

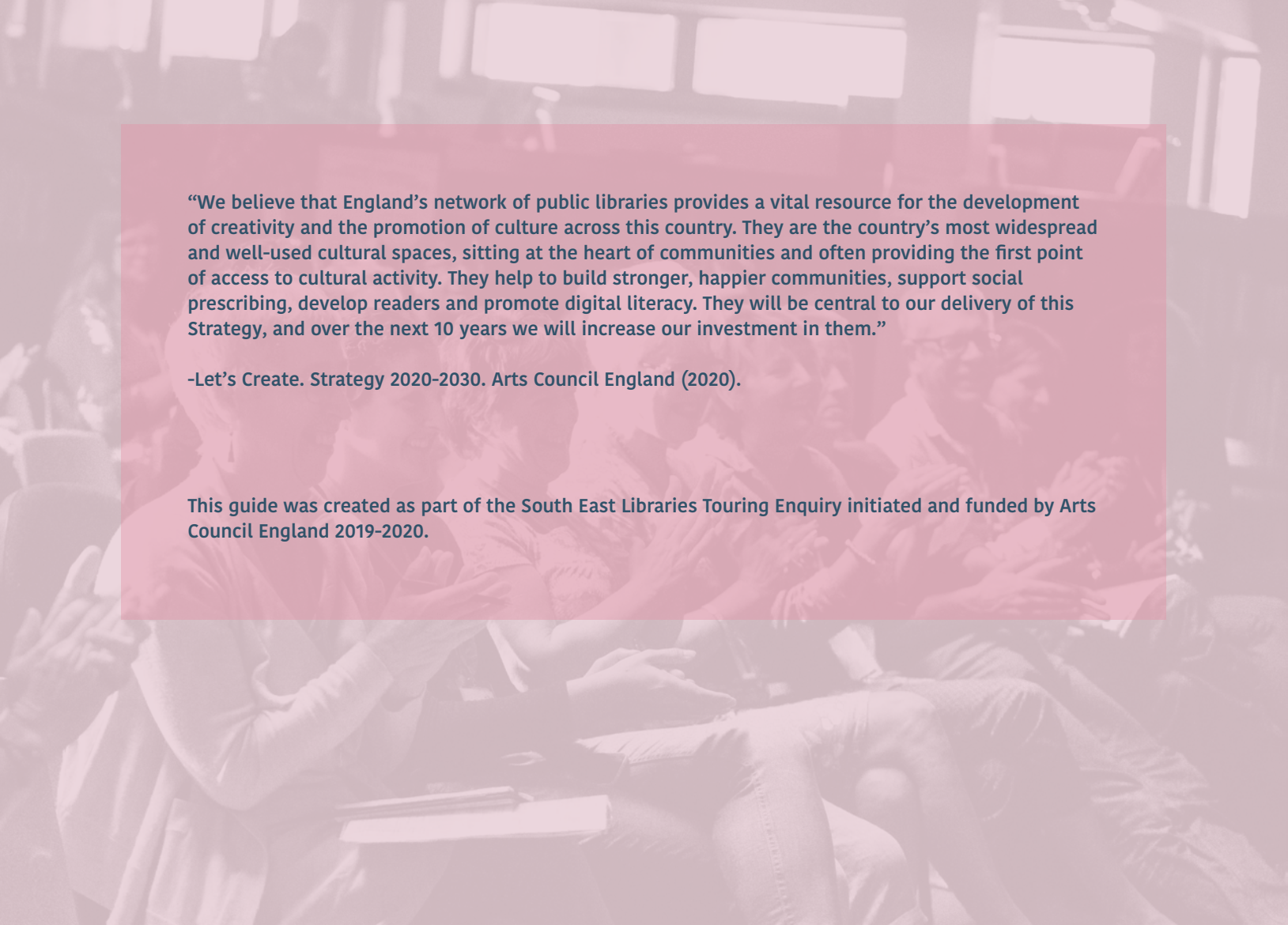


HOSTING

TOURING ARTS

EVENTS:

**THE REALLY USEFUL GUIDE
FOR PEOPLE
WORKING IN LIBRARIES**



“We believe that England’s network of public libraries provides a vital resource for the development of creativity and the promotion of culture across this country. They are the country’s most widespread and well-used cultural spaces, sitting at the heart of communities and often providing the first point of access to cultural activity. They help to build stronger, happier communities, support social prescribing, develop readers and promote digital literacy. They will be central to our delivery of this Strategy, and over the next 10 years we will increase our investment in them.”

