

**ACCESS & LEARNING POLICY****Date Approved:** 27 June 2024

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# 1. Executive Summary

At the Theatre Collection (TC), access and learning are at the heart of what we do and are summarised in our Mission Statement and in the Key Aims of our Forward Plan (2024-2027). These complement the Library Services Divisional Plan and the University of Bristol Vision and Strategy 2030 document, which emphasises ‘academic collaboration in both teaching and research’, ‘strong links with other world-leading research-intensive universities’ and ‘a close and synergistic relationship’ with the City of Bristol; the TC additionally and actively implements access and learning opportunities for the broader educational environment, citizen scholars and the Cultural & Creative industries in and beyond Bristol. This complements the ongoing work defined in the Centre for Cultural Collections Audience Development Roadmap (revised 2024).

The IDEASpace model, developed at the TC in 2015 (See Appendix 1) has allowed us to rethink the Collection as a source of knowledge to be discovered through various means (learning, research, curiosity, teaching etc.) and as catalyst for new work. This way of working has proved particularly effective, opening up new partnerships and learning opportunities, new ways of engaging with people and expanding the reach of our collections through collaborations within and beyond the University, co-curated exhibitions and loans to other museums.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the TC Forward Plan, TC Statement of Purpose, and the following TC policy documents: Exhibition Programming Policy, Customer Care and Service Policy, Workforce Handbook, Complaints Policy for Challenging Material, and the University’s Social Media Policy, plus the University of Bristol Group Health and Safety Policy (2023) with the Library Services Health & Safety and Incident Response Guidance.

In addition, the TC Access and Learning Policy has been revised in light of the following documents:

- Arts Council England *Let’s Create Strategy 2020-2030*
- University of Bristol *Vision and Strategy 2030 (2023)*
- Museums Association *Code of Ethics (2015)*

## 2. Mission Statement and Key Aims

### 2.1 Mission Statement

Our mission is to curate a world-class collection relating to the history of British theatre and live art, and their creative and cultural contexts. We work collaboratively to realise the potential of our collections to deliver research, educational, creative, and social outcomes for diverse communities locally, nationally, globally.

### 2.2 Key Aims

- To curate a world-class collection reflecting the diversity of British theatre and live art that provides unique insight into their creative processes and broader cultural contexts.
- To develop, care for and share our collections sustainably, ensuring they are visible and accessible locally, nationally and globally for the broadest possible impact.
- To use our collections to inform, inspire and transform learning opportunities, ensuring a culture of inclusion and belonging.
- To enable and co-create research by pursuing innovation, collaboration and sector leading practice, embracing the digital in our skills, services and collections, and contributing to the development of national research infrastructures as an arts laboratory for generating and testing new ideas.
- To democratise access to the Theatre Collection by working with academic, industry and community partners, creating new engagement opportunities which offer routes to deepening knowledge. These may be on-site, off-site, and online.

## 3. Terms of Reference

### 3.1 Access

The TC defines access as an activity that is made possible when physical, intellectual, cultural, financial and technological barriers are removed. Removal of these barriers enables all visitors both on-site and remote to engage with and respond fully to the TC collections. Access is considered in terms of both on-site and remote engagement with the collections.

### 3.2 Learning

The TC defines learning in terms of engagement with the collections. This may be made by a range of users, from academics to the citizen scholar and the cultural and creative industries. Engagement can be enabled via the online catalogue and social media provision, on-site and remote enquiries, object-based learning and the support of teaching provision in the University (and other educational establishments on request, on-site and via Virtual Reading Rooms), project facilitation and the creation of exhibitions and events.

### 3.3 Physical Access

Physical access to the Theatre Collection and related facilities (e.g. entrances, public areas, accessible toilet and lift access to the library, reading rooms and main TC office) is provided in accordance with the Equality Act (2010). Clear and visible signage and orientation is provided for the benefit of all visitors and staff which has been improved and updated by the University's Campus Division (2023) throughout the Vandyck Building.

### 3.4 Intellectual Access

Intellectual access is the process by which users can access information about the collections. This can be made available electronically via the online Calm catalogue and/or Preservica, or Excel spreadsheets and box lists which can be provided on request (including as hard copies).

## 4. Access to the Collections

### 4.1 Overview

The TC is open to everyone: members of the general public, individual enthusiasts, students and academics from within and beyond the University of Bristol, family historians, citizen scholars, and more specialised researchers, although access to some materials within the theatre and the live art archives may be restricted to those over the age of 18. The TC aims to provide a safe, comfortable and welcoming environment for all.

