

Research Impact Tool Kit John Rylands Research Institute and Library

The John Rylands Research Institute and Library (the Rylands), with sites in Manchester city centre and on the Oxford Road Campus, is uniquely placed to help extend research reach to public audiences and demonstrate research impact. The Rylands welcomes thousands of visitors through its doors each year and its influence extends worldwide through online events and digital content.

The *Exhibitions and Public Engagement with Research* (EPER) team, based at The John Rylands Research Institute and Library on Deansgate, delivers a programme of exhibitions and public events. The team is keen to work with researchers at the University of Manchester to create innovative public engagement opportunities linked to research on our extensive Special Collections. Researchers can collaborate with us on a variety of public engagement activities as a route to impact. This toolkit brings together information about engagement opportunities at the Rylands, case studies of types of events and signposts to public engagement support and resources at the University.



Migrant Voices Takeover.

1. Public engagement and research impact at the Rylands

Helping researchers to promote research with impact – realising the effects and benefits of research beyond academia – is one of the priorities of the Exhibitions and Public Engagement with Research (EPER) team at the Rylands. The EPER team and Faculty Impact Teams can help you develop your impact plan, identify and reach target audiences and evaluate your public engagement. Staff at the Rylands can help you to think creatively about designing engaging activities with effective dialogue with the public and help you demonstrate impact. We can assist in embedding evaluation in your public engagement activity and facilitate the capture of participant comments and feedback.

Examples of impact that might be created through public engagement with research at the Rylands include:

- Enhancing cultural understanding of issues and phenomena; shaping or informing public attitudes and values.
- Stimulating public interest and engagement in research.
- Engaging the public with research so that their awareness, attitudes or understanding of certain issues have been positively influenced, and their ability to make informed decisions on issues are improved.
- Shaping or informing public or political debate by research; this may include challenging established norms, modes of thought or practices.
- Contributing to processes of commemoration, memorialisation and reconciliation.

Source: REF2021 [Panel Criteria and Working Methods](#)

Examples of the methods by which impact can be achieved at the Rylands include:

- Exhibitions (online and physical)
- Workshops
- Collection close-up sessions
- Talks and lectures
- Film screenings or performances
- Producing educational resources for schools or colleges

Researchers should include the cost of impact in any research grant bid. If your activities will be held at the Rylands we can provide sample costings.

Faculty Impact Teams can advise on the most appropriate impact activities and evaluation for REF (Research Excellence Framework) and KEF (Knowledge Exchange Framework).

The University offers training to help you plan effective public engagement evaluation and provides a useful [Public Engagement Evaluation Guide](#).

2. Rylands contacts

Janette Martin [Research and Learning Manager](#)

Emily Tan [Exhibitions and Public Engagement with Research Manager](#)

Adam Cooke [Teaching Learning and Students Officer \(Widening Participation\)](#)

Contact us if you are interested in public engagement activity at the Rylands. We can help you think creatively about how exhibitions, events and education can help you demonstrate research impact. If you are developing an external grant bid, we can provide information to assist you to produce realistic and fundable impact.



Migrant Voices Takeover

3. Types of engagement activity facilitated by the Rylands

Engagement activity	Description	Benefits	Researcher commitment level
Exhibition	Display of curated collection items with a specific narrative and interpretation.	Reach a large number of visitors over 5-6 month period. Opportunities for supporting events programme during duration of exhibition run.	High
Manchester Digital Exhibition (MDE)	Online, permanent display curated collection items with	Can reach audiences who are unable to visit Manchester.	High

	a specific narrative and interpretation.	MDE exhibitions are enduring.	
Manchester Digital Collection (MDC)	MDC is an online platform providing access to collections of digital objects curated around specific themes, with expert interpretation displayed alongside ultra-high-quality images.	Can reach audiences who are unable to visit Manchester. MDC curated digital collections are enduring. Uses IIIF, a set of open standards for delivering high-quality, attributed digital objects online at scale.	High
Educational Activities	Hosting onsite collection-based workshops for schools and colleges. Developing online educational resources and providing a platform for them.	Can reach targeted schools in the Greater Manchester area. Online resources have a national reach and we can extract data on their usage to evidence impact.	High/medium
Festivals	The Rylands team have access to national and city-wide festivals and cultural partners.	Reach new and wider audiences. Opportunities to collaborate with other cultural partners.	Medium
Workshop	Session for small groups with direct participation in an activity and/or engagement with collections. Workshop could be facilitated by a collaborator or creative practitioner.	Good way to work with a small group of engaged participants or contributors and involve them in your research. Good way to build relationships with your participants.	Medium
Collection close-up session	Informal, drop-in session, 60-90 minutes engaging visitors directly with collection items.	Direct engagement with visitors using specific items relating to your research.	Medium
Talk/lecture	Bookable, in-person or online talk or lecture to a public audience with opportunities to show collection material or run a Q&A session.	Opportunity to reach an audience already engaged with your subject and answer their questions directly.	Medium
Film screening or performance	Bookable or drop-in performances as part of an events programme or festival.	Good way to engage audiences with creative media as film, music or dance.	Medium

4. Exhibitions

The Rylands hosts two temporary exhibitions each year to help visitors explore our Special Collections. The exhibition programme is informed by University of Manchester research, and we welcome proposals from researchers who have used our collections. You can propose an exhibition as an output of a research project or suggest a collaborative or co-curated exhibition working with multiple projects or partners.

