

# Birkbeck Library Annual Review 2022–2023



## Vitalizing our Special Collections

### Image collections

We moved Birkbeck's image collections from the LUNA platform to [JSTOR](#) as part of its community collections in August 2023.

During 2022–2023 researchers from 80 different countries looked at 13,251 images from the Birkbeck collections on JSTOR.

The Assistant Librarian (Repositories and Digital Media) supplied 35 high-resolution images to internal and external requesters, often for Birkbeck events and publications.

### Archives

We received 34 enquiries relating to the College Archive, the Bohm Papers and the Crick Archive.

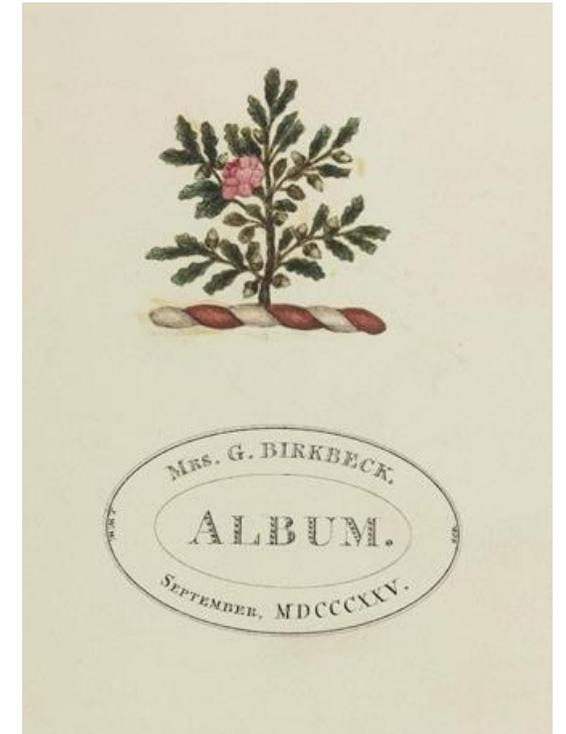
Most enquiries are dealt with online where we consult or scan the material on behalf of the enquirer.

## Vitalizing our Special Collections (2)

Dr Luisa Calè (School of Creative Arts, Culture and Communication) carried out a project with her MA students, looking at [Anna Birkbeck's album](#) – each student chose a poem or piece of prose to transcribe while researching its author. Both historical information and transcripts were passed on to the Library so that the image records' metadata can be updated.

The Library ran four archives sessions ('Get your hands on Birkbeck history') as part of the Welcome Fair in October 2023. New students attending these hands-on sessions appreciated being given the chance to discover some of the treasures of the College Archive and to learn about the 200-year history of Birkbeck by looking at and handling original documents.

The Archives formed the focal point of the Library's bicentenary celebrations.



Anna Birkbeck's album (1825)

## Celebrating Birkbeck's bicentenary

### Birkbeck 200 exhibition

Our Assistant Librarian (Repositories and Digital Media) curated four displays for a changing bicentenary exhibition which ran from March to January, using fascinating historical materials from the [College Archive](#) and the Library's [image collections](#).

The display themes were:

- **The founding of the College**
- **Sport and spotlights** (about Birkbeck's student life)
- **Birkbeck in the wars**
- **The Library**

