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**Heritage Fund**

(Ref: HG-18-01277)

# Final project evaluation EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND CASE STUDIES

2 April 2024

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FOR



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

**Birmingham City Council**



WEST MIDLANDS  
**HISTORY**  
PEOPLE OF IDEAS, INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE

## **The scope of the report**

**Jenni Waugh Consulting Ltd, Durnin Research, The Collett Consultancy and James Macdonald Media Services were commissioned to evaluate the project in summer 2020.**

The full report presents an independent evaluation of project delivery throughout its lifetime and has been prepared in accordance with the Heritage Fund Evaluation Guidelines for circulation amongst the Heritage Fund, the project partners and stakeholders.

The evaluation team produced a series of 11 impact case studies which have been uploaded to the E2E Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@everythingtoeverybody5379>

## **CREDITS**

Researched and written by Jenni Waugh Consulting Ltd, Durnin Research and The Collett Consultancy  
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## **NOTE**

All URLs were accessible at the time of writing.

Revised 2 April 2024 in response to an amendment from the British Library.

# Everything to Everybody: Executive summary and case studies

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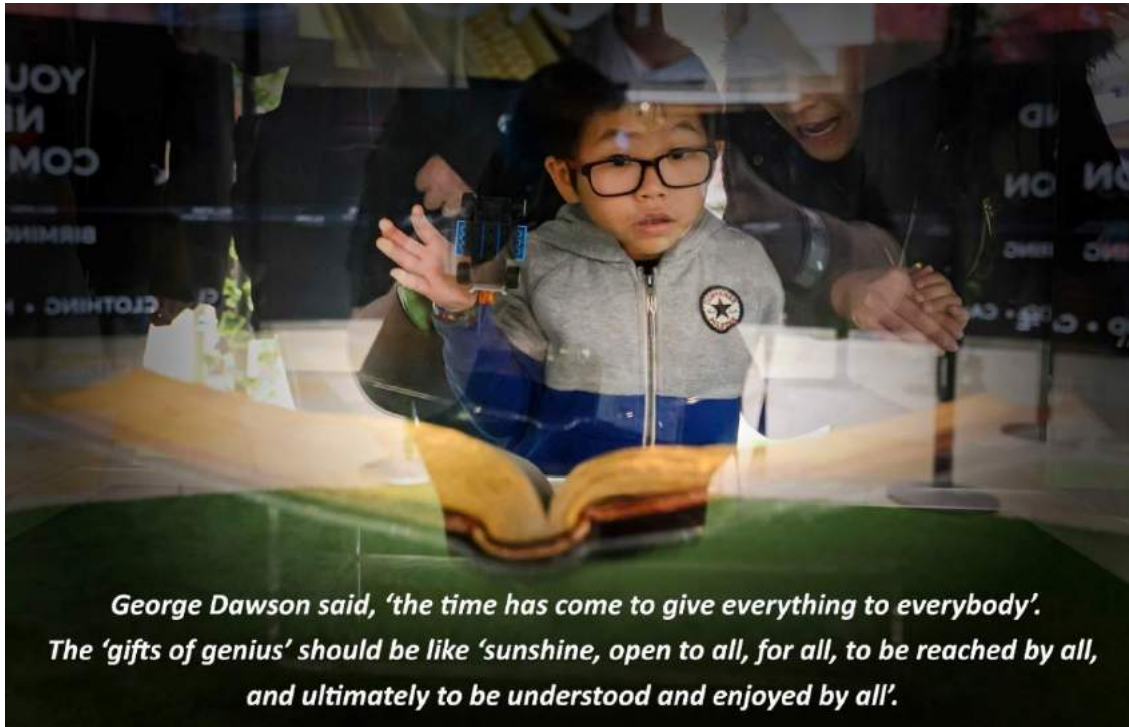


Figure 1 A boy views the First Folio, during its visit to the Bullring Shopping Centre, Birmingham.  
Quotation from Ewan Fernie, 'George Dawson: Lost Prophet' (History West Midlands, 2018)

## Executive Summary

### Project overview

**Everything to Everybody (E2E)** was an ambitious 4-year project led jointly by the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City Council's Library of Birmingham to restore the world's first, oldest and largest Shakespeare collection in any public library to every city resident.

**IN TOTAL, 270,500+ people participated in E2E activity across the project lifetime.**

**It is estimated that visits to E2E events generated an additional economic benefit to the Birmingham economy of over £900,000 in that time.**

**As the most recent and by far the largest public engagement partnership between the University of Birmingham (UoB) and the Library of Birmingham (LoB)<sup>1</sup>,** E2E has provided a valuable testbed for UoB's new Culture Forward programme and comparable initiatives of cultural, civic and community partnership activity and has given staff at LoB new impetus to celebrate the magnificent collections it holds and share them with the City.

Working in close and effective collaboration, **this cross-sectoral partnership has achieved a national first**, taking the City's precious, 400-year-old First Folio of Shakespeare's plays out of the Library to 16 community venues including libraries, shopping centres, a family centre, a church and a prison.

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<sup>1</sup> *Connecting Histories* (2005-2007), was a successful collections and community-focused project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (predecessor to the Heritage Fund), delivered in partnership by Birmingham City Archives, the Universities of Birmingham and Warwick, and the Black Pasts, Birmingham Futures group.