The TC recognises that different users require different levels of engagement with its holdings, which we endeavour to accommodate through our enquiry and request procedures and the provision of events and exhibitions on-site as well as loans to other local, national and international exhibitions.

The TC aims to respond to its users' requirements and expectations through a continual process of open dialogue, consultation and evaluation. To do so, it provides and advertises a range of methods for communication, including the provision of an online researcher registration form, a feedback option on the TC website, Social media (Facebook and X/Twitter), one to one communication and informal feedback, TC core staff email addresses and contact telephone numbers on our website and a visitor book or equivalent (e.g. comments cards) for exhibitions. The comments and needs of all users are taken into account when preparing and presenting our collection information and interpretation both on-site and online. Any actions implemented as a result of feedback are notified to users as appropriate.

See also the TC Customer Care and Service Policy and Exhibition Programming Policy, which are available to view at the TC on request or online at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/about/policies/>. The TC also abides by the University of Bristol Group Health and Safety Policy (2023) with the Library Services Health & Safety and Incident Response Guidance, and the University of Bristol Information Security Policy and Acceptable Use Policy (IT).

### 4.2 Intellectual Access:

- The TC has a searchable online catalogue at <https://www.calmview.co.uk/bristoltheatrearchive/calmview/> which is freely available to all both onsite and remotely.
- Printed catalogues and box lists are also available to researchers on request.
- The TC online catalogue includes digitised content. We are currently implementing Preservica, which will provide access to both digitised and born digital materials in the collections, either onsite or remotely as appropriate.
- The TC submits its accession data each year to The National Archives for inclusion in their online search engine Discovery.

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- The TC provides and shares information on its holdings for the Archives Hub online resource.

## 4.3 Physical Access

### 4.3.1 Buildings

The TC holdings are split physically across three sites: Theatre Collection: Park Row (part of the Vandyck Building in the centre of Bristol), the Theatre Collection: Langford Store, which is in Somerset, and the Library Services Research Reserve at Brislington.

Theatre Collection: Park Row is the primary site for user access, teaching, exhibitions and events. Maps and directions to the Theatre Collection: Park Row site can be found on the TC website at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/visit/>.

The Theatre Collection: Langford Store is unstaffed, with TC staff working on site on average once a week.

The Research Reserve is staffed by Library Services Collections team.

### 4.3.2 Opening times for the TC: Park Row site

- The TC is closed on Mondays to allow for collections management work and open Tuesday-Friday 9.30am-5.00pm.
- The TC is closed on University closure days and occasional other days. These closures are kept to a minimum, publicised as appropriate, and detailed information is also made available on the TC website and social media.
- The TC is open at other times, including occasional evenings and weekends by special arrangement for example, for Friends' events, exhibition previews or public events. Consideration will always be given to out of hours' openings and/or other events to maximise the reach of exhibitions and displays.

### 4.3.3 Access to holdings and protocols at the TC: Park Row site

- We aim to treat all researchers equally in terms of access to the collections and the TC facilities.
- No charge is made for users who visit the TC for research or learning activities, including exhibitions and events.
- We reserve the right to charge a fee for commercially arranged visits or tours.
- The reading room is staffed at all times. The Archives Assistant post-ensures that that all users are welcomed to the TC and have a point of contact during their visit.

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- Two reading rooms are available for researchers to access the TC holdings. The main reading room is a quiet study area, while the second reading room can be used as an additional teaching room or for group visits, volunteer or project work. Facilities in the main reading room include a Virtual Reading Room, PCs, scanners and a light box (on request). Both reading rooms are within a wireless hotspot for the University. All users of the reading room PCs are bound by the [University of Bristol Information Security Policy -Acceptable Use](#). We are in the process of implementing a kiosk system for researchers to view AV material in the reading room.
- Online visualiser meetings are available for researchers who are unable to visit the TC. Alternative access to some TC exhibitions is also available via VR headsets on-site and [online](#). The creation of further online 360° versions of TC physical on-site exhibitions is in progress. The Bristol Old Vic, Museums Association funded AR *Making a Scene: A Digital Innovation and Engagement Project*, is available for workshop use both on-site and off-site.
- TC rare books are held as archive items at the Library Services Research Reserve and are available on request (managed by Collections team in Library Services); other TC books are in the process of being re-catalogued; a selection of reference books to be housed in a new 3<sup>rd</sup> reading room (2024) and other books and journals to be available from Research Reserve (managed by Collections team in Library Services).
- Researchers are not required to book an appointment to use the reading rooms but are encouraged to contact the TC in advance of a visit to ensure availability of space, particularly during the teaching term.
- Visitors wishing to research items in the collections are encouraged to contact the TC in advance (in person, by email, letter or telephone) to order items. These can then be retrieved prior to the researcher's visit.
- No restrictions are placed on the number of items requested by a researcher. TC staff may advise researchers on the extent of individual items.
- Retrievals are made prior to a research visit. Researchers are advised at point of request if there will be a delay in the retrieval (e.g if items are held off-site).
- The TC enables both catalogued and uncatalogued (i.e. non-documentation enriched) material to be viewed by researchers. The TC actively encourages potential users to discuss their research requirements with staff prior to a visit so that TC staff are able to fully advise users of the existence of uncatalogued material and make it available whenever possible. Very occasionally, a restriction may be made to protect particularly fragile or vulnerable items prior to their conservation or in order to comply with GDPR or DPA legislation. Due to the nature of some of the materials in the theatre and the live art archive, access may be age restricted. TC staff always explain to researchers if these restrictions apply on requested material.
- External researchers are required to complete an online Researcher Registration Form prior to their first visit, which has been updated to align with GDPR (2018). Researchers are expected to abide by the reading room rules (a copy of which is



