



## East London Theatre Archive Project Plan

### *Overview of Project*

#### **1. Background**

The East London Theatre Archive will create an invaluable database, helping to address the lack of digital resources available in the performing arts sector. Led by the University of East London, the project is driven by a strong partnership between higher education, the heritage sector, local theatres and community organisations. This partnership brings together unique collections, academic excellence and vast experience and expertise in the field of digitisation.

The outcome will be a digitised collection of value to students and researchers across the country.

While the obvious benefit will be to the area of Theatre Studies and the performing arts, other academic areas including social history, art and design and cultural studies will also be able to make considerable use of this archive.

Creating in the region of 15,000 digital objects the project will preserve unique endangered collections and make them accessible to an academic audience. The objects will be catalogued to a high standard and be enriched with authoritative contextual essays. While focussing on East London, a key region in the development of the performing arts, an important part of the project will be to plan future work and to set the stage for further developing the archive and expanding into other regions.

Research into theatre history is a growing area both within the UK and internationally as the numbers of MAs and PhDs in theatre arts grows incrementally each year. The needs of these students are diverse but share a commonality in their need to access primary sources. Digitisation provides a gateway for source material to reach this academic audience. The PeoplePlay project, developed by the Theatre Museum, has already become an important tool for theatre researchers but it is limited in its scope and general in its vision. The East London Theatre Archive will provide a unique focussed, contextualised resource which has a narrative about the national and international importance East London has had for theatre practice. The unique and historic nature of these resources, combined with user-friendly resource discovery tools, sympathetic to academic needs will provide extensive value to the academic community in the performing arts, and in broader academic disciplines including, but not limited to Social History, Anthropology, Politics, Economics, Design and Architecture. The project has been developed in consideration of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and the QAA Subject Benchmark Statements for *Dance, Drama & Performance*. The project will run for almost two years, from March 2007 to February 2008.

#### **2. Aims and Objectives**

##### ***Aims***

The aim of the project is to develop an accessible database of digital objects that will be of value for teaching and research in higher and further education, not just in performing arts but also in other academic disciplines. It will also highlight the importance of the East End in the history and development of the performing arts.

##### ***Objectives***

- To create 15,000 digital objects from the collections held by the partners, including playbills, posters, documents 3D objects and multimedia.
- To provide appropriate metadata and cataloguing.
- To identify appropriate technical and metadata standards
- To enrich the collections with authoritative contextual essays.
- To develop an appropriate structure and web interface to make the collections accessible.
- To build and maintain a successful partnership

### 3. Overall Approach

#### **Strategy and/or methodology and how the work will be structured**

Due to the diverse nature of the collections, the digitisation will be achieved in a number of ways. The Theatre Museum will digitise their own materials, using in-house expertise provided by the Victoria and Albert Museum. Lift will also arrange for the digitisation of their materials, as part of the existing Lift Living Archive project. The collections from the other partners will be sent to a specialist digitisation bureau. Indicative costings have been included in the budget. Once the project has started, a detailed procurement exercise will establish the best value option for these materials. This will be supported by UEL's in-house Purchasing Department. The project team will work to develop an appropriate metadata schema with reference to existing standards such as VRA3 and Dublin Core. It is anticipated that the nature of the collections will not suit any pre-existing schema. An expert Advisory panel will work with the project team to develop rigorous selection criteria to which all the partners will adhere.

#### **Important issues to be addressed**

As the digitisation is not being carried out centrally, a key issue for the project is to agree strict selection criteria that address the needs of the HE and FE communities. These will be drawn up in consultation with the project's Advisory Panel. Common standards for both technical image capture and metadata will also be agreed. Adherence to all of these agreed standards will be monitored by the Management Board and the central project team based at UEL.

#### **Scope and boundaries of the work, including any issues that will not be covered.**

While the project will be restricted to digitising material relating to the performing arts in the East End of London, we have not taken a strict geographical definition of the East End to allow flexibility. The time period covered is dictated by the nature of the collections to be digitised, but does include material from the 1800s onwards. While recognising that the collection will be of value to other disciplines the main focus will be on Theatre History and the performing arts more generally.