## The basics

Delivered between January 2020 and 31 December 2023, E2E was supported by a total grant of £791,400 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (Heritage Fund), as well as funding from History West Midlands, Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and private donors. The total project value was over £2 million.

The four aims of the project were to:

- **UNLOCK the Collections:** to deliver a comprehensive programme that will make Birmingham's Shakespeare Memorial Library (SML) and George Dawson Collection (GDC) more accessible to researchers to the people of the City
- **Safeguard the Collection's PHYSICAL FOCUS:** to position iconic artefacts within the collection as powerful points of interest and popular engagement.
- **Provide DIGITAL ACCESS to the Collection:** to create web-based resources and social media to facilitate presentation, interaction, collaboration
- **SHARE the Collections:** to deliver a varied range of co-produced engagement activities encouraging diverse audiences to use, enjoy, and take ownership of the SML and GDC.

## The Approved Purposes

**The Heritage Fund specified 30 obligatory approved purposes to be fulfilled by the partnership as a condition of the grant. These actions could only be adjusted with the Heritage Fund's agreement.**

Thematically, the approved purposes related to:

- Fulfilment of Heritage Fund expectations regarding inclusion and promotion
- Recruitment of project team
- Volunteer recruitment and development
- Collections conservation and management, in particular improvement of the digital documentation and accessibility of the SML and GDC
- Research into the collections and heritage themes, and dissemination of the findings to local, national and international audiences
- Community engagement and the delivery of a complex programme of creative and heritage activities for a wide range of audiences
- Development of formal education resources, including Arts Award

Only one significant change was made in 2020 when, in the light of the Black Lives Matter protests in June 2020, the Heritage Fund gave the E2E team permission not to reinstall a statue of George Dawson in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and a portrait bust in LoB as part of his 200<sup>th</sup> birthday commemorations in 2021. Instead the team commissioned Soul City Arts to produce two legacy artworks in collaboration with pupils from Montgomery and Percy Shurmer schools.

## The challenges

The project team overcame a succession of **external challenges** to ensure the project's successful delivery. These included 2 years of restrictive Covid-19 lockdowns, local and national bus and rail strikes, and the impact on community activity of the death of Queen Elizabeth II in late 2022.

To achieve the project's centrepiece activity, the tour of Birmingham's First Folio to 16 community venues including HMP Birmingham, the team also had to address the numerous **internal challenges** of taking such a priceless volume out of the Library and onto the road.

With the Heritage Fund's permission and £116,200 grant uplift, project delivery was extended by 12 months, enabling the team to engage with more partners and participants in neighbourhoods around the city. Initially intended to climax during the 2022 Commonwealth Games, the final delivery year coincided with the celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare's First Folio in 2023, granting the project an international profile.

## Headline successes

Despite the challenges the project team experienced, each approved purpose was met, and many were exceeded.

**IN TOTAL, 270,500+ people participated in E2E activity across the project lifetime.**

**It is estimated that visits to E2E events generated an additional economic benefit to the Birmingham economy of over £900,000 in that time.**

The headline achievements of E2E are impressive and include:

- 45 volunteers recruited, who contributed over 1,290 days to the project
- 62+ community partners delivered E2E activities in over 40 venues across the city
- 11,793 people had a close-up view of the First Folio during the project, 3,342 of whom did so at community venues during the First Folio Tour
- 14,839 people participated in one of over 88 workshops, events, talks or other activities across the city or online
- 255,685 people visited one of 13 co-produced exhibitions in LoB
- 13 exhibitions took place in the Shakespeare Memorial Room (SMR) and LoB Level 3 Gallery, all documented on Flickr
- 8,262 online views of 46 films produced during the project
- 134 young people participated in E2E activities designed to increase their employability and creative skills
- at least 10 schools have taken part in project activities and co-curated exhibitions for the SMR
- LoB's Children's Library staff are now trained and have successfully delivered Arts Awards sessions to local children

## Impact on heritage

**As a result of the project, HERITAGE has been...**

- identified and recorded
- better interpreted and explained
- better managed
- in better condition

**E2E has made significant improvements to the management and condition of the Shakespeare Memorial Library (SML) and George Dawson Collection (GDC).**

- The catalogue is now enhanced and digitised, available for all to see online, as is the First Folio itself and the poster collection.
- LoB staff are now more confident about introducing visitors to the SML and GDC.
- Project volunteers have founded the Friends of the Shakespeare Collection to continue work on the digitisation and promotion of the collections.

**This work has increased public engagement with the collections and raised their profile.**

- New research has increased understanding of the collections and the 13 co-curated exhibitions have increased the range of interpretive approaches, highlighting the relevance of Shakespeare's works and the Civic Gospel to contemporary city residents.

- New interpretation about the collections and the library’s history have been installed on each floor of LoB, including audio posts in the roof gardens and improved displays in the SMR.