-Let’s Create. Strategy 2020-2030. Arts Council England (2020).

This guide was created as part of the South East Libraries Touring Enquiry initiated and funded by Arts Council England 2019-2020.

CONTENTS

This guide is designed to help people who work in libraries to successfully run a touring arts event at their venue. Touring arts enables multiple venues to host some of the best quality and most professional work from around the country. A touring arts event could be a live theatre show, a music or dance performance, digital workshop, or even a film screening or art exhibition. This guide is intended to help you run any kind of touring arts event. We'll cover everything from choosing the artists you work with, to delivery on the day, and evaluation. You could use this guide at library team meetings to plan for your Culture and Creativity Offer.

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INTRODUCTION

Touring arts can provide several benefits for your library service users and surrounding communities. As well as meeting culture and creativity outcomes, arts events can support all four Universal Offers and indeed local authority strategic outcomes.

One touring arts event could achieve the following:

Reading – Themes developing curiosity, further research, new users

Health & Wellbeing – Bringing people together, shared experiences, themed work raising awareness, taking part

Digital & Information – Signposting based on themes; new technology presented creatively

Culture & Creativity – Access to high quality arts, inspiring ideas, raising aspirations, opportunity to be creative

Why do artists want to tour to libraries?

Many arts companies would love to tour their work to libraries. Libraries touring provides them with the opportunity to add another circuit to their touring, reaching new and diverse audiences, and often reaching those who wouldn't see their work at a traditional arts venue. Not only are these companies enthusiastic to bring their work to your library's audiences, they thrive off more intimate experiences and the benefits that come from community arts venues. Many have experience in non-traditional touring so can be adapted to suit unconventional spaces.

"Libraries are a place where users can experience vibrant and diverse cultural events, reaching communities who do not normally take part in the arts."
(Libraries Connected, 2018).

BEFORE YOU START...

Consider these questions at a team meeting:

What do we need to know from the artist or company?

Who do we want to reach?

What do we want to achieve?

How will we select the art we programme?

What can we afford? Do we need funding?*

What facilities does our library have? **

It helps to have a designated staff member based at the library that will be hosting the event - one who is aware of that library's regular schedule, audience and features - to also be involved in the programming and artist liaison, to keep communication clear.

Involve everyone working at the library at an early stage to make sure they are all confident and enthusiastic about the activity. Giving people clear roles that they are happy with will also help them sell the show in the lead up and make the touring artist and attendees feel welcome on the day itself.

Essentials: appropriate licence for live performance and music (i.e. PRS), insurance (check with your local council for what's needed), health and safety policy, risk assessments.



Some libraries told us they don't think they're as equipped as traditional arts venues to put on a high-quality arts event – we think you are! In fact, arts events in libraries have an audience who know each other, a familiar space, welcoming staff, signposting to other services, an intimate experience, and much more.

*Check list can be found via link on page 22

** Link to Arts Council England funding pots are on page 22, and you may find other local authority or other funding streams available.



SELECTING & PROGRAMMING ART

When it comes to selecting and booking artists, you may have a good idea of what your library users like, especially if you have received feedback from previous events. Consider your main target audiences and consult with them about what they want. Be aware: sometimes users don't know what they would like so you might want to be creative and give suggestions, or take a poll on a few options.

If you are booking an event for multiple libraries in your service, it's worth taking time to choose a cluster of libraries with similar audiences or groups who would appreciate the event you'll be putting on.