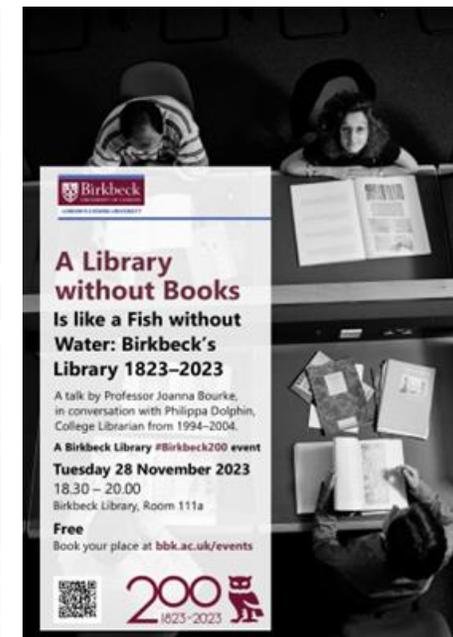
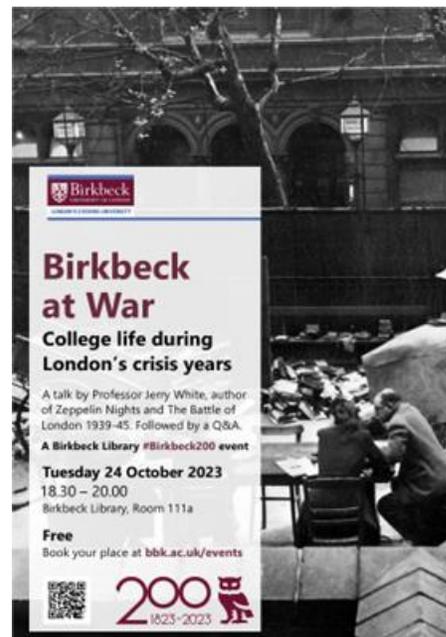
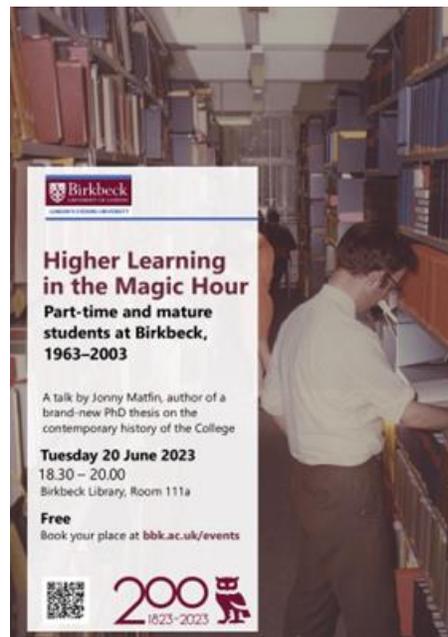
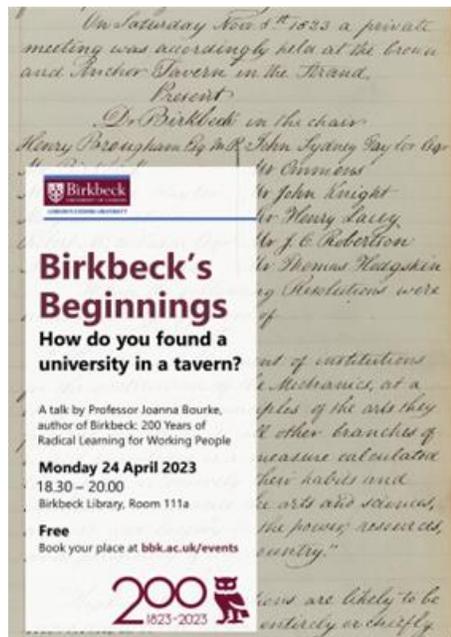


# Highlights 2022–2023

## Celebrating Birkbeck's bicentenary (2)

### Exhibition talk series

We worked closely with Development & Alumni to promote the Library's [Bicentenary talk series](#) throughout 2023 to the Birkbeck community and the general public.



# Highlights 2022–2023

## Celebrating Birkbeck's bicentenary (3)

- **Founding a University (in a tavern)!** – Professor Joanna Bourke, author of the history of the College, [Birkbeck: 200 Years of Radical Learning for Working People](#), shared the exciting story of Birkbeck's beginnings.
- **Higher Learning in the Magic Hour: part-time and mature students at Birkbeck, 1963–2003** – Dr Jonny Matfin, whose brand-new PhD thesis throws the spotlight on the contemporary history of Birkbeck, explained what motivated those studying here.
- **Birkbeck at War** – Professor [Jerry White](#), award-winning historian of London, told us the dramatic story of Birkbeck during the world wars of 1914–1918 and 1939–1945.
- **A Library Without Books is Like a Fish Without Water** – Professor Joanna Bourke and Philippa Dolphin, Birkbeck's Librarian from 1994–2004, explored the Library's central role in the life of the College between 1823 and 2023.

Three of the talks were held in the Library's training room which makes for an intimate venue; we moved Jerry White's Birkbeck at War talk to a lecture theatre after the event sold out more than twice over in record time!





## Celebrating Birkbeck's bicentenary (5)

### Window manifestations

The Library acquired three large window manifestations in 2023 which have brought Birkbeck's history into our daily lives! We selected the images from the College Archive.



Bream's Building, c1930s



Students in the Common Room, c1943



War-time bomb damage, 1941

## Underpinning Student Experience

The Library submitted evidence for the 2023 [Teaching Excellence Framework report](#). Learning resources were highlighted as being 'a very high-quality feature' (p. 8).

In the 2023 National Student Survey, the Library received a 91% satisfaction rating for the support its resources provide to learning. A [College news item](#) highlighted this achievement.