Our exhibition programme is planned two years in advance and proposals are considered by the Exhibitions and Galleries Programme Group on a bi-monthly basis. If you are interested in exhibition opportunities at the Rylands please contact [Emily Tan](#) or the curator responsible for the collections that your proposal relates to and they will help you to develop and submit a proposal. If you plan to include an exhibition in a research bid, please get in touch at the early planning stage to discuss timescales, costings and how the Rylands can support your application. Exhibitions are supported by a programme of events, promotional campaigns, and digital content, all of which can be developed to meet your impact goals.

Examples of recent and forthcoming exhibitions curated with University academics include:

Designing Dante, March-September 2022, curated by Dr Guyda Armstrong (Senior Lecturer in Italian Studies).

Transitions in Print, October 2022- March 2023, featuring research projects by Dr Stephen Mossman (Senior Lecturer in Medieval History) and Prof Stephen Milner (Serena Professor of Italian Studies).

Workers Playtime, March-September 2023, curated by Michael Sanders (Professor, 19th Century Writing).



Being Human Festival.

5. Manchester Digital Exhibitions and Manchester Digital Collections

Manchester Digital Exhibitions

We are developing Manchester Digital Exhibitions (MDE), an online exhibitions platform to allow digital visitors to engage with our collections and curated research online from anywhere in the world.

MDE draws together in-depth interpretation and exceptionally high-quality images of our collections offering a sustainable platform for narrative-based engagement with significant digital reach. The ongoing development of the platform offers opportunities to utilise innovative digital storytelling tools supported by [IIIF](#), such as Exhibit.

Some of our exhibits include:

[Travels in Tokugawa Japan](#) created by visiting fellow Dr Sonia Favi as part of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Project Travel in Tokugawa Period Japan (1603-1868): Identity, Nation and Social Transformation.

[The Many Faces of the Rylands Jewish Manuscripts](#) curated by Philip Alexander (Professor Emeritus of Post-Biblical Jewish Literature) and Zsofia Buda (Curator, Global Manuscripts) as part of a project to digitise Hebrew manuscript collections, making them available for academic study and community engagement.

[Qing: China's multilingual empire](#), an online version of an exhibition held at the Rylands in 2021/22. Curated by Julianne Simpson (Collections and Discovery Manager) and Dr Johannes Lotze (post-doctoral fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) as part of a project to improve access to Chinese collections at the Rylands.

Manchester Digital Collections

[Manchester Digital Collections \(MDC\)](#) is an online platform providing access to collections of digital objects curated around specific themes, with expert interpretation displayed alongside ultra-high-quality images. It draws together digitised material from Cultural Institutions across the University, often developed as part of funded research projects. As well as images and high-quality descriptions, MDC hosts 'digital editions' of texts with associated transcriptions and translations (see the digital edition of the Mary Hamilton Papers (in progress) [here](#)).

MDC's support for [IIIF images](#) allows content to be seamlessly embedded on other platforms, for example within an MDE exhibit or a project website. MDC also supports the interoperability and reuse of data and so can provide opportunities for digital humanities engagement activities such as hackathons or creative reuse of images. More simply, MDC can support digital collection encounters and 'hybrid' outreach activities.

As MDC develops, more interactive tools will allow further innovative engagement with our digital collections. We are also developing functionality to provide access to content produced by our world-leading advanced imaging techniques, such as 3D models of items that allow 'digital handling' and exploration. We are also interested in developing opportunities for engagement through 'citizen science' projects to create crowd-sourced transcriptions of texts or enrich existing collection descriptions.

Projects hosted in MDC will incur considerable photography and metadata costs. These need to be included in the bid costing. If you are interested in proposing a collection for MDC first have a

conversation with the relevant curator and MDC Content Coordinator to talk through initial ideas and considerations. For large, funded projects costings and advice can be provided.

See our [Japanese Maps collection](#) produced as part of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Project *Travel in Tokugawa Period Japan (1603-1868): Identity, Nation and Social Transformation* led by Dr. Sonia Favi (2019-2021). The collection supported an associated MDE exhibition and a programme of digital collection encounters.

6. Events

The Rylands work with researchers whose work focuses on our collections to deliver a varied public events programme including drop-in sessions with collections, talks, workshops and performances. As well as in-person events, we have been developing a variety of ways to engage audiences through a range of digital activities such as online talks, hybrid collection sessions and artistic performances.

Events are considered on a case-by-case basis but we suggest contacting us as early as possible to discuss the feasibility of hosting your event at the Rylands. If you have a proposal for a public event, or want help developing an idea, please get in touch with the [EPER team](#). We can discuss creative and innovative ways to engage the public as well as providing costings for a funding bid.