#### **Critical success factors.**

- Establishing a good working relationship between partners
- Building successful workflows for digitisation and metadata creation
- Reaching agreement between the partners and with JISC on IPR and licensing issues
- Agreeing rigorous selection criteria, technical standards and metadata
- Development of accessible web interface

### 4. Project Outputs

These unique and important resources are held in various locations around East London, many inaccessible at the moment and some are in danger of being lost. We want to bring this rich resource together in digital form and make it accessible to the academic community at large. The project will deliver a web accessible collection of 15,000 digital objects. This will mainly comprise images and papers, but also photographed artefacts and media clips. The digitisation will be for preservation as well as access, and the standards will be carefully selected accordingly. The objects will be recorded with detailed metadata, based on existing standards, but with extensions for the specific nature of the collection. Contextual essays will be written to support the collection and provide insight for the targeted higher education and research audience.

**Theatre Museum** The Theatre Museum will be providing c. 10,000 items for digitisation, including rare nineteenth century playbills, modern programmes, contemporary press cuttings, prints, posters and architects' plans relating to around 25 current and historic venues in the East London area, including the partner organisations cited here. Additional venues include the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton (1841-1923) the Grecian Saloon, Shoreditch (1832-1881) and the Pavilion, Stepney (1827-1919). Much of the earlier material is currently unavailable to researchers due to the fragility of the playbills, which were produced as highly ephemeral material on cheap paper, not intended for longterm preservation. A digitisation exercise will enable a large amount of primary resource material to be released to the research community for the first time. The Theatre Museum also possesses substantial collections of archival material which are highly complementary to those being provided by

some of the partner organisations. For example, it holds the original architects plans for Hackney Empire, and intends to digitise scrapbooks on key productions at the Theatre Royal Stratford East created by the theatrical producer, Oscar Lewenstein. In order to provide researchers with contextual information, the Theatre Museum's contribution will also include overviews of a series of specialist areas relevant to East London Theatre, such as melodrama, music hall, variety, nautical drama and pantomime.

**Lift Living archive** After eleven festivals and 25 years of performances, events, workshops, and lectures, Lift has amassed a huge wealth of documentation and supporting materials - more than 300 boxes of documents, 4,000 photographs, 100 Festival programmes and leaflets, 700 hours of video documentation and 60 hours of audio recordings. The Lift Living Archive project is a new initiative that will open up this wonderfully rich resource to a wider public audience, offering access to a physical archive as well as a searchable, online digital resource. The first stage of the project began in November 2005 with a research and development phase funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. Since then Lift has been surveying archive materials, talking to their audiences through market research and exploring ways to use the archive as a creative tool for learning. The findings of this phase have helped Lift to plan the implementation phase of the archive, which will be launched to the public at the end of 2007. The Lift Living Archive will be hosted and managed by Lift. The digital version of the Lift archive will be developed as an open source product enabling the East London Theatre Archive to display Lift content through their defined portal and provide additional contextual information.

**Theatre Royal Stratford East** Its archive collection is rich in realia, photographs and books and includes letters, posters and press clippings up to the present day. Charting the history of the theatre up to the present day, the archive includes important and unique collections of Joan Littlewood's letters as well as the emergence of the black musical during Philip Hedley's directorship.

**Hoxton Hall** Hoxton Hall's collection comprises of a mixture of objects, including photographs, Victorian ephemera and architectural items. There are two main parts to the collection. The first comprises the leaflets, posters and other printed material that related to Hoxton Hall as a community centre and theatre from the early 1980s onwards. This part of the collection will continue to grow as printed material for all future Hoxton Hall events will be added. The second part of the collection comprises the 'historic' material. The historic collection includes all material from the late 1800's to the early 1980's. It contains Victorian ephemera gathered from under the floor boards in the Music Hall, prayer and hymn books from Hoxton Halls use as a meeting house for a Christian group, costumes, photographs and reports by the different groups housed in Hoxton Hall over the years.