**Thanks to a focussed approach to public relations and communications, E2E has enjoyed extensive international, national, regional and local media coverage since its launch, ensuring that news of the collection has travelled outside the city.**

- Team members have published blogs, written articles and spoken at events about the project in a range of settings.
- Dissemination through Higher Education networks and History WM publications has increased national and international focus on the collections, attracting new researchers
- the project contributed significantly to the creative aspects of the B2022 Commonwealth Games opening ceremony and city-wide cultural festival

## Impact on people

<p><b>As a result of the project, PEOPLE have experienced the following benefits...</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more people and a wider range of people have engaged with heritage</li> <li>• learnt about heritage</li> <li>• developed skills</li> <li>• changed their attitudes and/or behaviour</li> <li>• had an enjoyable experience</li> </ul>
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**E2E has brought learning to a far wider audience than would have otherwise been achieved if the activity had been solely located in the library or university. This approach removed the stigma of Shakespeare as being ‘not for me’ that some audiences reported feeling prior to the events. It also presented the UoB in a less elitist light.**

- 255,685 visitors attended at least one of 13 exhibitions in the SMR across the lifetime of the project
- 11,793 people had a close-up view of the First Folio during the project, 3,342 of whom did so at one of 16 community venues during the First Folio Tour
- 14,839 people participated in one of over 88 workshops, events, talks or other activities across the city or online

**Participants have enjoyed the opportunities provided to learn something new, to connect with each other, particularly after the long Covid-19 lockdowns, and to try out the wide range of activities on offer.**

- Survey respondents described how much they appreciated the fact that the Folio had been brought to them in their own ‘back garden’. This removed the barriers that a city-central location can impose on surrounding communities and fostered the sense of the Folio belonging to everybody.

**From the outset, E2E was determined to be as accessible as possible, and made all reasonable efforts to support inclusion.**

- Soul City Arts and Desiblitiz worked with school children and adults living in Birmingham’s most diverse wards, exploring the impact of Shakespeare on South Asian culture and of the Civic Gospel on today’s community values
- Two Folio Tours were held in community centres which support people with complex disabilities (Sense Touchbase Pears and The Hive)
- Sense Touchbase Pears and BSL interpreters supported inclusive delivery of community events across the city
- BCAT, Bards Beyond Borders and Friction Arts worked with adults with mental health difficulties, with refugees and people in other vulnerable groups.

## Impact on communities

**As a result of the project the COMMUNITY benefits are...**

- the local economy has been boosted
- the local area has become a better place to live, work or visit
- people have volunteered time
- the lead organisations are more resilient

**It is estimated that visits to E2E events generated an additional economic benefit to the Birmingham economy of over £900,000 during the project lifetime.**

**The E2E team achieved a national first by taking the City's precious First Folio on tour to 16 community venues around Birmingham and the West Midlands, including HMP Birmingham where it was viewed by 28 prisoners and 5 staff members.**

- Project activity reached right across the city and into the neighbouring local authority areas of Dudley, Sandwell and Solihull
- Participants represented many of its superdiverse ethnic and national communities

**Most participants felt a greater connection with their local community because of participating in E2E activities.**

- Connections made between Shakespeare and other cultures and languages strengthened and renewed those within the respondent's own communities as commonalities of experiences and emotions provided new links between them.

**45 volunteers were engaged throughout the project to fulfil a variety of roles, supported by a dedicated member of staff to ensure continuity, and comprehensive training.**

- Volunteers contributed over 1290 days to the project
- Their roles included digitising, translating and cataloguing the collection, events support, exhibition curation and audience evaluation

## Key lessons learned and recommendations for the future

### Taking advantage of the enforced pause

The pause in the project in 2020 caused by the Covid lockdowns, and the extra year, allowed the E2E team time and space to come together, to develop clarity and consensus around the project's purpose. This paid dividends across the remainder of the project.

### A risk-aware model for taking significant artefacts into communities

In touring the First Folio out of a formal, institutional setting to a range of 'non-traditional' community venues, E2E developed a risk-aware approach that assured conservation professionals such an activity was possible, and of great social value.

UoB and LoB now have a tested methodology and are more confident and positive about touring objects of a similar status and prestige from their collections or those of other.

### Maintaining momentum through developing further community, higher education and cultural partnerships

UoB is has begun developing Culture Forward, their new civic and cultural engagement partnership programming. The director is Ewan Fernie, who brings with him the extensive networks and experience that contributed to E2E's success.

LoB is considering how it can continue to contribute to such important cultural partnerships whilst operating without a large project budget. The team are now in conversation with other Higher Education institutions in the city to explore how the model might be applied in future. In the



meantime, the skills and enthusiasm of the newly founded Friends of Shakespeare Collection mean that the SMC will continue to be championed.

**Looking toward developing a regional Shakespeare offer**

Looking to the future E2E has reasserted Birmingham's Shakespeare credentials and credibility, and there is now an opportunity to develop this as part of a coordinated regional approach through collaboration with key partners, notably the Royal Shakespeare Company, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Birmingham Rep and the West Midlands Combined Authority.



Figure 2 Screen capture of a scene from 'Wondrous Stories', performed by Motionhouse and a large community cast outside LoB at the opening of the B2022 Festival, 17-20 March 2022

## CASE STUDY 1: Placing the collection at the centre

*Thank you for such a fascinating and innovative project. It is good to see that archives are being celebrated and that you are encouraging us to visit the Library. You are reminding everyone of the value of our library services and how they are part of the culture and identity of the City - especially in its tradition of diversity.*

### George Dawson and the Shakespeare Memorial Library

Birmingham's Shakespeare Memorial Library (SML) was co-founded in 1864 by George Dawson, a non-conformist preacher, lecturer and activist, as a public resource, a part of his pioneering 'Civic Gospel' which helped make 19th-century Birmingham the world's most progressive modern city.

