

## 4.7 Outreach and Public Engagement Policy

Gladstone's Library is committed to ongoing engagement with our immediate community in Hawarden and North Wales, as well as a national and international community of scholars, researchers, students, and writers. The Library is also committed to projects which seek out communities and individuals who do not traditionally engage with heritage sites such as the Library.

### *Resources*

This document is written and reviewed using various sources, including:

- National Co-Ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (<https://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/do-engagement/partnership-working/working-with-museums-and-libraries>)
- The National Archives (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/advice-and-guidance/talking-to-your-community/community-engagement/>)

### *Definitions*

We define **outreach** as any activity that brings library and archive services, or the collections within reach of a community who would not normally have access to these services or collections.

We follow HEFCE's definition of **public engagement**; specialists interacting with non-specialists. This can mean engagement in any direction – specialists can listen to non-specialists, or vice versa. Gladstone's Library works constantly to place these two groups in dialogue with one another.

'**In-reach**' is defined as bringing outreach and engagement strategies to bear on communities already within the Library, such as staff, existing users, residents and heritage visitors.

### *Outreach*

Our primary outreach activities are online and digital. With the Library's limited financial resources, heritage built environment and geographical location, online and digital strategies represent the best and most sustainable methods to reach a large number of people across the world.

Recent digital initiatives include Digital Gladstone, an umbrella term for the Library's ongoing collaboration with external scholars and creative practitioners. Digital Gladstone projects create digitised collection items and 'born-digital' resources and host them online in free-to-access ways.

### *Public Engagement*

Public engagement strategies in the past decade have focused on events such as festivals, talks and lectures. Though not immediately obvious to attendees, all events are based around collection areas – theology, religion, literature, history, and politics – and are designed to introduce a range of topics to an audience who might be meeting these concepts for the first time.

The initial strategic aim was to significantly raise the proportion of non-scholarly users entering Library spaces. These are defined as people who are interested in collection areas but who are not registered to the Reading Rooms in any way.

A combination of low ticket prices, integrating books with tickets and scheduling on evening and weekends worked very well and events now run at between 75-92% attendance. Due to their overwhelming success the best way to keep increasing engagement is to borrow from outreach strategies and stream events online. This will be in place from 2021.

From 2014-2020 the Library ran 'Glimpses', thrice-daily tours led by Reading Room staff. Free to attend and around ten minutes in duration, expert staff gave potted histories to anyone who wished to listen. Again, these were extremely successful and averaged eight attendees per Glimpse. Covid-19 means that Glimpses are suspended but the Library is committed to investing in technology so that Glimpses can continue.

### *On-Site Access and Engagement – 'In-Reach'*

The Reading Room's users are many and varied, typically including students, researchers, academics, lecturers, writers, clergy, theologians, lifelong learners, and the general public; it is easy to split them into three broad categories.

Most immediately, the library is used by what might be termed 'autonomous users'. These are people who are familiar with research and study: academics, researchers, postgraduate students. They value the quiet and productive atmosphere, and require little to no assistance from staff in negotiating the Reading Rooms, even for the first time; indeed, many may not ever use the collections directly (many have electronic access to the resources that they need through their home institutions). These users are well catered for, as the library maintains specific relationships with three local universities: Chester, Glyndwr, and Liverpool.

Secondly, the library is used by 'collection users': those who use the collections as their main or home institution. Often these users are themselves confident researchers a home institution they are more reliant on the library's holdings. Clergy are well-represented in this group, as are creative practitioners. Gladstone's own collection and preoccupations benefit the former, as the library already contains a collection of significant theological texts, and is committed to maintaining holdings in that area.

Thirdly, the library is used by significant numbers of more 'casual' readers – those who are committed to lifelong learning but who are not, for one reason or another, able to dedicate significant amounts of time to research and/or writing. These users are often local, or resident for only one or two nights. They value our developing programme of creative writing events, and are often not confident with classic research and/or archive resources.

The Library's outreach and engagement strategies for this community are aimed at improving intra-community discussion and raising collection use.

#### **Document Control**

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**Approved by (policy documents only):**

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v. 1	September 2013	Created in Library Handbook
v. 2	May 2016	Transferred to Training Sheet
v. 3	October 2020	Reviewed due to Covid - renumbered to 4.7 and renamed 'Outreach and Public Engagement Policy'