You may work with a local arts organisation who can help you select a programme that is high-quality and appropriate to your audience and space, and they can also offer expert advice and support.

Ensuring quality is important, as well as gaining more understanding about the shows/exhibitions/workshops that you are selecting. Try and see shows, read reviews, watch clips or trailers/images, seek peer reviews or recommendations.

The following are things you might want to consider when programming:

- ✓ Do a quality check – does the company have a good track record of creating work for your intended audience? Are they funded by a reputable body? What are the reviews like?
- ✓ Who is your intended audience, and do you have ways of reaching them to promote this event to them? Can the touring artist help with this?
- ✓ Check availability – are the company available to book for the date you'd like to programme them for your preferred dates?
- ✓ Do the company have good quality marketing materials, or will you need to ask for amendments?
- ✓ Check what the company fees include – is travel/accommodation additional?

EVENT PLANNING



The earlier you start planning, the better. You may want to link your event with significant national or local library dates or add wrap-around activities such as a themed trail or workshop.

Here you'll find below a few points on the main aspects of event planning to use as a guide. We have included a timeline for you on page 20 so that you can see the stages and milestones leading up to a successful arts event. You could use this guide to establish your own timeline of actions, to ensure all members of your library team know who is doing what, and when.

Top tip: Consider including the plan for the event on the agenda of a team meeting.

TIMINGS



- Tying in your event with significant national dates could mean planning starts very early
- Company and artist availability might need to be booked up to a year in advance
- Allow 12 weeks to promote your event – will the company have marketing available to send you in time? (see timeline on pg. 20)
- Decide what time of day is best to hold your event – when your library is open or out of normal hours
- Be aware of 'setting-up' times needed on the day – both for library staff and the company



COMMUNICATIONS


- Establish a consistent contact between an individual at the library, and someone from the touring arts company, to liaise through the planning process, right up to the event itself
- Ask the company contact key questions as soon as possible*
- Confirm information about both timing and space and requirements early on and keep a check list of questions and answers

* The link to additional resources can be found on page 22

SPACE & REQUIREMENTS



- Artists' needs e.g. food, changing and warm-up space
- Access e.g. parking and loading
- Event space details e.g. which area of the library, blackout blinds, dimensions including height
- Technical e.g. power supply, access to light switches
- Legal i.e. licences and insurance



Start promoting as soon as you have all details set – the longer you have to spread the word, the better.





TICKETING



Think about what pricing structure is best for your service, audience, and for what you want to achieve. Consider whether the ticket price is appropriate and affordable for your library communities, but also that it reflects the quality of the event.



To be financially inclusive, will you offer special rates (concessions) for particular audiences (such as low-income audiences or personal carers)? Be clear about what the discounts are for, and give guidelines for them (e.g. the age limit for a child ticket).

- ✓ The full price ticket (general admission) should represent the high standard of the event, so that people are aware of the quality, even if you are offering discounts.
- ✓ Try and have two different ways to buy tickets. Online is a great option if it is straightforward to use and manage (there are several options, be aware of commission), but some people prefer to pay in person – make sure all methods are clearly communicated on marketing materials.
- ✓ Physical tickets can be very useful as both a reminder to an individual that the event is coming up, and for creating a more memorable experience. These can easily and cheaply be made on a standard printer.
- ✓ Having a clear system for ticketing both leading up to the event and on the night will help it run smoothly.
- ✓ Are there specific groups or individuals you want to offer complimentary tickets or discounts to? Contact these people directly and give them plenty of notice.



You could try 'pay what you decide' but make sure your audiences are aware of the cost of the activity, or give a suggested amount.

MARKETING MATERIALS & PROMOTION



WORD OF MOUTH: The BEST way to sell a show is to tell people, so make sure everyone who works in your library knows all about it and encourage them to talk to everyone! Share ideas as a team about key things to say to attract most people i.e. 'live music', 'fun night out', 'great story.'

