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# 1. Executive Summary

The Theatre Collection (TC) is a Designated Collection, and an accredited museum and accredited archive service, based within Library Services (LS) in a research-intensive university. The University of Bristol *Vision and Strategy 2030* states that 'Curiosity, research excellence and innovative teaching are the bedrock of our university'. The Library Services Divisional Plan 2023-2030: *Engaging Community, Connecting Knowledge* has a Strategic Priority for Research and Innovation, the primary aims and objectives of which are to 'enable and co-create research as disciplinary and interdisciplinary partners' and to 'be an active component of the University research environment and culture'. The LS embodies University values in its [aim](#), to be 'disciplinary and interdisciplinary partners, collaborating in research, developing academic skills, and providing learning environments, collections, subject expertise'.

As such, enabling and encouraging research and scholarship remains the *raison d'être* for the Theatre Collection. Key Aim 3 of our Aims and Objectives states how the TC will '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.'

As a theatre collection our holdings directly and actively relate to the Cultural & Creative industries. We are uniquely placed to be used as a research resource for investigation and inspiration, which may have scholarly, creative and/or social outcomes (as encapsulated in the IDEASpace model (See Appendix 1). This research activity will often have potential for impact and public engagement within and well beyond the University.

We encourage research of all types and at all levels, and aim to provide helpful, open and non-discriminatory support for all researchers, regardless of their level of research experience and research interests.

We are open to all, welcome all users and make no restriction on who may come in and carry out research based on our collections (with the exception of some age-related exceptions for some material held within the theatre and Live Art Archives).

We regard research with the Collection as part of a natural and deepening progression of learning and discovery, from initial encounters with exhibitions to in-depth academic research (See Appendix 2: 'Toe-dippers to Deep Sea Divers' Model).

## Relationship with other policies and plans

This policy should be read in conjunction with the TC Forward Plan, TC Access and Learning Policy, TC Customer Care and Service Policy and the TC Exhibition Programming Policy.

We also abide by the following University of Bristol Policies:

- [Ethics of Research Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Research Governance and Integrity Policy](#)

And we comply with ethical codes of conduct in the sector including:

- [Museum Association Code of Ethics](#)
- [Archives and Records Association Code of Ethics](#) (updated March 2024)

## 2. Statement of Purpose

### 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

- 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.
- Develop, care for and share our collections sustainably, ensuring they are visible and accessible locally, nationally and globally for the broadest possible impact.
- Use our collections to inform, inspire and transform learning opportunities, ensuring a culture of inclusion and belonging.
- 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.
- Democratise access to the Theatre Collection by working with academic, industry and community partners, creating new engagement opportunities

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which offer routes to deepening knowledge. These may be on-site, off-site, and online.

### 3. Background

Until 2021/22 the Theatre Collection was based in an academic faculty in a Russell Group university, therefore facilitating research has always been at the heart of what we do. In 2022/23 it transferred into Library Services thus retaining its essential role as a research led organisation.

The Theatre Collection was established in 1951 as a teaching and research resource to 'serve scholars and practitioners alike' for the UK's first ever Department of Drama (established 1947). It has been at the forefront of theatre research, including Practice as Research, ever since. The TC is now recognised as one of the most comprehensive research collections for the history of professional British theatre and live art in the world. Since 2010 we have continuously received HEMG (HEFCE) Museums, Galleries and Collections Funding (with an uplift awarded in 2016 and again in 2024) in recognition of the important contribution we make to research activity and the UK HE research infrastructure.

In order to respond to the changing research environment, we take a proactive approach to collecting. Our Collections Development Policy allows for the Collection to grow and respond to changing research agendas and support academic researchers needs.

### 4. Forward Plan

Details of the Forward Plan are included here to reflect the integrated nature of research across all our activities.