**Wilton's Music Hall** The collection at Wilton's comprises photos and papers mainly from more modern performances.

**Half Moon Young People's Theatre** This theatre has a unique archive collection of papers which tell a story about the rise of bilingual theatre within East London's transient immigrant populations. Described by the director as a "research project waiting to happen", the archive provides an invaluable source of information about dual-language approaches to theatre production and emergent forms of intercultural performance. The building was formerly a Victorian Poor House and the building has unique archive documents from the building's philanthropic past.

**Hackney Empire** The University of East London is proud to have become the custodian of the Hackney Empire archive which charts the theatre's history through its music hall heyday, its demise and then resurgence into a vibrant multicultural theatre for the East End. This archive includes unique film footage of the campaign to save the theatre, its variety acts and the restoration project. The collection also includes programmes, posters, architects' plans from the Frank Matcham office and unique recordings of artistes from the music hall period.

## 5. Project Outcomes

The East London Theatre Archive reflects an ambition to build collections which develop and reflect the region's rich diversity and history and serves to celebrate East London's contribution made to theatre and theatre practice as a whole. Many of the theatres in East London have developed their own small archives but have found it difficult to allow public access to these archives for researchers

and students or to find suitable accommodation within which to house and preserve them. Creating a digital East London Theatre Archive will provide the academic community with online access to these unique, multimedia resources currently physically spread throughout East London. Our archive will also have a user-friendly search engine through which the academic community can search for and retrieve relevant materials, images and information.

The project will engage with the academic community in a number of other ways. All materials will be available to be developed as learning objects, provided they will be made available to the wider community by deposit in JORUM - JISC's learning and teaching materials repository. UEL is currently using JORUM, and the Theatre Museum has already allowed its digitised materials to be developed and deposited with the service. During the course of the project, the team will actively encourage academic teaching staff to develop their own materials using the available resources. A recent AHDS Performing Arts Scoping Study found there was a high demand in the academic community for a wider range of digitised materials to be made available in this area (<http://www.hatii.arts.gla.ac.uk/ahds-pa/>). Researchers and students in other fields including social history, design, politics and architecture will also find value in the collections, and we hope that synergies will develop across disciplines initiating new teaching and research.

The project will also assess and develop metadata standards that will be of use to other projects in the future. Staff working on the project will develop skills through JISC workshops and from project itself including project management, awareness of standards, cataloguing, procurement and promotion.

## 6. Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Interest / stake	Importance
University of East London	Project partner (lead)	High
V&A Theatre Museum	Project partner	High
Arts and Humanities Data Service	Project partner	High
LIFT	Project partner	High
Hackney Empire	Project partner	Medium
Theatre Royal Stratford East	Project partner	Medium
Wilton's Music Hall	Project partner	Medium
Hoxton Hall	Project partner	Medium
Half Moon Young People's Theatre	Project partner	Medium
Theatre's Trust	National body committed to the preservation of theatres	Medium
Academics - Theatre History, Performing Arts etc	Use of databases for teaching	High
Students - Theatre History, Performing Arts etc	Use of database for projects and coursework	Medium
Researchers - Theatre History, Performing Arts etc	Use of database for research	Medium

## 7. Risk Analysis

Risk	Probability (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Score (P x S)	Action to Prevent/Manage Risk
1. Different organisational priorities and size could affect the partners' ability to achieve project milestones.	3	4	12	Most of the selection and digitisation arrangements for the smaller partners will be undertaken by the central project team
2. Delays in selection or digitisation could adversely affect the timescale for the	2	4	8	Different stages of the project will run in parallel, reducing the impact of any delays on the critical path.

project.				
3. On a large project, with many partners, communication could be poor or even break down.	2	4	8	Communication will be co-ordinated by the centralised project team and supplemented by regular meetings of key personnel and the Advisory Group.
4. The needs of the key intended audience (UK HE and research communities) are not addressed when selecting and contextualising content.	3	4	12	Selection criteria will be drawn up by Creative Director (within HE) and the project team will exercise strong editorial control.
5. Different partners bring “too many voices” giving the final project no cohesive tone.	3	3	9	Editorial control from the central project team, strong selection criteria, good communication between partners.
6. Common standards are not adopted by the partners controlling their own digitisation.	1	5	5	Standards will be explicitly agreed in accordance with JISC and MINERVA guidelines, with advice from the AHDS and monitored by the central project team.
7. Delays in recruiting key staff may affect critical path.	3	4	12	Internal staff will be seconded to the project by UEL as required.