*... the city which really is a city must have parks as well as prisons, an art gallery as well as an asylum, books and libraries as well as baths and washhouses, schools as well as sewers. It must think of beauty and dignity no less than of order and of health.*

George Dawson, Free Reference Library Inaugural address, 1866

At its heart is Birmingham's copy of Shakespeare's First Folio, purchased in 1881 and unique because it is the only one bought as part of a dedicated programme for improving people's lives through culture and education. It was bought for all the people of Birmingham, no matter what their background or status.

Since 1868, the SML has been open to the public at the city's main library – LoB is its 4<sup>th</sup> such home – along with the George Dawson Collection (GDC), a wealth of material relating to Dawson's life and legacy. Until the delivery phase of the project began, it was barely used or even known about.

*7 people used the SML in 2017, so its use as a result of E2E has exponentially increased.*

### Placing the collection at the heart of the project

The SML is about more than Shakespeare, the playwright. Its contents explore what Shakespeare's work means to the world and its impact, rather than focus on performance history as do those of the Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare Birthplace Trust at Stratford upon Avon.

**The SML now contains documents in at least 98 languages, demonstrating the global and multicultural impact of Shakespeare's work. Most of these languages are spoken on Birmingham's streets. At every event, E2E staff displayed digitised pages of the plays in different languages.**

*I was holding up large-print translations of Macbeth and a man said 'that's MY language' and began reciting in Bengali.*

*A deaf father and his hearing son sat for hours in the haptic chairs, simultaneously feeling and hearing the audio recording of Romeo & Juliet together for the first time.*

To each nationality, Shakespeare's work means something different. For example, in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Poland, to translate Shakespeare directly into Polish was an act of political dissent, whilst from 1835 in India, English was the formal language in schools and colleges and his works formed part of a colonial curriculum.

### **Everything to Everybody**

**The abundance of the collection contents meant that it genuinely offered Everything to Everybody, whilst at the same time offering a thread of communion between each group and each activity.**

Supported by the Librarian and CEVO, each partner was invited to visit LoB and to explore, interpret and express those deeper themes in the collection which chimed with their own needs: of citizenship, community, identity, history and dreams. For teachers and community partners, these workshops were a revelation. A teacher from Ark Victoria Academy said:

*It has made me think about the importance of showing pupils artefacts. It has also made me think how we can make the curriculum more relevant to [our school's] the cultural context.*

The Heritage Fund Investment Manager was impressed by the team's commitment and authenticity, saying of their decision to take the Folio into the prison, 'no one does this!'

### **Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games**

Raidene Carter was Creative Producer of the B2022 Festival of cultural and community events which ran across the city from March to September 2022. She recalled that when she and Iqbal Khan, Creative Producer of the Opening Ceremony, were commissioned during lockdown, they were looking for creative ideas that weren't 'aligned to the negative stories that come about because we were talking about the Commonwealth'.

***I initially remember meeting Ewan and him telling us about Everything To Everybody... I think that we just immediately clicked, a bit of a no-brainer.***

Themes of E2E and the Civic Gospel underpinned the community-focussed way in which the B2022 Creative Producers designed the commissioning process: 'we made the decision early on to devolve the delivery of the festival... this needs to be a festival that everybody can go and deliver'.

Motionhouse, the dance company which devised *Wondrous Stories*<sup>2</sup>, the multi-media performance directly outside LoB which opened the B2022 Festival in March, began their show with images of the Folio and other books from the SML 'flying' out of the library into the square below. In the months before the show, city residents had been asked to contribute stories which were shared on the night.

*There was a song in the show - I hear your voice, I hear your story, I hear your voice, your wondrous story - and that was a pickup from the idea of, well, the library here, it gathers stories. Is there a way in which your story can be part of this moment now?*

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<sup>2</sup> For more information and to watch the film recording of the performance, visit URL: <https://www.motionhouse.co.uk/production/wondrous-stories/>



Figure 3 Shakespeare makes his entrance during the B2022 Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony

The night before the Games' Opening Ceremony on 28 July 2022, which was broadcast by the BBC across the UK, Creative Producer Iqbal Khan wrote to Ewan Fernie, saying

*You opened the doors to the fundamental ideas of this show & I'm so grateful. You're in the DNA of it.*

The show included a section entitled 'Everything to Everybody' which told the story of George Dawson, the Library and the 'Bards of Brum', Midland-born creatives including Shakespeare, Samuel Jonson and Edward Elgar whose work has shaped the cultural and political landscape.

*Hearing George Dawson referenced by name in the Opening Ceremony was a very powerful moment for me.*

### Many threads, one collection

As more research was made available about the collection so the partners became more confident in the range of their work, connecting the contents and history of the collection itself to the lives and aspirations of participants.

### A few examples of themes explored by community partners include:

- **Bertz Associates** and students from Ark Victoria Academy explored themes of colonialism, identity and collecting in SML and presented their findings to the E2E team. Having acquired funding from Arts Council England, Bertz collaborated with We Don't Settle and students from George Dixon School to research and host a debate about the Civic Gospel's legacy. For further information about Bertz's work see section 9.
- **Ex Cathedra** used E2E prompts as part of the Singing Playgrounds programme in lockdown, to give school children a voice, resulting in a performance at the Folio event at the Bullring.