available on the [TC website](#), hard copies are available in the reading room). These are designed to protect the collections whilst still providing maximum access to them. Handling procedures are also explained to them by the Archives Assistant/member of staff on duty in the reading room.

- Visitors to TC exhibitions and events are not required to complete registration forms.
- In order to comply with legislation and best practice for duty of care, the TC has a strict protocol on accessing any online challenging material, which has been developed following consultation with the UoB Secretary's Office, the University Ethics Committee, UoB Head of IT Services, UoB Head of IT Security and the UoB Director of Communications and Marketing. The protocol includes a 'Take Down Policy'. Further details of the policy and procedures are available on request.
- Where archive material is considered to be particularly challenging in its content and/or potentially hazardous (e.g. material from the Franko B Archive), consideration is always given to the most suitable form of access. In these cases, specialist members of the TC staff will liaise closely with the individual researcher to balance accessibility of the archives with a duty of care.
- The TC has made considerable effort to create digital surrogates of some of the most vulnerable material in the collections, such as the NRLA Video Archive and lantern slides so that access can be managed and optimised without risk to the physical collections.
- The TC aims to provide a high standard of customer care in every aspect to all its users and stakeholders. We encourage feedback from visitors and we take great care to ensure that we provide all our services efficiently, courteously and to a high standard. Complaints are dealt with according to procedures detailed in the TC Customer Care Policy.

#### 4.3.4 Remote enquiries

- If researchers are unable to visit the TC in person, TC staff can undertake more detailed searches on their behalf. This service is provided free of charge for up to half an hour. Additional time spent on a remote enquiry will be charged at £12.50 per half hour. The researcher will be informed if the enquiry will necessitate a search longer than half an hour, and permission will be sought before charges are incurred.
- Online visualiser meetings are offered for researchers who are unable to visit the TC. Researchers are advised that 30 minutes is provided free of charge, after which the charge is £12.50 per half hour. The researcher will be informed if the meeting is likely to be longer than half an hour prior to the meeting taking place, and permission sought before charges are incurred. Visualiser meetings are intended as a way to gain an overview of a collection or to check specific holdings. They are not recommended as an alternative to longer, in-depth academic research of multiple holdings. To that end, visualiser meetings are not intended to last longer than one to one and a half hours. If a remote researcher requires more in-depth or academic

research to be undertaken on their behalf, they may be advised to employ a research assistant who will be able to visit the TC to study holdings in detail.

- Payment for research services are made via the University of Bristol Theatre Collection online shop at <https://shop.bris.ac.uk/product-catalogue/faculty-of-arts/faculty-of-arts-other/university-of-bristol-theatre-collection-research-and-scanning-charges>
- Freedom of Information enquiries are dealt with according to the University of Bristol FOI Policy. Procedures are outlined at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/foi/request/>

### 4.3.5 Reprographic services

#### 4.3.5.1 Reprographic services: non-commercial

- Non-commercial is defined as for personal reference only.
- Researchers visiting the TC may take photographs (non-flash) of materials for personal reference only. University of Bristol staff and students are not charged. External researchers will be charged £3 per day for camera use and will be asked to complete a copyright declaration form.
- Researchers visiting the TC may use the scanner available in the reading room to create images for personal reference only. University of Bristol staff and students are not charged. External researchers will be charged £3 per day for use of the scanner and will be asked to complete a copyright declaration form.
- On-site and remote researchers may request for images to be scanned by TC staff, for personal reference only. The researcher will be asked to complete a copyright declaration form and a charge will be made of £3 for the first scan and 50 pence for each additional scan. If a large number of scans are required, that will entail the member of TC staff spending longer than half an hour scanning, then additional costs of £12.50 per half hour will be made. The researcher will be advised of any additional costs before the work is undertaken.