## 8. Standards

Common standards will be used throughout the project by all partners. A scoping exercise at the beginning will be used to determine the best solutions for both preservation and access. This exercise will be carried out by the project team, advised by the Arts and Humanities Data Service. The project standards will be in sympathy with both the JISC Information Environment and the MINERVA Digitisation guidelines. Where feasible, open standards will be used. This includes TIFF and PNG for images; XML and TXT for text file. For audio and video a mixture of preservation and dissemination standards will be used. MPEG2 is likely to be the master video format. The use of the open standard Ogg Vorbis and WAV will be considered for audio masters. Dissemination formats for audio visual will include QuickTime and Microsoft’s MWV format. The digitised material will be backed-up, to a secure network server on a nightly basis.

At this stage, the project team are still working on the final evaluation and selection of all standards.

Name of standard or specification	Notes
TIFF	Likely image format for preservation
PNG	Likely image format
XML	Likely text format
TXT	Likely text format
MPEG2	Likely to be master video format
WAV	Possible audio format

## 9. Technical Development

The technical development of the project will be undertaken by the Arts and Humanities Data Service.

## 10. Intellectual Property Rights

Most of the material to be digitised will be out of copyright. Some of the material will be owned by project partners, and small amount will have to have rights cleared. There is sufficient flexibility that

the rights cleared materials may be substituted if clearances prove to be too difficult or expensive. The rights will remain with individual project partners, but will be licensed to HEFCE on a non-exclusive basis as required in the terms and conditions of grant through one lead partner.

Rights for some of audio-visual material may be complex, involving performers, authors, designers and others. Time has been allowed for the Project Officer to investigate IPR in this area and for the other materials. The project will develop a copyright workflow for processing material and a general copyright policy to cover such issues as orphan works, due diligence and indemnity.

## ***Project Resources***

### **11. Project Partners**

The partnership behind the East London Theatre Archive, established by the University of East London brings together many rich resources - unique collections, academic excellence and vast experience and expertise in the field of digitisation.

#### **The University of East London**

Main contacts:

Andrew McDonald, Project Director

Mark O'Thomas, Project Creative Director

Judith Preece, Interim Project Manager (pending appointment)

#### **The Theatre Museum**

Main contact: Claire Hudson, Head of Information and Collections Management

#### **The Arts and Humanities Data Service**

Main contact: Sheila Anderson, Director AHDS

#### **Lift**

Main contact: Paddy Chatterton, Development Manager

#### **Theatre Royal Stratford East**

Main contact: Elizabeth Royston, Development Director

#### **Hoxton Hall**

Main contact: Mark O'Thomas, Chair of Trustees

#### **Wilton's Music Hall**

Main contact: Frances Mayhew, Director

#### **Hackney Empire**

Main contact: Simon Thomsett, Chief Executive

#### **Half Moon Young People's Theatre**

Main contact: Chris Elwell, Director

### **12. Project Management**

The central project team will be based at UEL. This will comprise a full time project manager and a full time project officer (currently being recruited). In addition, the Project Director, Andrew McDonald and the Creative Director, Mark O'Thomas are both based at UEL and will each spend 10% of their time on the project.

The V&A Theatre Museum will appoint a full time Digitisation Officer and a full time Documentation Officer. Claire Hudson will manage this part of the project spending 20% of her time on it. Additionally there will be support and input from existing curatorial staff (40% FTE).

There will be a full-time Technical Officer appointed at the AHDS for one year, starting around month 9 of the project.

In addition each partner has a main contact as detailed above.

