchester's role in the free trade movement, the country's first public library supported by public rates and the establishment of the Manchester Ship Canal.

The Archives+ partnership promises to break new ground in how the public can access archive and special collections, and learn about the story of the city and region.

Further information

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