

INCREASING OUR VALUE THROUGH SOCIAL INCLUSION

"Having the British Library in Camden offers a wonderful resource. We had a multi-faith tour of the John Ritblat Gallery, which holds great treasures from many world religions. British Library staff were incredibly generous with their time, offering expertise on how these works were produced and discussing them with Camden's faith leaders."

Nina Rahel

Faith Officer, Camden Council

FACT FILE

- **Government is committed to opening public institutions to wider communities to promote lifelong learning and social cohesion**
 - London's museums are failing to translate knowledge of diversity issues into good practice and are uncertain about how to develop appropriate services*
 - Staffing and governance in the sector does not reflect diverse communities and only 24% of visitors to museums are from ethnic minority backgrounds*
 - London's diverse communities are still getting a raw deal despite some excellent pioneering work*
 - Collections, exhibitions and activities often fail to reflect diverse backgrounds and cultures of the communities serviced*
- **The British Library recognises the importance of making its resources accessible to a wider public**
 - Attracting a more diverse audience
 - Interpreting collections in ways that help people benefit from them, through learning, entertainment and stimulation of ideas
 - Supporting community events
 - Providing creative and professional opportunities for entrepreneurs and artists.

* *Holding up the Mirror 2003. Addressing cultural diversity in London's museums*

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SERVICES

- **The British Library consults users and audits all services to ensure that access is improved and barriers to use by people with disabilities are removed**
 - Key information is available in alternative formats
 - Specialist equipment is provided when necessary
 - www.bl.uk complies with accessibility standards
 - Expert support is available for disabled and disadvantaged users – public and readers
 - The Library constantly investigates new technology to improve service delivery to the visually impaired
 - The Library collaborates with other libraries and voluntary agencies to share best practice

- **The British Library ensures that research services do not exclude minority audiences**
 - Currently working with Birmingham Library and Information Services to develop a blueprint for providing community library services with access to national library resources
 - Widening access to learning resources eg. INSPIRE - the national scheme which enables other libraries to refer their users to the British Library Reading Rooms
 - Increasing links with the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries and key regional hubs to facilitate improved marketing to regional libraries.

INITIATIVES

- **The British Library engages with diverse communities to deliver and promote learning opportunities to all, through a variety of educational programmes, exhibitions, events and www.bl.uk**
 - Themes for public programmes have wide multi-cultural appeal. Exhibitions during the last two years have focused on children's book art – *Magic Pencil*; faith – *Painted Labyrinth*; post-Mao China – *Chinese Printmaking Today*; exchange between the Middle East and Far East – *The Silk Road*
 - Treasures selected for *Turning the Pages* include Islam – *The Sultan Baybars' Qur'an*; Christianity – *The Lindisfarne Gospels*. Plans to add treasures reflecting other world faiths have been developed for this multi-media library
 - Literary events are targeted at diverse interest groups both popular and specialist eg. Asian business events for small businesses and entrepreneurs; Chinese film series; events to support *Black History Month*
 - Community events are regularly incorporated into Library programmes eg. Camden's Mela - *a Taste of Bangladesh*
 - Working with the Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage the Library is exploring how to engage with and attract more visitors of African and Asian descent; collaborating with Tamasha Theatre Company to support a professional development initiative for British Asian playwrights, the aims of which are to nurture the artistic individuality of emerging writers and act as a bridge for artists into professional practice.