The work of the project will be monitored and directed by the Management Board, ensuring that milestones are met and that the project remains on schedule and within budget. Additionally an Advisory Panel of academics and experts in the field will help to inform the selection criteria, selection of appropriate standards and the contextualisation and presentation of the material.

### 13. Programme Support

We would look for support from the programme in the following areas

- Workshops, training and networking with other projects
- Contribution to project Management Board
- Advise, guidance and national perspective on issues such as metadata, IP and technical standards
- Promotion

### 14. Budget

The budget has changed slightly from the original proposal to reflect the changed start dates. There are no other changes. It is attached as appendix A.

## *Detailed Project Planning*

### 15. Workpackages

The work packages breakdown is attached as Appendix B.

### 16. Evaluation Plan

One of the first tasks of the project Advisory Panel will be to devise criteria to evaluate the success of the project.

Timing	Factor to Evaluate	Questions to Address	Method(s)	Measure of Success
AUG 2008	Usability of website	Accessibility, intuitiveness, ease of use	Usability testing with students	Observations of students
ONGOING	Suitability of materials	Is the material selected in keeping with the projects' aims	Comment from Advisory Panel	Agreement that material is appropriate

### 17. Quality Plan

The project will adopt a holistic approach to quality assurance, involving the whole project team in a continuous effort to ensure that the digital objects, metadata and contextual information are of the highest quality. Random sample rates will be applied to the created objects and metadata, and the metadata creation and cataloguing will involve viewing and checking every image. These processes will be incorporated into a robust quality assurance framework to be fully developed once project funding is secured, with the advice and support of the Arts and Humanities Data Service. A standardised approach will be adopted by the project partners. QA rates will be developed during the

initial scoping exercise, but are likely to involve 10% of digitised material being sampled. There will be an agreed project standard for image quality.

## 18. Dissemination Plan

The team will work on dissemination activities throughout the project to keep awareness high and to ensure that the project's aims are understood. There will be a dissemination period at the end of the project where publicity will be intensified and the project aims to be represented at at least one major conference in area of cultural or theatre history.

Timing	Dissemination Activity	Audience	Purpose	Key Message
May 07	Project Launch Event	Partners, funders, academics, theatre practitioners	To raise awareness of the project	That the project exists and is important.
From May 07	Representation at partner events	Varied	Ensuring the project is represented at the various events the partners will run to raise awareness	That the project exists and is important. To report on progress
From November 2008	Presentations at relevant conferences	Academics, librarians, students	To show the project outputs and promote the website	The archive is a valuable resource
From November 2008	Press releases, brochures and general marketing	Media, academics, librarians, students, general public	Academics, librarians, students	The value and interest of the collection

## 19. Exit and Sustainability Plans

The involvement of the AHDS guarantees the project's sustainability as they are committed to preserving the digital content and hosting the website for at least ten years beyond the end of the project's funding. The resource will be integrated into the AHDS preservation system which includes full back-up and disaster recovery procedures. Details of the AHDS preservation policies and procedures, which will ensure the long-term sustainability of the resource, are available from <http://ahds.ac.uk/preservation>. If for any reason the AHDS were unable to continue this work, UEL will commit to hosting the website.

Project Outputs	Action for Take-up & Embedding	Action for Exit
Skills and knowledge of project team	Disseminate lessons learnt on the project	Publication and presentations while team still in post
Metadata standards developed	Deposit on project website, publicise through JISC and other means	Ensure website will continue to be maintained, publish standards
Project documentation	Ensure deposited on project website	Ensure website will continue to be maintained

Project Outputs	Why Sustainable	Scenarios for Taking Forward	Issues to Address
Website	Will continue to be maintained by AHDS	Look at further funding to expand and develop	Funding sources, future of AHDS

		content	
Digital objects	Will continue to be maintained by AHDS and other partners	Investigate offering content via additional sources	Ensure standards and formats continue to be accessible
Contextual information	Hosted on website using open standards	Investigate funding for further work	Funding sources, where is further context needed

## ***Appendixes***

### **Appendix A. Project Budget**

### **Appendix B. Workpackages**