The school children who performed with Ex Cathedra at the Bullring were proud of their achievements:

*Having the opportunity to perform like this and share the joy of Shakespeare at the same time is an amazing experience. Sharing music with people and celebrating Shakespeare is wonderful!*

*It makes me realise the significance music has, to enable us to come together, to unity and to 'sing as one'.*

- **Parrabbola** explored how Birmingham had supported Polish political emigrés in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and how rare translations of Shakespeare from that time survived because the SML took them in. These stories were told alongside oral histories supplied by contemporary

Polish migrants, now settled in Birmingham. They were supported in their research by Polish academic, Dr Aleksandra 'Ola' Sakowska.

*We underestimate the power of Shakespeare in Central and Eastern Europe. For example, Romania holds the biggest Shakespeare Festival in Europe.*

*We spent a week in the archive, looking at the Polish material... Our use of the collection has helped to clarify the documentation as Ola could identify material for the Librarian.*

- **Desiblit**, a Birmingham-based British Asian magazine, commissioned Pakistani artist Haider Ali to transform a minibus into the Punjabi-styled Desibus, taking Shakespeare and his Bollywood connections all over the city, and provided translations so that South Asian visitors could share their own memories and ideas.
- **BCAT** hosted community workshops as vulnerable communities emerged from Covid-19 lockdowns, exploring themes of isolation and reunion in *The Tempest*, and of wellbeing through Shakespeare's plant imagery and commentaries from the SML. Sarah Dyble, the freelance participatory artist who delivered the E2E workshops said:

*...I've learned masses about Shakespeare as well and have interest in his works as I never was before. Visiting the collection and meeting Lucy, Nicola and Lauren for the first time opened up more exploration and suddenly everything became even more real and exciting!*

- **Highbury Hall**, former home of Joseph Chamberlain, a friend of Dawson and a politician who transformed the streets of Birmingham, compared political speeches from the plays to those made by people who enacted the Civic Gospel.

*We've lived local for years and Highbury Park is like our front garden... today is special, the Folio is so beautiful. I really got such a buzz from seeing it I almost cried – to have something so special brought to us to see.*

- **Stan's Café** enabled students from UoB School to look afresh at their city, creating diptychs placing digitised 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century production stills of famous scenes from Shakespeare's plays next to photographs they had taken of their neighbourhoods.

According to their teacher, the children were pleased the results and there were 'lots of 'wows' seeing their exhibition in the Shakespeare Room [sic]'



Figure 4 Friction Arts ran a series of community workshops for women and girls which led to the public performance of *Ophelia's Flowers* in LoB, 25 November 2023

## CASE STUDY 2: Reaching further into the community

*I enjoyed everything about this event! The community involvement was fantastic and inspiring. This event, and the project itself, is an excellent example of diversity. Furthermore, this demonstrated that the project is true to its title - Shakespeare and the memorial library really is for EVERYONE!*

The project team deliberately sought to co-produce events in Birmingham communities which had little to no prior engagement with the Shakespeare Memorial Library, and to work with organisations within those areas to reach a greater demographic through their local networks.

*We know that people in the city perceive the university as distant, not really for the people. E2E is helping us fulfil our civic role.*

Many of the organisations collaborated with additional local partners, ensuring that the Neighbourhood Productions, First Folio tour events and community workshops had a wider audience reach and greater diversity of supporting activities.

By necessity, it has proved hard to track how far the ripples have spread: every one of the 58 partners named in this report have in turn worked with at least one other organisation, others, like FOLIO Sutton Coldfield, with up to ten. Their staff and volunteers have contributed hundreds of days of their time to developing and delivering local activities.

In the development phase, community partners were invited to express interest in taking part. The main options were:

- host the First Folio tour
- co-produce a Neighbourhood Production (a community-based performance)
- curate a community exhibition for the SMR

Tom Epps said, 'it was challenging to pin down partners at an early stage, an expectation of the *Heritage Fund*'. Once delivery was underway, some of the original partners were unable to continue their involvement because of the Covid-19 delays, so the team approached other organisations directly to ensure city-wide coverage and include groups that might otherwise be overlooked, like refugees and young people. The Project Manager said:

*All of the activities we have done away from the library have been challenging, quite difficult to deliver, but I think that's what we should be doing.*

The community partners' contribution was vital and the E2E team took a co-production approach so that organisations could take ownership of the event, inject their own skills, knowledge and resources, and tailor activity to suit their communities.

Every partner was invited to bring their staff, volunteers and community team members to LoB for at least one archive workshop with the Librarian and CEVO. The Activity Manager from The Hive, part of Ruskin Mill Land Trust, described the benefits of such a collaborative and welcoming approach for their creative practitioner:

*[It gave her an] opportunity to find out more about Birmingham. Going on her own wouldn't have been as rich and meaningful without the participants and the [Librarian]'s work with them.*

### **The value to the community partners**

The aim of each collaboration was to cultivate a sense of local pride, shared ownership and to stimulate interest in learning about Shakespeare, the Memorial Library and George Dawson. Most of the community events were delivered in-person. For Birmingham Museums Trust, it was '*great to work with new partners and form more connections within the city*'.

**Community partners were asked to complete a survey review at the end of their engagement.**

- **95% of respondents agreed that 'taking part in E2E has positively affected our standing in our community'**

For Mohammed Ali, artistic director of Soul City Arts, the best part of the collaboration was:

*...working on a major, large-scale project at my old primary school. It's the largest school-based project we've done at a school we've wanted to work with for many years.*

*Taking the University and the SML into the community (inner city Spark Brook) was a unique and rare moment. Future collaboration discussions are continuing.*

### **Support from Birmingham City Council libraries and archive services**

*People have told me that [LoB] is a bit of an intimidating building so that's what the project aims to do, to break down those barriers really.*

Libraries across the city intrinsically provide a trusted space and an important point of contact for otherwise vulnerable or isolated groups. The staff know their service users well and became valuable supporters of E2E activity, signposting locals to workshop opportunities.