POSTERS: It isn't enough to simply put posters in the library – reach out to the wider community by putting them in cafes, bars, community centres, doctors' surgeries, leisure centres, churches, shops and shopping centres and anywhere else you can think of. Make sure you have permission to put posters up before doing so. You will already have checked at the beginning of your planning, but does the touring company provide marketing? Can you overprint with your event details?

FLYERS: Posting out flyers to groups affiliated with your library; schools and other groups could also help spread the word. FLYERING in the streets and to houses can also be effective but is of course more time consuming, and in some public areas a licence is needed to flyer.

SOCIAL MEDIA: You can share videos, comments and photos (ask the company for extra photos if you need them) – have fun with it! Run a competition or poll, get local MPs and community groups involved in sharing online and try to get as many shares and likes as you can. Use hashtags of your area and tag local places. Don't underestimate how well a boosted Facebook ad can help you sell tickets for a show.

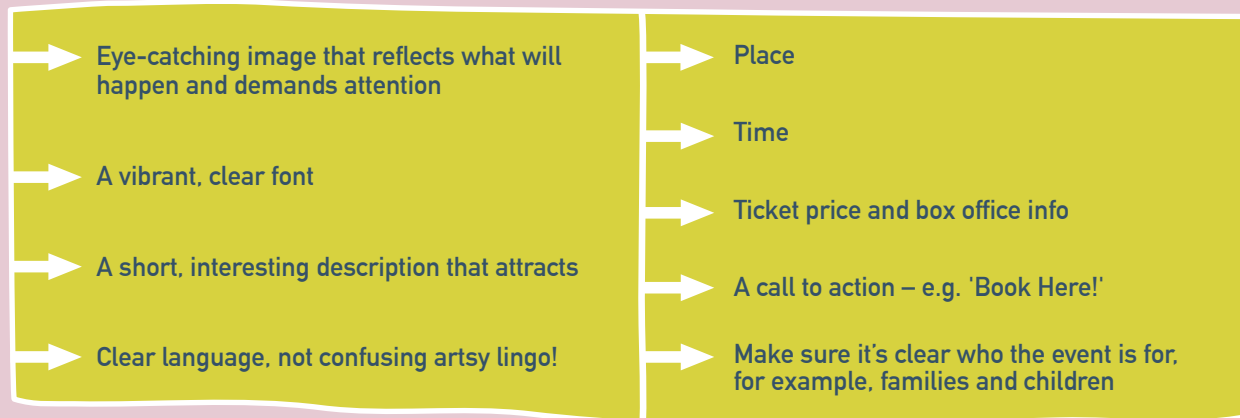
ONLINE LISTINGS: You should be able to find several online listing sites for your area, sometimes these are linked to local radio stations and other print media.

INVITED GUESTS: You could also invite certain groups that represent your intended audience to attend for free or with a group discount. Do this as soon as you can so they appreciate being invited first as special guests, and so they will spread the word to others – this could promote more ticket sales.

SUBLIMINAL PROMOTION: You could play music linked to a show in the weeks leading up to it, create a display, and link the event with as many activities as possible, e.g. particular themes to book groups, songs in Bounce and Rhyme, special patterns at Knit and Natter!

BE CREATIVE: Themed bookmarks for borrowers, special badges (for staff or to give away) or even fancy dress! Think how this could tie in with the other Universal Offers.

If you are designing any marketing materials in-house, think about what they should include:





PRESS RELEASES



Press releases only work if you have a 'hook' – a story to tell and/or something great to sell.

