



UCL

UCL Special Collections

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# Outreach Strategy 2024-2027

This should be read alongside UCL Special Collections' core strategies, policies and procedures. It forms the overarching context for the outreach implementation plan.

# Mission

In addition to supporting UCL Special Collections in delivering their core mission, the Outreach team seeks to:

**Empower our audiences to explore UCL's collection of rare books, archives and manuscripts and to make careers in the cultural heritage sector more accessible through inspiring, discursive and inclusive programming.**



## Aims

- To encourage and empower schools and local community audiences to feel entitled and equipped to access special collections at UCL.
- To champion a more diverse range of voices and stories within the collection.
- To increase awareness and broaden access to the professional fields represented within Special Collections.
- To ensure the Outreach programme is visible and perceived to be dynamic and relevant by the UCL community and by external audiences.

## Objectives

- To continue to serve schools and community groups in our key boroughs through a discursive and inclusive programme that responds to audience needs and interests.
- To seek out opportunity to collaborate with UCL departments and colleagues, especially those at UCL East and LCCOS.
- To invest time in broadening the selection of items used in the Outreach programme both in physical and digital formats.
- To devise a series of activities that raise awareness of Special Collections' Outreach programme within the UCL Community.
- To continue to establish and build on strategic relationships with community and educational organisations in our key boroughs.
- To deliver an enriching volunteer and work experience programme.

# Context

Where some school activities are concerned, Special Collections' Outreach programme intersects with **Widening Participation's** mission. This is also the case with aspects of Special Collections' community activities and **UCL's East Community Engagement** mission. Special Collections' Outreach programme is complimentary to these areas of work within UCL, but it remains distinct in that it sits within LCCOS and ultimately works to broaden public access to the university's collection of rare books, archives and manuscripts. It is also core funded by LCCOS, unless external funding has been sought out for particular projects.



# Audience and needs

The Outreach team aims to engage with audiences that are 'harder to reach' than those who might otherwise access and use a university's special collection services. Priority audiences are defined by two key characteristics; their proximity to UCL's campuses and their being unlikely to access special collections at UCL without the Outreach programme.

Our target audience is characterised as someone who is not aware of, or already accessing, special collections and archives. They are likely to be under the age of 18, or adults who are not university graduates. They are not academics, they do not carry out historical research in a professional capacity and they are not usually a part of UCL's existing community of students, staff and academics. The exception to this is the volunteer and work experience audience, which may include (but is not exclusive to) UCL students, and teacher CPD programming.

In addition to these characteristics, the Outreach team's priority audiences also live, work or go to school within one of five neighbouring boroughs to UCL's campuses; Camden, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest. While online digital engagement might reach a wider audience than this on occasion, audiences from these specific geographical areas remain a priority.

Given the nature of the specified target audience, some key overarching principles will be adhered to in delivering the Outreach programme:

- Where possible, activities will be free for audience members (where a fee applies, it should be minimal).
- All programming will be devised after careful consideration of and - where possible, consultation with - the intended audience, meeting their specific needs both in terms of learning and more practical aspects, such as venue or schedules.



# Methodology

The Outreach programme will include distinct strands that are crafted especially for the intended audience:

## 1. Schools

The schools programme is designed to fit within schools' usual curriculum and routine, while bringing something unique that teaching staff cannot otherwise provide. This will include one-off Curriculum Support workshops (using the collection to enrich topics already being taught), after school clubs (championing curiosity, enquiry skills and wellbeing) and bespoke workshops (designed especially for 'partner schools' with whom the Outreach team are fostering longer term relationships). Where possible these activities will include a group visit (or multiple visits) to the UCL Campus to see original items and experience the university environment.

## 2. Community groups

Workshops, online engagement and collaborative or community curated exhibitions pitched to particular groups' interests and needs. Training programmes for audiences to discover the cultural heritage sector as an area of work.

## 3. Volunteers

A programme of short term and long term placements that carefully match individuals' interests and skills with projects within the Special Collections team.

## 4. Work experience

A programme of work experience opportunities that is accessible and made available for a wide range of individuals. The hosting of school work experience placements from partner schools.

## 5. Exhibitions

An annual exhibition in the Main Library at UCL that champions the collection. Collaborations on other UCL and community exhibitions, both physical and digital.

# A commitment to ethical codes and policies

The work of the Outreach team will comply with UCL's **Equal Opportunities Policy** and GDPR legislation at all times. It will also follow UCL's **Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy and Procedure**, and when activities are delivered as a guest to other institutions (such as schools), the hosting institution's safeguarding policy will be adhered to. In addition to the safeguarding policies specified above, when engagement takes place online, it will closely follow the guidelines outlined in UCL Special Collections' *Safe Online Engagement with Young People and Vulnerable Adults*. The volunteer and work experience programme strand will be guided by UCL's **Internships, Work Experience and Volunteering Policy** alongside additional guidelines specified in UCL Special Collections' Volunteer Procedure.



# Collections use

Where possible, the Outreach programme will create access to the collection in a 'face to face' environment. However, the need to provide activities off-site means that this is often not possible. In this case, the team will work to ensure the best possible alternative, such as working with the Digital Collections team to develop digital resources.

# Fundraising

While the Outreach programme is funded by UCL Special Collections' core budget, specific projects and/or collaborations might call for external funding. The Outreach team will actively pursue opportunities to bring funds to the programme in this way.

# Evaluation, reporting and reflection

The Outreach team will work in a reflective manner throughout the planning, delivery and evaluation of all aspects of the programme. This includes the recording of key statistics, the writing of an annual report and formative assessment throughout. All activity will be evaluated in some way, depending on the aims and objectives of individual projects. This might be through informal discussion with participants, teachers or community leaders, the formal collection of surveys and data or the use of an external evaluator for formal reports or research.

Any evaluation that takes place will inform the programme's ongoing development, the team's training and the direction in which relationships with partner organisations or stakeholders will be developed.

## Aspirations

While UCL Special Collections Outreach Implementation Plan sets out the forthcoming year's activities, the team's aspirations reach further and wider than these parameters. As well as continuing to progress with the aims and objectives set out in this document, the following ambitions will also guide decisions and inform investments regarding the fostering of partnerships, staff development and the use of resources:

- The ability to track the legacy of work experience placements and career programmes for individuals' career paths.
- The development of long-term projects whereby individuals' progress and our impact can be tracked and monitored.
- Raising collaborators' own aspirations about themselves; both in terms of wellbeing and learning/career confidence.
- Foster our own relationships with East Bank partners, especially as London Legacy Development Corporation comes to a close.
- Growing the team, whether through more permanent staff or Freelance facilitators, to enable us to expand the programme further.
- Increase work with audiences we engage with less such as older adults and primary school audiences.
- To be recognised for our work across LCCOS and UCL East.
- Improve access to collections, digitally and in person, in the new UCL East campus.
- Nurture our long term relationship with community partners in our target boroughs to an extent that recruitment for projects like The New Curators Project can be achieved through a significant number of referrals.
- Continue to explore new collection stories and incorporate new technologies in the way we do this.

