South Asian heritage to be celebrated in



The Library of Birmingham Christian Richters

A project to celebrate the role of South Asian culture in Birmingham's history and identity has been awarded an HLF grant of £91,700.

The Library of Birmingham, in partnership with the British Library, will present a major exhibition and public programme of events and workshops throughout 2017. The Documenting Histories project coincides with the city's wider celebration, Utsav, Year of South Asian Culture, marking the UK's longstanding cultural ties with the Indian subcontinent.

Documenting Histories

The new exhibition, which will open in July, draws on both libraries' rich collections and includes official records from the East India Company, classified surveillance files, archive papers from figures like Gandhi and photographic portraits stretching back over 70 years. Many of the exhibits will be on public display for the first time.

Local people will also be given the opportunity to share their experiences and journeys, creating a lasting testimony to South Asian migration to the UK.

[quote=Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF West Midlands]“Thanks to National Lottery players, this project will help people gain a better understanding of Birmingham’s diverse cultural heritage and how it has helped to form the city we know today.”[/quote]

Cllr Ian Ward, Deputy Leader of Birmingham City Council, said: “Combining regional and national archive collections for the first time, the exhibition promises to bring local people’s stories to life and reveal the fascinating history of Birmingham’s South Asian heritage. With its focus on involving citizens and communities throughout the city, it’s especially significant that this new partnership will invite people from all over Birmingham to tell and share their own stories.”

The project will also train volunteers in curation and host workshops on using and developing archives.

Roly Keating, Chief Executive of the British Library, said: "We are delighted to be working with the Library of Birmingham once again on this timely and important project and we are grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their generosity. This partnership can be seen as a celebration of collaboration – between libraries, communities and cultures – exploring the wonderful potential that’s unlocked when we come together to share our ideas and our stories.”

Celebrating Birmingham’s diverse heritage

Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: “We are delighted that we can support the Library of Birmingham to explore over 400 years of South Asian heritage in the UK. Thanks to National Lottery players, this fascinating and timely project will help people gain a better understanding of Birmingham’s diverse cultural heritage and how it has helped to form the city we know today.”

Grants of £3,000 upwards are still available for groups wanting to explore and share Birmingham’s diverse ethnic and cultural heritage. Groups with project ideas should get in touch with the HLF development team to discuss their plans via email.