



“I feel so secure and relaxed when I bring my little ones in the library! I haven't found any other place in York that can make me feel like this. Thank God for the library- it is a gift for parents!”

explore

Knowledge and Ideas for Everyone

Annual Review 2019-2020



“I think many people don't realise what an invaluable gem we have in York. I keep reading and hearing about the library closures around the UK and worldwide and I remind myself how lucky we are to have such a fantastic library in York!”



explore

Libraries and Archives

IN THE LAST YEAR...



1,023,034 people
visited Explore Libraries and Archives.

206,330 books

available to read
including ebooks,
local history and
music scores.



112,874

genealogy

searches

More than
25,000
archives made
accessible

7
**Friends
Groups**

raise funds
and promote
our work

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

329

compliments

56

suggestions

117

complaints



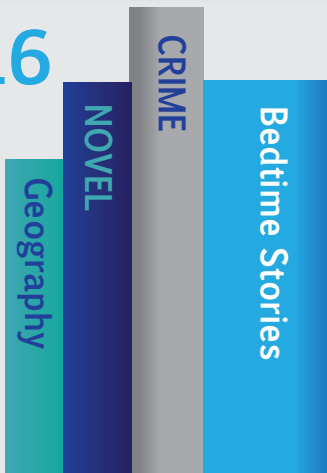
700
volunteers

(the largest number of
volunteers in York) gave
25,988 hours of their time

Knowledge and Ideas for Everyone

736,616
books

Borrowed by people of all ages.



3,483
children

joined in the Summer Reading Challenge



who completed the survey said they were proud to work for Explore

explore LABS
Libraries, Archives & Media Arts

8,697 participants

82 artists

36 community arts and cultural organisations

56 community groups, schools and learning organisations

Over three years of the project

Winner

of the Social category at the Edinburgh Edge 2020 awards

10,621 adults participated in **890** activities

32,352 children participated in **2,140** activities

Customers tell us how libraries contribute to their wellbeing and help to stop loneliness. How the staff provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere that is inclusive and accessible.

Chair's introduction

What a year this has been. A year where we have seen once again that Explore is a wonderful organisation, with outstanding people, doing really important work in so many areas and so many places. The libraries have been places for children, young people, young adults, workers, carers, the cared for, mums, dads, grandparents and older people generally. They have been welcoming places at the heart of the communities we serve... places for readers, writers, poets, storytellers, makers, creators, dancers, artists, musicians and singers... social spaces, community spaces, family spaces, creative

and cultural spaces, learning spaces... and importantly in all these places we will be listening, learning and looking at how we can continue to work to meet everyone's needs.

I hope you enjoy reading this annual review which highlights a year of hard work and real progress for Explore York Libraries and Archives. It is impressive that over a million people visited our libraries and that our activities and initiatives increased due to the creativity, imagination and hard work of so many people. In increasingly challenging times, it is important to recognise that we are continuing to deliver

so much that is outstanding alongside ever-improving services to our members, our visitors and the communities we serve. I would personally like to thank Fiona, Sarah, Susan, Barbara, Gillian and the rest of our amazing team for making this such a successful year for Explore. I would also like to thank our volunteers, our friends, our partners and elected members and officers from the City of York Council without whom we couldn't have achieved so much.

Chris Edwards
Chair of the Board



Chief Executive's message

We started the year winning a new contract with the City of York Council to deliver their library and archive services for the next 15 years. We are so excited at the opportunity this affords us to realise our long term plans. We completed our award winning Explore Labs project this year. Over the last 3 years we have transformed our libraries into cultural spaces that deliver exhibitions, drama, poetry, art. We have also worked with a range of artists working in different art forms to interpret the stories held in our archives. The voices of York's past are being heard again through these projects and more people of all ages are realising the importance of our archives. This has been ground breaking work and we have received national acclaim for it. Our community singing sessions

– Cuppa and a Chorus brings people together to sing, improving their mental health and helping to make new friends. These sessions have been so popular that we had to hold additional ones to include everyone. They are similar to our Boccia sessions which have brought so many people together to play and make new friends. (Boccia is a form of bowls for people with limited mobility) These demonstrate our role in providing different activities that help communities to come together as well as improving health, both physical and mental. Space Chase, this year's Summer Reading Challenge was another success and we put on an exciting programme of activities for children. 3,483 children took part in the Challenge and staff enjoyed talking with them about their reading, encouraging

them to read new authors and widen their choices. It is always a summer of fun working with children to discover the joy of reading as they collect their prizes along the way to the Challenge medal. Our School's Cup was won by Acomb School for the 3rd time, such an achievement for them. All of these projects are supported by our amazing volunteers who make such a difference in what we can deliver. I am so proud of being CEO of Explore and so excited to be starting our second contract with CYC as a key cultural provider in York.