In September 2023, the Library got re-accredited with the Customer Service Excellence award for the third consecutive year and obtained 12 'compliance pluses' – our highest to date. The report mentioned the Library's excellence in identifying customer needs at the first point of contact and in promptly sharing information with colleagues and partners.

**'The way the library is set up is very good, as it's easy to use and find what you're looking for.'**

**'Facilities (library) has been a great resource; however, it would be great to have more spaces within the university to go to virtual seminars. I think it would be a bit obnoxious to be in a virtual discussion room in the library.'**

**'All the staff in the library and the services we can use are amazing.'**

2023 National Student Survey

# Highlights 2022–2023

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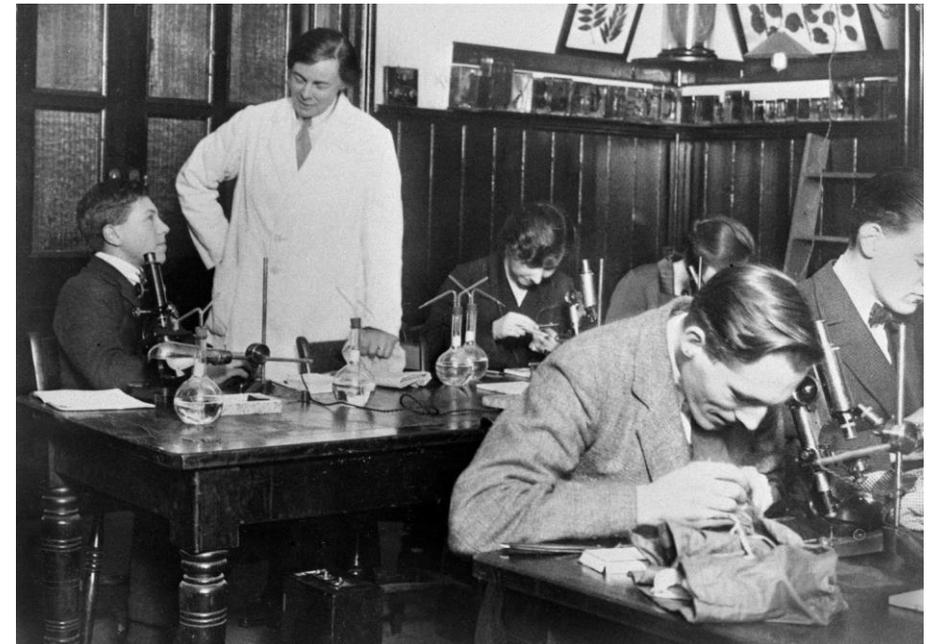
## Supporting research

The Library worked collaboratively with the Birkbeck Graduate Research School (BGRS) to provide space for focussed writing sessions for research students.

Library staff delivered a series of training sessions, aimed at PhD students, which were promoted via BGRS.

Topics included:

- literature searching and systematic literature reviews
- research data management
- uploading digital thesis copies to BIROn (Birkbeck Institutional Research Online)
- open-access publishing
- research impact



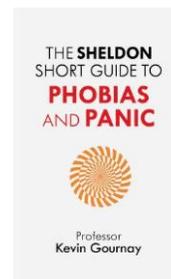
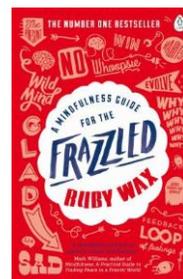
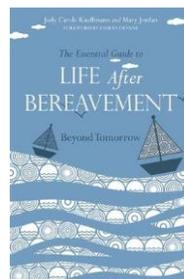
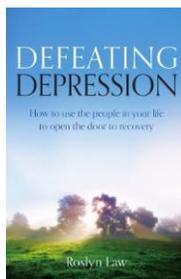
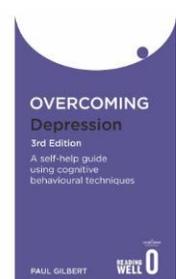
# Highlights 2022–2023

## Opening of the Wellbeing Corner

In May, in time for the 2023 Mental Health Awareness Week, the Library opened a new wellbeing space in the silent study area on level 2.

Designed for reflection and calm, it includes a selection of books and leaflets to support health and wellbeing, and sensory toys to help relieve stress and combat anxiety.

Our [online guide](#) lists the books chosen for this collection by Birkbeck's Student Wellbeing Services.



## Supporting Birkbeck's widening participation mission

The Library has an Access and Engagement group of interested library staff who support the College's access and engagement activities in the following areas:

- **On Track programme**

In July the Library participated in Birkbeck's On Track programme summer school. As well as making library membership cards for all students registered on the programme to allow them to access our spaces and resources before they fully enrolled, we ran activities: a treasure hunt and presentations from students to their peers about the Library.