#### 4.3.5.2 Reprographic services: commercial

- Commercial use is defined as any usage within the public sphere, including print and online publication and public dissemination, film and television, performance and installations, exhibitions and displays, websites, online blogs and all forms of social media.
- Commercial image requests are directed to the picture research agency ArenaPAL ([enquiries@arenapal.com](mailto:enquiries@arenapal.com)).

- Researchers taking, scanning or requesting images for personal use are always advised of the procedure involved should they wish to later use images for commercial purposes.

#### 4.3.6 Access to holdings and protocols at the TC: Langford site

- Researchers may request material from the Langford Store, which can then be retrieved by staff and made accessible in the reading room at the Theatre Collection: Park Row site. Provision may be made for additional off-site retrievals if a researcher's visit falls outside of the standard dates for staff visits to the Langford Store. In all cases, researchers are advised to request items well in advance of a visit, as resources and travel may influence retrieval times.
- For both the TC: Park Row and TC: Langford sites, if requested items are impractical to retrieve or unsuitable for production, an explanation will be given to the researcher and alternative access methods will be offered where possible, such as the provision of digital surrogates or, where practical, arranging for a researcher to visit the Langford Store. In such instances the researcher will be accompanied by TC staff. Such provision will be made on a case-by-case basis and discussed with the individual researcher.
- Image requests made for items stored at Langford are treated as remote enquiries and dealt with as 2.2.5.1 and 2.2.5.2.

## 5. Learning

### 5.1 Public engagement

- The TC recognises the importance of learning opportunities for all, and constantly seeks to enable and encourage the public to engage with the TC through a variety of ways that offer routes to deepening knowledge.
- The TC stages regular on-site exhibitions, co-curated off-site exhibitions and the loan of items to other national and international museums and galleries. (See also the TC Exhibition Programming Policy.)
- The TC welcomes requests for visits and tours of the TC by groups of up to 12 people. Non-commercial visits and tours are provided free of charge and tailored to the interests of the group.
- The TC views partnerships and projects as opportunities to engage with external community and specialist interest groups and to target potential new users, especially among those currently under-represented.
- The TC has an active volunteer group. Members are of all ages and contribute to a range of projects. A revised Volunteer Policy in 2023 aims to create volunteer projects that align with specific TC projects (e.g. *Firestarters*) and recruits a volunteer team with each new project. Effort is made to ensure that the volunteer team is a balance of ages and abilities, responding to the requirements of the TC Friends Association, and the UoB commitments to both student and civic volunteer engagement opportunities.
- The TC has an active Friends' Association with which it collaborates to host public events such as lectures and 'Collections Chats'.

### 5.2 Student and Academic Staff Engagement

#### 5.2.1 University of Bristol

- The TC aims to work with students and academics from all departments and Faculties across the University of Bristol, although it currently works predominantly with departments in the Faculty of Arts.
- The TC seeks to support archive-based research activities, from Widening Participation and Foundation Year to post-graduate students and academics at all stages of their careers. The TC is also actively involved in promoting its facilities to prospective students and their parents during open days and post-offer open days, whenever possible.