Our Forward Plan (2023/24 - 2025/26) sets out our Statement of Purpose: Mission Statement and Key Aims and describes how we deliver these aims (see Forward Plan (2023/24 – 2025/26, Section 5). All our objectives are linked to the overarching desire to increase accessibility and use of the collections for education, research, innovation, enjoyment and inspiration. Our ethos is grounded in the belief that there is a direct correlation between curating a world class collection, increasing its visibility and accessibility and releasing its research potential. This opens up opportunities for new research by individuals, project teams and partnerships.

Aim 5.4 of our Forward Plan focuses on research, with specific objectives relating to enhancing research through, for example 'Contribut[ing]' to the creation of a Creative Lab within Library Services for digital scholarship...' (5.4.1) and 'Explor[ing] the potential of remote Virtual Reading Room facilities to bring together disparate archive collections that relate to each other...for opening up new global research and

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collaboration possibilities' (5.4.4). Objectives 5.4.7 – 5.4.14 refer to specific academic, funded research projects with internal and external academic and professional arts organisations, that the Theatre Collection will support through its holdings and expertise.

The detail of how we are achieving these objectives and their associated action points can be found in the Forward Plan.

## 5. Principles

In addition to our Aims and Objectives, there are a series of overarching principles that we adhere to across our activities.

### 5.1 Intellectual Access:

- No charge is made for users who visit the TC for research. We make catalogued and uncatalogued material freely available on site to all researchers.
- We make users aware of our uncatalogued material through our web site and catalogue by identifying and describing all collections at a collection level (minimum), regardless of whether they are yet fully catalogued.
- We share our data as widely as possible, via our website, through The National Archives online search engine *Discovery* and the *Archives Hub* online resource.

### 5.2 Researchers

- We aim to treat all researchers equally in terms of access to the collections and the TC facilities.
- We are open to all and make no restriction on who may carry out research based on our collections (with the exception of some age-related exceptions for some material held within the theatre and live art archives which are limited for legal reasons).
- Information for visiting researchers is provided at <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/visit/>.
- We encourage research of all types and at all levels, and aim to provide helpful, open and non-discriminatory support for all researchers, regardless of their level of research experience and research interests.

- TC staff knowledge and experience is shared openly with researchers in an advisory capacity (but we do not judge or seek to influence research outcomes).
- For researchers who are unable to visit in person we offer a remote enquiry service, and online visualiser meetings, with no charge being made for the first 30 minutes research. See <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/services/enquiries-and-research/>