The Community Libraries' connections and support were particularly valuable to Friction Arts and BCAT who held workshops in some of the most deprived wards of Birmingham and Solihull for vulnerable people or families with low socio-economic status or complex needs.

Staff from other departments of LoB also supported the community partners to deliver their activities, particularly from the Archives, the Children's Library and the Prison Library Service.

### **Partner organisations included:**

- **Local heritage organisations or attractions:** Jewellery Quarter Research Trust, Birmingham Civic Society, Birmingham Museums Trust, Selly Manor Museum, Highbury Hall, Black Country Living Museum and Mrs History
- **Organisations with direct connections to Shakespeare:** Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, the Royal Shakespeare Company, UoB Shakespeare Institute
- **Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations:** Soul City Arts, Ex Cathedra, Stan's Café, Birmingham Rep, Friction Arts
- **Arts and cultural organisations:** Desiblitiz, Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies (BCAT), Parrabbola, Gap Arts, Bertz Associates and Kantu Ensemble
- **Community organisations:** Sense Touchbase Pears, The Hive, St Barnabus Church, Bearwood Community Hub

- **Local authority libraries:** Staff in other departments of LoB, and the community libraries of Sutton Coldfield, South Yardley, Balsall Heath, Nechells, Northfield, Druids Heath, Handsworth and Solihull
- **Schools:** Chilwell Academy, Ark Victoria Academy, Percy Shurmer Academy, Montgomery School, Birmingham Shakespeare Schools Hub, University of Birmingham School
- **HMP Birmingham and BCC Prison Library Service**

A full list of core community partners is available in Appendix 4





Figure 5 The First Folio on tour at Gap Arts, Balsall Heath



Figure 6 The First Folio on tour at Gap Arts, Balsall Heath

## 1. CASE STUDY: First Folio Tour

11,793 people from all over the city saw the First Folio up-close either in a community venue or in LoB between March 2022 and November 2023.

Birmingham's copy of Shakespeare's First Folio is unique because it is the only one bought as part of a dedicated programme for improving people's lives through culture and education. It was bought in 1881 for all the people of Birmingham, no matter their status. Of the 750 copies printed, only a third are still exist and Birmingham's Folio is one of very few in public hands.

The E2E team achieved an innovative national first by taking the City's precious First Folio on tour to 16 community venues around Birmingham and the West Midlands, including HMP Birmingham where it was viewed by 28 prisoners and 5 staff members.

*What was explained and what we asked was well presented ... it was a privilege to get up close and personal to this great book. I was literally a[n] arm length away from it. Many thanks for the experience. [Prisoner feedback]*

### **The Folio's 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

The project's extension into 2023 coincided with the national celebrations for the First Folio's 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, giving the team a chance to put the 'Everything to Everybody' ethos into action. In a year when the British Library loaned the Grenville First Folio to the Shakespeare North Playhouse in Prescott<sup>3</sup>, the Birmingham Folio was displayed at 9 community venues and 3 LoB events.

### **Taking it out of the Library**

*LoB was initially nervous about the First Folio going out on tour and felt that there were a range of logistical issues and hurdles to be overcome. Typically, such objects would be loaned to similar institutions, so LoB and E2E had to develop an approach that assured conservation professionals.*

**Taking the Folio on tour was a huge logistical challenge.** The Project Manager and LoB Operations Manager carried out multiple risk assessments and overcame a series of internal challenges to obtain appropriate permissions; make suitable security arrangements to ensure the book's preservation and safety; and work closely with their chosen partners to ensure correct conditions for the Folio.

### **The impact on communities**

***It's great that these works have been the property of the people of Birmingham, but the people of Birmingham haven't really known that until now.***

**Casey Bailey, Birmingham Poet Laureate**

As befits a text so fundamental to Britain's theatrical heritage, the Folio arrived dramatically at each venue and was on display for up to 4 hours in a bespoke case, accompanied by its retinue of academics, librarians, archivists, E2E project staff, volunteers, a conservator and a security guard.

- **The Folio was viewed in community venues by 3,342+ people who chatted directly with the team about its significance to the City and to themselves.**
- **Over 6,300 people attended the First Folio community events.**

**The value of the whole exercise was in the enthusiastic community response.**

Survey respondents described how much they appreciated the fact that the Folio had been brought into their own 'back garden'. **This removed the barriers a city-central location can impose on surrounding communities and fostered the sense that the Folio belonged to everybody.**

*The outreach to the community and language was really wonderful. To see and hear all ages engaging with Shakespeare was very enjoyable.*

Many respondents stated how much they had appreciated the opportunity to come together, either as a family or a community, because of the project.

*This was an inspiring presentation of community collaboration, creativity and togetherness that also taught me a lot about Shakespeare.*

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<sup>3</sup> For further information of this significant loan as part of the British Library's Treasures on Tour visit URL: <https://shakespearenorthplayhouse.co.uk/shakespeares-first-folio-to-be-exhibited-at-shakespeare-north-playhouse-as-part-of-shakespeares-first-folio-400-years-on-exhibition/>



Figure 7 Desiblitz created the Desibus, which appeared at several First Folio events and helped take the project to South Asian communities.