Fiona Williams
Chief Executive, Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Limited



THE SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

Every year we hear stories of how children who had not thought of themselves as readers have been inspired by the Summer Reading Challenge. Summer Reading Challenge 2019 Space Chase

“Listening to the passion in a young reader’s voice as they talk about their book is one of the most rewarding parts of the challenge. And I can’t forget when their faces light up upon seeing their medal!”

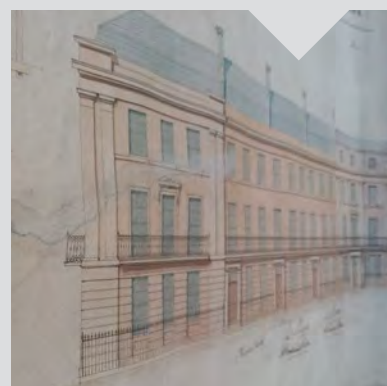
Volunteer, Summer Reading Challenge 2019



celebrated the anniversary of the moon landings. 45 schools were visited by library staff who got children enthused about the challenge. 3483 children and young people took part. 160 events were attended by 2173 children.

ARCHIVE – ON THE DRAWING BOARD

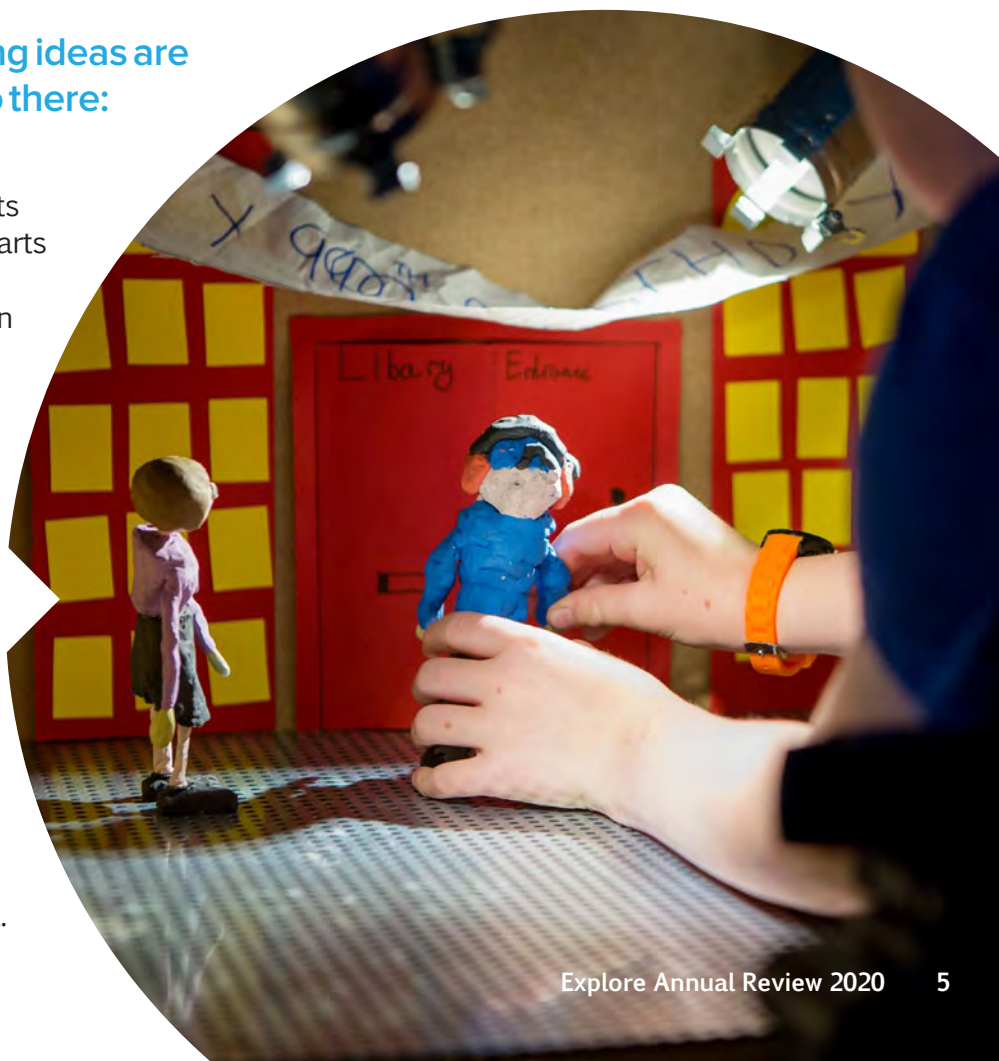
This cataloguing and conservation project was completed giving access to 10000 engineers and architects plans. Some of the images were exhibited at the Mansion House in January 2020 and the collection has proved enormously popular since its release.