### 5.3 The Research Environment

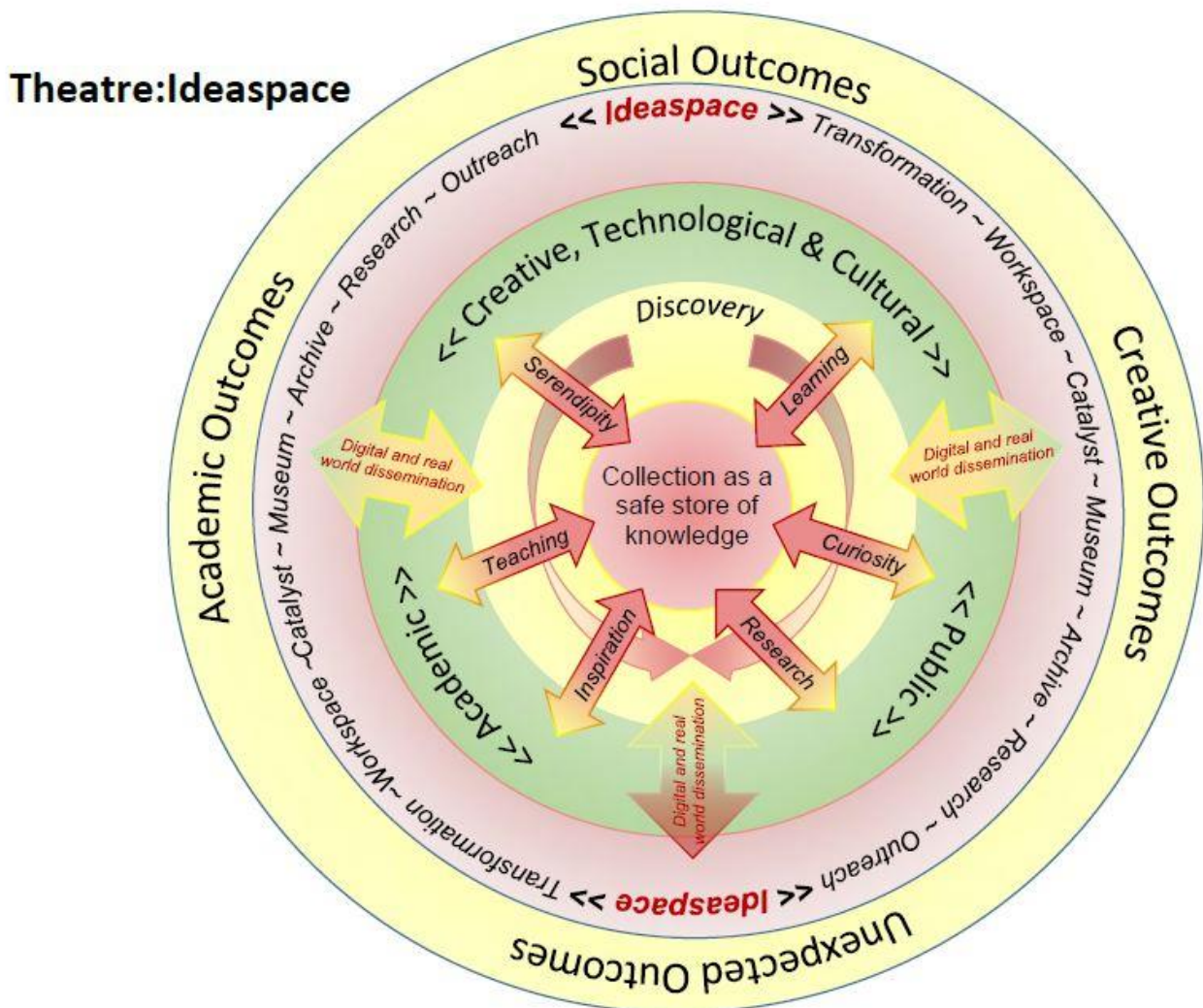
- We work closely with our Academic Champion to promote use of the TC for research, teaching and learning within the University.
- We use the ‘Toe-dippers to Deep Sea Divers’ model (Appendix 2) to enable all users to have a deepening participation and engagement with our collections, and to support a research rich curriculum by encouraging collections and research outcomes to be used in teaching and learning activities.
- We support academic endeavour within the University and work closely with colleagues in Library Services as well as individual academics, Specialist Research Institutes (SRI), University Research Institutes (URI) and Centres to enable and facilitate individual and collaborative research, and other projects.
- We also support academic endeavour beyond the University which seeks to use the TC holdings for research, teaching and public engagement activities. These activities may be by individuals, groups, institutions or other collaborations.
- TC staff take an active role supporting the academic sector and individual academic staff, through contributing to conferences, talks, tours and other events.
- TC staff support others from within, and beyond UoB, to develop research grants and other applications that relate to our holdings.
- TC staff work with partners (including researchers) to help deliver academic and other outcomes based on our holdings.
- TC staff take an active role contributing to the archive and museum sector through conference papers, publications, talks and other events.
- TC staff take an active role, undertaking ‘professional practice as research’, and are encouraged to contribute to the academic research environment, through conference papers and peer-reviewed publications.

- TC staff proactively develop grant applications and projects (cataloguing, conservation, digitisation etc.) that enhance access to and use of our collections, including for research use.
- TC staff abide by the UoB Ethics of Research Policy and Procedure, Research Governance and Integrity Policy and comply with the Museum Association Code of Ethics and Archives and the Records Association Code of Ethics.



## 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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# Appendix 2 Toe Dippers to Deep Sea Divers Model

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION v1.3

Cultural Collections: enabling a research-rich, innovative and inclusive educational experience

Deepening learning journey