**The family-friendly nature of many of the activities encouraged multiple generations of families to engage with the whole event, not just one aspect. Visitors were observed to stay and participate in activities after they had viewed the Folio, or to spend time creating their own contributions to The People's Folio, a scrapbook in which everyone was invited to share thoughts and memories of their own Shakespeare experiences.**

*It was AMAZING! We thought we'd stay an hour, and we ended up staying the whole day.*

Each of the selected locations developed a wide-ranging programme of activities to complement the Folio and the themes of the Civic Gospel. These included:

- Live dance, poetry, music and drama
- Costumed interpreters including George Dawson, Falstaff, and the Folio's printer, Isaac Jaggard.
- Arts and crafts activities
- Stage craft workshops
- Recitations in other languages
- Images of translations into community languages

Many of these events were ambitious in scope and required the active involvement of everyone concerned to achieve success. Partner organisations and their volunteers proved willing to plan and work flexibly to make their day a success.

### **The tour details**

The tour launched at Birmingham Rep on 7 March 2022, along with a short film, *Shakespeare's Coming Home*, written and directed by Sean Foley, the Rep's Artistic Director. It starred Adrian Lester, the project patron, comedian Frank Skinner, and a community cast of 75 performing in BSL and a range of languages.

A director in great demand, Sean was happy to contribute and said as a result, *'For the first time I feel like I have the university on my side. A new idea is brewing...'*

As well as visiting 16 community venues - 13 across the city, and one each in Dudley, Smethwick and Solihull – the Folio was on public display at LoB from 27 July to 5 November 2022, and at 3 events to celebrate its 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary, where it was viewed by more than 8,500 people.

### First Folio tour venues

- Aston Hall, Aston
- Black Country Living Museum, Dudley
- Dorothy Parkes Centre, Smethwick (Sandwell)
- Gap Arts, Balsall Heath
- Grosvenor Shopping Centre, Northfield
- Handsworth Library
- Highbury Hall, Moseley
- HMP Birmingham, Winson Green
- Selly Manor, Bournville
- Sense Touchbase Pears, Selly Oak
- South Yardley Library
- St Barnabus Church, Erdington
- Sutton Coldfield Library
- The Bullring, Birmingham city centre
- The Core, Solihull
- The Hive, Jewellery Quarter



Figure 8 Quill writing in Bearwood



Figure 9 Costumed dancers at Sutton Coldfield



Figure 10 Iris Bertz and the Ark Explorers, students from the Ark Victoria Academy, visit LoB (credit: Oliver Romoff)

## CASE STUDY 4: Young people

Birmingham is the youngest city in the UK: according to the 2021 census<sup>4</sup>, 37% of the population is under 24. The E2E team decided to introduce activities that were additional to the requirements of the activity plan and provided local young people with a valuable work experience opportunity.

- 134 young people participated in E2E activities designed to increase their employability and creative skills

### Summer schools and work experience

The team hosted two, week-long, summer schools for 8 young people aged 18 to 25.

The participants were introduced to all aspects of delivery from collections management and research to event planning and marketing.

*I learned much more about the process of maintaining an archive, being an archivist, digitalism, community engagement, the history of the library/collection, and how exhibitions are curated.*

**E2E also hosted 5 UoB undergraduates as part of the UoB Professional Skills module** who mainly assisted with event delivery and **1 undergraduate from Aston University** on a 5-week placement.

All said that the experience had opened their eyes to the variety of heritage work and had given them inspiration for their future careers.

*How informative and fascinating everything was. I thought that my interest would be limited but I loved everything I learned about and my curiosity only grew. Also, that there is so much more to Birmingham.*

*I feel inspired to volunteer here and share my exhibition with friends and family. I also feel inspired to attend more Library of Birmingham and heritage events.*

**Some summer school participants and work experience students continued to volunteer for E2E after their placement ended.**

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<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics, 'How life has changed in Birmingham: Census 2021', 19 Jan 2023. Available at URL: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E08000025/>

## Bertz Associates

**120 young people took part in E2E activity organised by Bertz Associates.**

**Bertz Associates is a not-for-profit organisation set up to initiate projects with a particular focus on creating opportunities for emerging artists of ethnically & culturally diverse backgrounds in the West Midlands.**

In 2022, Bertz were commissioned to deliver a short programme of creative activity with 22 year 8 students from Ark Victoria Academy, chiefly of South Asian or Somali backgrounds. The 'Ark Explorers' researched themes of colonialism and identity in the SML and then presented their findings to the E2E team with a confidence and level of interest that delighted the CEVO.

*One decided to research the history of teaching Shakespeare in India, two more carried out their own research into the Forrest Collection of Scrapbooks.*

Asked to describe the project's top 3 successes, Bertz said:

- 1. The Library visit, as some of the children had never even been there, let alone seen the Shakespeare library.*
- 2. The engagement of the children, they loved the idea of making Shakespeare accessible to people of all backgrounds.*
- 3. The digital resource they created, as they wanted people like them to come to the library to see.*

**Inspired by the success of the Ark Explorers, Bertz Associates successfully applied for an Arts Council England grant to deliver a second sequence of workshops with 24 young creative practitioners and Year 12 students at George Dixon Academy in Edgbaston, many of whom were of the global majority.**

The young people co-produced poetry, moving image, music and use applied drama to refresh E2E and create an original art piece which was filmed and will be screened via multiple digital platforms. They curated an exhibition, We Made Brum, for the SMR and, with the youth organisation We Don't Settle, researched and hosted a Lunar Campfire for 15 young people in LoB, during which they debated the contemporary legacy of Dawson's Civic Gospel.