Top Tips:

- ✓ Do as much of the legwork as possible in the press release, so that an editor can simply lift your written copy and put it in an article.
- ✓ If you have an image (and the right to use it in print) include it with the press release.
- ✓ Get all the key information in the release including the call to action for booking tickets, and contact details for any queries.
- ✓ List your core funders so that they get a mention.
- ✓ Have a think about whether there is an angle or a story in your event. Is it the first of its kind in the area? Is your local museum or gallery running an exhibition that links with the event theme? Are there any quirky facts that would be fun to include or perks on offer at the event, such as a talk before the event or social drinks after it?
- ✓ Your local council press or communications office should be able to help you share the press release with local contacts – make sure you're aware of the marketing and comms department timeline for this.
- ✓ If you're running regular events, it's worth trying to develop a personal relationship with local newspapers and magazines. Could you build your event into a bigger feature and suggest they run a piece about the changing face of community venues, for example?


PLANNING FOR FEEDBACK & CAPTURING DATA

It's always good to start thinking of this as early as possible so that you can build it into your event plan. Data (in your case, information about your audience) is gold. It helps you sell your event, build a following, raise your profile and share news.

If you have received funding you may need specific information for reporting (such as numbers of attendees, age range, postcodes, etc.) Even if you don't have any official reporting to do, any feedback from your audience is an opportunity to find out more about them and build a loyal following.

At the very least, it is good to collect email addresses – don't forget to comply with GDPR guidelines and make sure that any information you gather is recognised as confidential and stored securely. Be polite and brief in gathering data and always remain sensitive to questions that people might not want to answer.

Think about what information would be useful to your organisation. What else would be good to know about your audiences? Are they local? What are their interests and what would they like to see next? Do they think you've priced the event correctly? Asking how they heard about the event tells you which of your marketing streams is working.



Document arts events with photos and video, for future applications and marketing!

HOW COULD YOU GATHER THIS INFORMATION?

- ✓ Leave a questionnaire on the seats, so people can complete them at the time. Volunteers might directly invite audience members to complete forms, and the company can encourage feedback too.
- ✓ Make a comments box or a board with post-it notes and ask everyone to make a recommendation or give a piece of feedback.
- ✓ Provide details of social media account handles, and encourage your audience to share their thoughts.
- ✓ Invite audiences to give email addresses for information on future events, but always get make sure they're aware of what their email address will be used for.
- ✓ Create online surveys with free online sites such as [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com).

Keep your survey to less than 8 questions to encourage maximum responses. You can email out a survey at any time – to those who have just purchased tickets, after the event, or both. Remember to ask for their consent first.

- ✓ Check if the artist or company have feedback forms – can you combine questions, or decide how to share information so audiences don't need to complete multiple forms?

TOP TIP!

Don't forget to get feedback from library staff, volunteers and the company about their experience working on the event.

ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT

- ➔ Allow enough time to prepare the space, e.g. if you are moving bookshelves, make sure there's enough staff and time to do so.
- ➔ Take time to welcome the artists or company team, they might have travelled a long way and will need enough time to have a refreshment (don't forget to offer them a hot drink!), space to change, and time to setup.
- ➔ Signage is important; put a sign outside the library and inside the library to let people know they can attend the event, put a 'tickets on the door' sign up if available, and upload an image of the library onto the Facebook page to help people know where to go.
- ➔ Create a warm and inviting environment with 'front of house': have people ready to welcome the audience, ask audience members if they've been here before, give directions to facilities and seats, offer info about the event, be a smiling face for newcomers and run box office at the door.
- ➔ Other ways to create a welcoming environment are to set a comfortable temperature, have background music playing, have rolling images displaying on a screen, and offer refreshments either paid for or free. The sale of alcohol will require a licence.
- ➔ Housekeeping: take a moment at the beginning of the event (if it is a fixed-duration or sit-down show) to keep on top of health and safety and announce the key information - Where are the toilets? Where are the fire escapes?
- ➔ Paying attention to small details makes the audience feel cared for and important – this goes a long way in making sure that people return.
- ➔ Make sure feedback forms are available and ask people to complete them after the event – don't forget pens too!
- ➔ Remember to mention any future events that are coming up at your library and signpost to where audiences can find out about them - you can use this event to promote the next!