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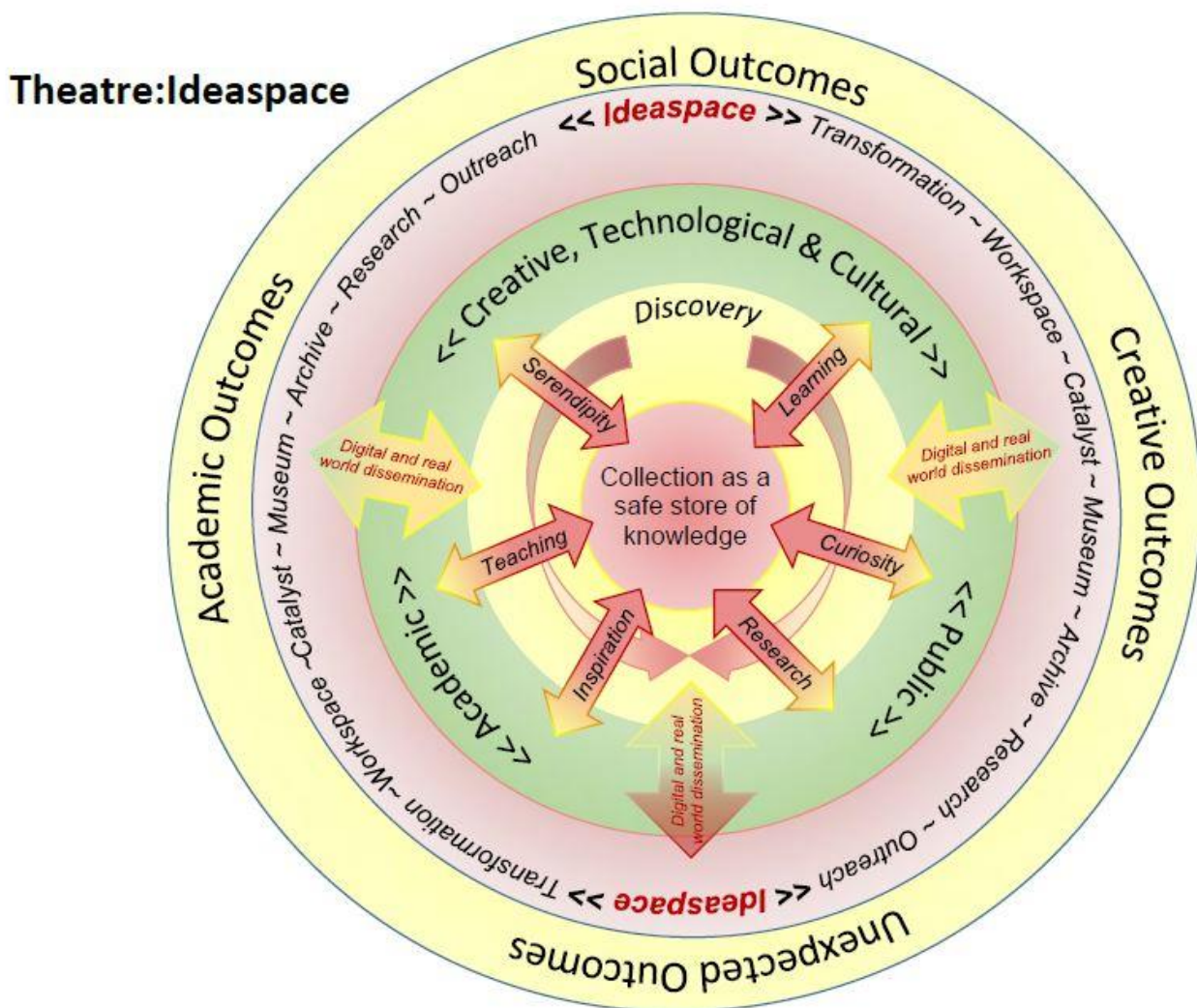
- TC staff work closely with academics at the University of Bristol to co-lead archive research and object-based learning sessions for taught undergraduate and postgraduate units. TC staff are also actively engaged in the planning of these sessions to ensure that the TC holdings can be used in the most effective way.
- First year Theatre Department single and joint honours students, and those embarking on specific archive-based units, are offered an introduction and tour of the TC as well as guidance on archive research skills and handling skills at the start of their course. However, any student seeking to use the TC for unit-related or independent study is welcome to approach the TC for guidance on using the collections for their research.
- The University of Bristol Theatre Department has appointed an Academic Champion for the TC, who actively promotes the Collection as a teaching and research resource, across the University who will spend 20% of their time in advocacy and academic development work for the TC.

### 3.2.2 External HE and FE students

- The TC actively supports and encourages engagement by external HE and FE students with the Collection holdings and responds positively to requests for visits and workshops. TC staff work closely with external academics and teachers to facilitate and co-lead bespoke workshop sessions for regional sixth form colleges and other FE and HE institutions such as University of the West of England and the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School.
- The TC is also actively engaged with University of Bristol initiatives such as IntoBristol, Access to Bristol, and the Sutton Trust Summer School and visiting Fulbright scholars, and works with the University's Widening Participation and International Office to provide bespoke workshops.

## Appendix 1 – IDEASpace model

Theatre: IDEASpace is our unique model for an Inspiring, Dynamic and Engaging Arts Space. Our vision situates the Collection at the heart of academic activity (teaching, research) within and beyond the University. It allows the Collection – and the knowledge it contains – to be discovered through self-led learning, teaching, research and curiosity. It brings together the three user communities of Academic, Cultural & Creative (C&C) industries (including creative technologists) and Public, enabling each to engage with the Collection and with each other. It embeds us in the cultural life of the city and country, through partnerships with C&C organisations including, but not limited to, those whose collections we hold. It provides innovative, new routes to dissemination and public engagement on and through local and national partners. IDEASpace transforms the Collection: it becomes a catalyst for new scholarly, creative, cultural and social outcomes and facilitates/brokers new partnerships and other innovations.



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