EXPLORE LABS

“You don’t know what exciting ideas are inside your head until you go there: your dreams start here”

2020 saw us complete our 3 year Arts Council England-funded community arts project, Explore Labs. Labs helped libraries develop as cultural spaces in the heart of communities and today York Explore is a thriving venue with increasing visitor numbers and interaction with artists, community groups and cultural organisations. Explore Labs has been recognised nationally by Arts in Libraries network and Libraries Innovation network and The National Archives, and was awarded a prestigious Edge award in 2020. What we have learned through Explore Labs will help shape our future, as we transform all our libraries with participation, co-creation and inclusivity at their heart.





RE-IMAGINING OUR SPACES

The Marriott Room became an intimate 60-seat performance space for an experimental programme including: Pop-up cinema - Dancing Stories, an exploration of children's stories through play, movement and dance - Live in Libraries York featuring local and international musicians.

The Café at York Explore is also a gallery and exhibition space. The rolling programme of exhibitions covers local community arts projects to international artists. By re-imagining our spaces

“This is such a lovely place; I felt safe, warm and secure. I don't go out much because of confidence issues. I shall certainly return. Everyone is so friendly and welcoming.”

at York Explore we attracted new audiences and introduced existing customers to high quality cultural experiences. This has provided a blue-print of how all our libraries could evolve to enrich the everyday life of communities.

CUPPA AND A CHORUS - SINGING FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Cuppa and a Chorus workshops enabled people to sing music from around the world together in a relaxed environment, and enjoy an all-important cup of tea and chat afterwards. The workshops were inclusive with no need for any previous experience of singing. Their success led to sessions being rolled out to East Riding libraries and they were featured as an example of how libraries help combat loneliness by the Local Government Association and Arts Council England.



NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION

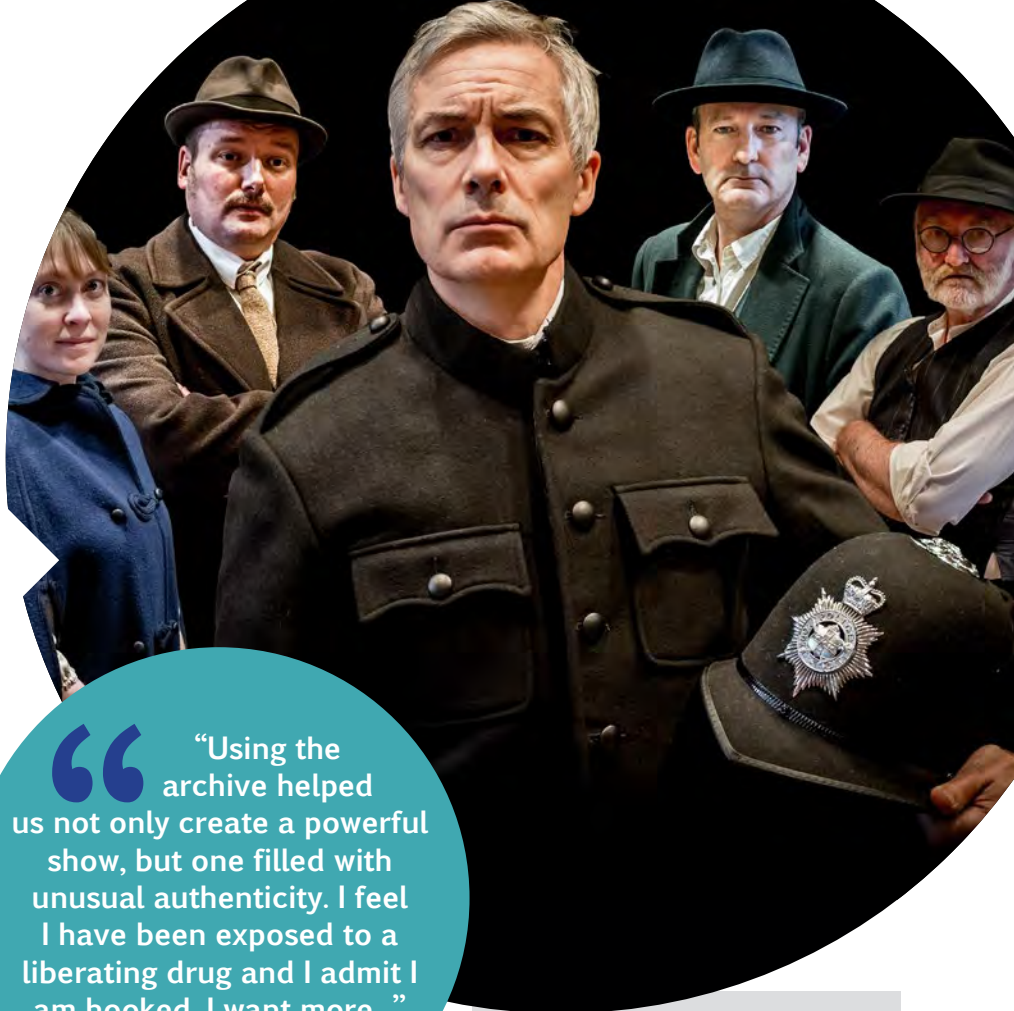
Working with professional artists and digital makers at Makerspace at York Explore, Muse Hack youth club members play, explore, create, tinker, design, and learn some code, using digital maker tools, circuits, technology, arts and crafts. One of their projects - 9 Bit recycling digital noise orchestra - created the soundtrack for iMove an outdoor dance performance in September 2019 with York Dance Space and composer Jon Hughes.



ARCHIVE TREASURE TROVE: NUISANCE INSPECTOR

The City Archive contains thousands of unique documents, plans, artefacts and photographs. As well as a research tool, the Archive has been revealed as a treasure trove for artists and writers who are inspired to shed fresh light on the stories of how people lived, worked, broke the law and died through 800 years of York's history.

The Nuisance Inspector was an immersive audio drama by writer Paul Birch based on the story of the Hungate clearances and inspired by the internationally significant Past Caring archives of Poor Law and Work house records.



“Using the archive helped us not only create a powerful show, but one filled with unusual authenticity. I feel I have been exposed to a liberating drug and I admit I am hooked. I want more...”

Paul Birch, artist

VOLUNTEERS

Around 700 people support Explore by regularly volunteering their time and skills. We also provide opportunities for students with work placements in libraries and in the City Archive. We are committed to not using

volunteers to replace our paid staff, but their support helps us grow new projects and enhances the work we do in our libraries and archives.

“There are so many social things I now do with ease. Before I started volunteering at the library I really struggled with talking to new people in an unfamiliar environment. I would agonise over the thought of being out of my comfort zone, now the library is a comfort zone. Now I look forward to meeting new people and making new friends.”

Anna, Volunteer



DISABILITY ARTS CREATIVE YOUTH NETWORK (DACY)



DACY is a mentoring programme helping emerging artists who identify as disabled to learn from older disabled artists, create and make their way in the art world. Their exhibition Things as They Are for United Nations International Day of People with Disabilities 2019 told the world what it is like to be young and disabled.



Explore Libraries and Archives Board Members 2019-2020

Chris Edwards	John Carlill
Fiona Williams	Natasha Guest
Beth Cairns	Robert Powell
Ian Money	

www.exploreyork.org.uk | #TeamExplore
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