DEBRIEF & FUTURE AMBITIONS

Make sure to hold a debrief with your team. Discuss what went well, what could change for next time, and discuss the audience feedback you collected.

Discuss and consider the following questions: Did you meet the goals you set out to meet? Were there any surprising outcomes? For example, were there audience members you were surprised to see?

Each time you put on a touring arts event, you will learn something new. Think about the direction you're going in, and your ambitions and goals. Perhaps set a goal of programming a certain number of events over a specific time period or think about applying for funding. Your feedback and evaluation are very important to feed into these plans and applications, so be sure to make the most of the data you collect.

Confirm all information about the event including date, time, age-range and any pre-event activity with the touring company

If it's a film screening, book the licence and order the DVD

Apply for premises licence if needed

Decide on ticketing structure and begin marketing design

Invite any groups you'd like as special guests 'free of charge' now, rather than later

Upload the event to your social media channels

Make a note of publishing deadlines for local newspapers and magazines, to include an article or advert about your event. Some will need information a month or more in advance

Now is a good time to submit your event details to event listings/online event guides

12 WEEKS BEFORE

10 WEEKS BEFORE

6-8 WEEKS BEFORE

4 WEEKS BEFORE

Print your marketing – flyers, posters and tickets, and start to distribute

Write a brief timeline of what social media posts will go out and when so that the same information isn't repeated

Let partners and funders know about your upcoming activity and ask for their help in promoting the event

Tickets should be on sale at your library as well as online

Send an email to your users about the event and any wrap-around activities you have planned

Increase promotions online with regular postings in the lead up to the event – tell people something new each time

Send an email to your attendees about the event with any additional information such as parking or access

Local newspapers that are published weekly or daily won't usually respond to information until the event is close at hand – now is the time to send out the press release

Ask partners to help with a final promotional push online

Final email to your attendees as a gentle reminder of the upcoming event

Is there any early prep you can do for the event (i.e. getting space ready)?

Print any feedback forms, free sheets or programmes

Courtesy call to artists or company before the day to check arrival times and other requirements

Get some rest!

1 WEEK BEFORE

3 DAYS BEFORE

1 DAY BEFORE

ON THE DAY

Dummy Run / Technical Rehearsal if required

Confirm the staff available and their roles on the day

Check the space is ready for the event, and make sure enough chairs are available

Are there free sheets or programmes the artist or company would like you to print?

A last push on social media – lots of people buy tickets last minute

Greet the artist(s) and make sure they have everything they need

Get the room set up and ready as early as possible – aim to be ready at least 30 minutes before doors open

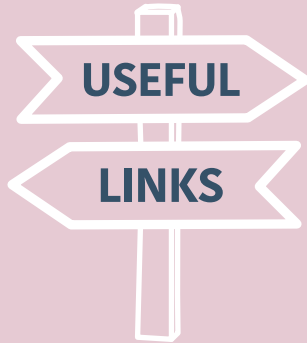
Do a final check on sight lines and health and safety

Set your sound levels

Create a warm and friendly environment for your audience

Don't forget the evaluation!

GOOD LUCK!



- ➔ Arts Council England ten-year strategy:
www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate

- ➔ Arts Council England funding:
www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding

- ➔ National Rural Touring Forum:
www.ruraltouring.org

- ➔ Libraries Connected Culture and Creativity:
www.librariesconnected.org.uk/universal-offers/culture-creativity

- ➔ Artist guide and libraries information resource at AMACultureHive:
www.culturehive.co.uk/resources/touring-arts-to-libraries

- ➔ Creative Arts East Libraries Touring blog and videos:
www.creativeartseast.co.uk/news

- ➔ Farnham Maltings Tour Finder:
tour-finder.org

- ➔ Glossary of arts terms for libraries:
www.librariesconnected.org.uk/resource/arts-and-culture-terms-and-definitions



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Kent County Council Libraries

Librarian Theatre

Libraries Connected

Libraries & Culture Slough

Luton Libraries

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Spot On Libraries

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