For details, see <https://www.bertzassociates.net/work/projects/everything-to-everybody-2023>

## Schools

**At least 10 schools took part in E2E activity organised by Stan's Café, Bertz Associates, Soul City Arts, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust or the E2E project team.**

Each school combined off-site creative workshops with on-site collections workshops at LoB, meaning that every child had an opportunity to get hands on with the original books and documents. A teacher from Ark Victoria Academy said:

*The E2E project has been an excellent opportunity for our pupils to engage with the Shakespeare collection and Birmingham Library. It has given pupils an opportunity to be creative, work in teams, and to create something that they can be proud of.*

Desiblitz collaborated with the E2E team to deliver workshops at 4 schools around the city. The arrival of the colourful bus sparked great curiosity. Another teacher from Ark Victoria Academy said that pupils 'were interested in the designs on the bus and asked good questions'.

*The link between South Asian culture and Shakespeare was new to them so they are still slowly grasping this. It was a really good enrichment opportunity - thank you!*

A teacher from Chilwell Croft School said, 'we are most definitely open to collaborative working in the future for the benefit of enriching experiences for our pupils.'



Figure 11 Some of the many dedicated project volunteers in the SMR with E2E team members

## CASE STUDY 5: Volunteers and Friends of the Shakespeare Collection

Every volunteer played a role in the delivery of this project, but none more so than those closely involved in the work of digitising and documenting items in the collection.

Of the volunteers surveyed at the start of their involvement, 7 identified the opportunity to work with the collection and archive as their primary reason for coming forward.

*Fantastic opportunity to help with the digitising Shakespeare archive material project. Nice to be able to give something back to community.*

In interviews with the evaluation team, three said they had previously volunteered to carry out collections work for Birmingham Rep's Centenary project (funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund).

As soon they could re-enter LoB after lockdown, the E2E volunteers worked closely with the Project's Librarian, Archivist and Digitisation Officer, receiving training and support as they began the task of digitising parts of the collection and assisting with the enhancement of the catalogues.

*I have had a really amazing time helping to digitalise the collections... I've learnt so much and met really great people along the way, so I'm grateful for the opportunity.*

This painstaking work involved **thousands of hours** of patient study of the SML's production programmes, posters, photographs and ephemera. The volunteers worked carefully and closely together to ensure accuracy and consistency throughout. Peter Dore, Head of Archives, said of the volunteers: *'They're really, really good and worth their weight in gold.'*

This group formed a close working bond and, halfway through the project, the lead volunteers met with the CEVO to express how reluctant they were to step away from the collection.

**During 2023, volunteers have worked with the CEVO and the Head of the Archives to form the Friends of the Shakespeare Collection (FOSC), with the aim of continuing to enhance the visibility and accessibility of the collection.**

They intend to continue volunteering with the collection, cataloguing and digitising new material, hosting events and producing exhibitions for the SMR to showcase items in the collection.

**This initiative by the volunteers will help shape and sustain the legacy of the project as a whole.**

*[I have enjoyed] Learning more about the collection, sharing this knowledge with others and engaging the wider community and beyond. I have also made friends with other like-minded volunteers along the way...*

Further information about the new Friends group can be found at URL:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/723933845812191>



## Impact case study films

Jenni Waugh Consulting Ltd, Durnin Research, The Collett Consultancy and Clear Picture Productions were commissioned to evaluate the project in summer 2020 and to produce 8 project impact case study films to be shared on the project's Youtube channel.

### Jewellery Quarter Research Trust Impact Studies, 2021

Case study films exploring how the Jewellery Quarter Research Trust developed and delivered online 'Do-Gooder' tours of the JQ Cemeteries in 2020 despite the challenges they faced during lockdown.

[Jewellery Quarter Research Trust Impact Story - omnibus](#)

[Jewellery Quarter Research Trust Impact Story - Impact on our organisation](#)

[Jewellery Quarter Research Trust Impact Story - Support from the E2E project team](#)

### Impact case studies, 2024

- [Adapting to change](#): how the E2E team addressed the challenges of the Covid 19 lockdowns and the Black Lives Matter movement
- [Connecting and learning](#): how the E2E team worked with partners to break down barriers, share Shakespeare and connect with people all over the city
- [First Folio Tour](#): how the E2E team overcame internal challenges and took the First Folio out on the road
- [Legacy](#): what it has meant for LoB, UoB, the E2E volunteers and the communities who have taken part over the lifetime of the project

### Collection videos, 2023

Members of the project team were asked to describe their favourite E2E object and say why it mattered to them.

- Tom's Hollywood photos: <https://youtu.be/2VpQu5r5Pw0>
- Ewan's book: <https://youtu.be/f0wGv7l7eBU>
- Lauren's scrapbook: <https://youtu.be/PPPM1myrKxQ>
- Nicola's First Folio kit bag: [https://youtu.be/vi\\_hpA0wCN8](https://youtu.be/vi_hpA0wCN8)