[Download detailed guidance on delivering activities at the Rylands.](#)

7. Festivals

Local and national festivals are an effective way to engage new audiences and collaborate with other cultural institutions and partners. The Rylands participates in a range of festivals including:

- University initiatives such as the [Community Festival](#).
- Local festivals [Muslim Arts and Culture](#), [Manchester Histories](#), [Festival of Libraries](#) and [Manchester Science Festival](#).
- National festivals like [Being Human](#).

We have relationships with festival teams and citywide cultural partners and can help you to develop and submit a proposal for festival events. If you are interested in participating in a festival to highlight your research using Rylands collections, please get in touch with the [EPER team](#) to discuss your idea and see how the Rylands can support your event.

8. Educational activities

The University of Manchester Library's Teaching, Learning and Students Team can work with academics to create lesson plans, teaching materials and other learning resources. We can connect researchers with school and colleges with a high percentage of students from widening participation backgrounds in the Greater Manchester area and support embedding collections-based research into school and college curriculums.

The Rylands can host educational resources derived from our Special Collections and can extract data on their usage to evidence impact. Researchers can follow up with more in depth interviews

with individual teachers. Here is an example of a special collections based teaching resource hosted on our website.

- [Faith in the Town teaching resources](#)

If you are considering an educational output please talk to our team at an early planning stage. If they don't have capacity they can put you in touch with external educational consultants.

9. Evaluation activities offered at the Rylands

Your school will have an Impact Team who can offer advice at the start of your project on planning your engagement activities and evaluation. You may also wish to look at the University's Public Engagement page which includes an [Evaluation Toolkit](#). When developing your evaluation methodology, you may find this resource helpful: [Question Bank: tool kit for museums, library and archives](#).

The Rylands team has experience of capturing audience comments and collecting evidence as part of our public programme and can facilitate the evaluation of your engagement activity, for example via targeted interviews and questionnaires. Your Faculty and School will have an Impact Officer who will be able to advise you.

10. Case studies

Below you will find examples of impactful engagement at the Rylands by University of Manchester academics:

Migrant Voices Takeover

The Rylands hosted *Migrant Voices Takeover* as part of Manchester Festival of Libraries 2022. Led by Prof Jerome de Groot, in collaboration with Olympias Music Foundation (OMF), the event was part of the ['Mapping Migrant Voices' research project](#), bringing Manchester together through music. Visitors experienced live music performances from across the globe and met with musicians to learn about their migration experiences.

[The project](#) builds on two years of collaboration between OMF and the University of Manchester delivering 'Musical Living Library' events in libraries across Greater Manchester with members of Migrant Voices – a network of 70 diverse global majority musicians from 27 different countries.

Oral histories collected from musicians were archived at the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Centre. The project contributes to Prof de Groot's 'Manchester's DNA' project.



Migrant Voices Takeover.

Designing Dante

The *Designing Dante* exhibition (March-October 2022) explored the afterlife in Dante's *Divine Comedy* and how it has been designed on and beyond the page. An accompanying events programme allowed curator Dr Guyda Armstrong to develop her interest in multi-media interpretations of Dante's afterlife and how the public engage with Dante's work through non-written media. Events included:

- Artist book workshop and talk with Dr Rhiannon Daniels (Associate Professor in Italian, University of Bristol).
- Silent film screening with contemporary soundtrack by [Cities and Memory](#).
- Newly commissioned sound installation by artist Sophie Cooper responding to the three realms of Dante's afterlife.

11. Further information about public engagement at the University

The University offers a range of resources, training and support to help you develop engagement skills, and to plan and deliver public engagement. Read the [Public Engagement at Manchester Guides and Toolkits](#) to start planning your public engagement.

Many public engagement activities also support the University of Manchester's Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). KEF focuses on social responsibility and impact with local communities via public engagement, festivals, widening participation, policy engagement, and engagement with communities through our cultural institutions. See the [University of Manchester's commitment to Research England's Knowledge Exchange Framework](#)

University resources for research impact:

- [Research Impact Staffnet page, with links to Faculty contacts](#)
- [University webpage for research impact](#)
- [Research Impact Showcase, of REF 2021 impact case studies](#)
- Campaign showing [how research impact is addressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

External resources to support research impact:

- [UKRI impact stories](#) – examples from across the Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England, demonstrating how UKRI-funded research is delivering social, cultural, economic and knowledge impact.
- UKRI [Good Research Resources Hub](#) – policies, standards and guidance to support researchers, innovators and organisations. Includes guidance on public engagement and co-production in research.
- AHRC [self-evaluation documents](#) and selection of [case studies](#).
- [EPSRC Impact and Translation Toolkit](#) - provides an accessible overview of some of the key barriers researchers may face when seeking to apply their research to solving and addressing challenges in human health and wellbeing.
- [ESRC Impact toolkit for economic and social sciences](#) - for social science researchers applying for and receiving funding from the ESRC.
- [Better Evaluation](#) and [Evaluation Support Scotland](#) – for resources to support impact evaluation.
- [Research impact at the UK Parliament](#) – ways to engage with Parliament, ‘How To’ guides, training and events.
- [National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement](#) – support and resources for achieving impact from public engagement activities.