

UCL Special Collections Outreach Strategy, 2019-2022

This should be read alongside UCL Special Collections' core strategies, policies and procedures and 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:

create inspiring and engaging learning experiences for a diverse non-specialist audience, increasing awareness of, and access to, the university's collection of rare books, archives and manuscripts.

Aims

- To raise awareness of the collection
- To promote the use and value of historical research using primary resources
- To encourage and empower non-specialist audiences to feel entitled and equipped to access the collections
- To improve learners' enquiry and interpretive abilities when encountering sources and texts of all types
- To promote social inclusion
- To increase awareness and broaden access to the professional fields represented within Special Collections

Objectives

- To devise and deliver an inspiring schools and community educational programme
- To nurture the team's relationships with UCL departments, collaborating and sharing best practice
- To establish and nurture strategic relationships with community and education organisations.
- To deliver an enriching volunteer programme that is mutually beneficial both to participants and UCL Special Collections
- To deliver a meaningful work experience programme for a range of audiences

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 'non-specialist'.

A 'non-specialist' audience member 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 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 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).
2. Community groups
Workshops, online engagement and collaborative or community curated exhibitions pitched to particular groups' interests and needs.
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, including remote and on-campus activities. 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 alternative resources. The team will also ensure that routes to see the collection in person are offered following the project.

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 Implantation Plan sets out the forthcoming year's activities, the team's aspirations reach further and wider than these parameters. The following ambitions will continue to 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 for individuals' career paths
- The development of long term school projects whereby individuals' progress can be tracked
- The commitment to a richer and busier community programme strand once UCL EAST has launched.

Created by Vicky Price, September 2020

Agreed by Director of Services 21/01/21