- **Success project**

In October we contributed a workshop to the programme of events called "Write Now!" organised by the Success project. Called "The Library as Inspiration", the workshop introduced returning or repeating undergraduates to the Library and provided them with techniques for finding literature using the Discover search tool for digital resources, to help them overcome writer's block and/or procrastination.

# Highlights 2022–2023

## Supporting Birkbeck's widening participation mission (2)

- **Pre-Sessional International Foundation programme**

In July and August the Library participated in the International Foundation programme and conducted a group workshop on information skills.

- **Get Started taster course**

The Library offered a tour and a concise induction to Computer Science "Get Started" students.

- **School visits**

In 2022–2023, we welcomed 245 Year 10, Year 11 and Year 12 pupils from four different London schools. We organised a tour of the Library for them followed by either an interactive presentation or an activity where we asked students to create a book display around a particular topic.



## Supporting Birkbeck's widening participation mission (3)

- **Compass**

The Library continued its support of Compass Scholars and in 2022–2023 conducted an information skills session which included an induction to the Library.

- **Women for Refugee Women**

The Library conducted an information skills workshop and library induction for the external group Women for Refugee Women who were undertaking a short course taught by a Birkbeck lecturer.

- **Access to Birkbeck Library scheme**

The Library worked with Birkbeck's Access Manager (Forced Migrants) to devise a scheme which gives forced migrants [access to the Library](#). Applicants receive a library card which enables them to borrow books and use our study spaces and they are given a Birkbeck IT account to use the Library PCs. They first receive a personalised induction from a member of the Library team to ensure that they make the most of our resources. Although we had 35 applications in 2022–2023, more than half of the applicants have not taken up the offer of using the Library, a likely consequence of the multiple challenges they are facing.

## Supporting Birkbeck's widening participation mission (4)

- **Role of libraries in supporting refugees and asylum seekers**

In July the Subject Librarian for the School of Business, Economics and Informatics (BEI) and the User Support Manager co-presented a [Cpd25 event](#) about the role of libraries in supporting refugees and asylum seekers with John Vincent, [the Network's](#) founder and Humera Kanwal, a former Birkbeck Compass scholar.

- **Peninsula of Sanctuary**

In September the Subject Librarian for BEI presented as part of the [Peninsula of Sanctuary](#) event, talking about the support Birkbeck Library offers to forced migrants.



# Statistics at a glance

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Enquiries received at the desk: **23,042**

Live chat enquiries: **1,228**

Individual visits to the Library: **166,348**

Welcome emails sent to students by the Library  
Disability and Dyslexia Service: **1,378**

Disability and Dyslexia Service one-to-one  
appointments with students: **65**

Subject librarian one-to-one appointments: **190**

Subject librarian information skills sessions: **120**

New and prospective students attending library tours: **813**

Interlibrary loan requests fulfilled: **939**



## Statistics at a glance (2)

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Requests for digitised readings and ejournal links: **1,247**

Online searches for electronic resources: **91,811**

Page views of Library website: **214,802**

BIROn (Birkbeck Institutional Research Online repository) deposits: **712**

BIROn downloads: **784,881**

BiRD (Birkbeck Research Data Repository):

- Downloads of datasets: **8043**
- Top item downloaded: [Dungeness beach GPR and topographic survey](#): **1291**
- Deposits: **5**

Number of images from the Birkbeck image collection accessed on JSTOR: **13,251**



# Our service standards: how did we do?

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## Achieved

- ✓ We will have trained library staff available to provide help and support whenever we are open.
- ✓ We will respond to all enquiries within a day.
- ✓ We will respond to complaints and comments within 2 working days.
- ✓ 99% of interlibrary loan requests will be submitted to the British Library within 2 working days.
- ✓ 90% of all returned material will be reshelved within 48 hours.
- ✓ 90% of students will be able to arrange an appointment with their Subject Librarian within 1 week.
- ✓ 90% of new books will be available to library users within 7 days of arrival.

## Not achieved/not applicable

- × We aim for the Library to be open 100% of our advertised opening hours.
- × Our Library catalogue and electronic resources will be available 24/7 for 100% of the time.

The Library had to close early on 15 occasions due to staff shortages. Our catalogue was available 95% of the time due to the move of VuFind to a new server, and our electronic resources were available for 95% of the time as we experienced downtime with some platforms.

## Further information

Robert Atkinson

Director of Library Services

Birkbeck, University of London

[r.atkinson@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:r.atkinson@bbk.ac.uk)

020 3926 1450

[bbk.ac.uk/library](https://www.bbk.ac.uk/library)

