

REWRITING THE BOOK THE LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM



THE LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM TO SEARCH FOR REAL PEOPLE AS IT LOOKS TO 'REWRITE THE BOOK'

24th May 2010: Birmingham City Council Leader, Mike Whitby, today introduced the first 'faces' of the Library of Birmingham as he launched the search for real Brummies to become honorary representatives for one of the world's most exciting cultural projects.

The first 'faces', including a boxing poet, a cupcake-making duo, an 82-year-old artist and two schoolchildren, and a skills tutor (full details below) now adorn the hoardings on the site of the new building in Centenary Square, heralding the launch of a new campaign entitled 'Rewriting the Book'.

Challenging old fashioned perceptions of what libraries offer, the campaign will use the stories of real people to demonstrate how the Library of Birmingham will offer a wealth of services, including career and business advice, film and performance facilities, health services and the latest cutting edge technology alongside traditional library offerings such as research and book borrowing.

With a total of 26 faces due to be recruited in the next three years, a campaign is underway to find additional members of the public to join them later this year, with more to follow in 2011 and 2012. A dedicated website has been launched at www.rewritingthebook.com for potential participants to find out more about the first 'faces', and to register their interest in joining them, together with a Facebook page allowing members to keep track of the Library of Birmingham project.

The 'faces' of the Library of Birmingham will feature on all promotional material for the project, including the website and information posters. Their own individual stories will be used to highlight the many diverse services to be provided by the Library of Birmingham, and, as honorary 'ambassadors' they will be involved in promotional activity and events including community engagement and launches.

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Cllr. Mike Whitby said:

"The Library of Birmingham is for the people of Birmingham and its development is an investment for the city's future generations. It's going to be a landmark building that will completely regenerate Centenary Square, providing a new cultural centre that is linked to The REP and which will be one of the world's best libraries.

"I believe that the best advocates for libraries are the people who use them and whose lives are enriched, in some cases even completely altered by libraries. This is why we are calling upon real people with real stories to share the stage in spreading the word about the Library of Birmingham".

The first 'faces' of the Library of Birmingham are:

- **Matt Windle from Northfield**

Former Young Poet Laureate and part-time Boxer, Matt turned his life around when he discovered poetry after being excluded from school. Now 19, Matt works as a poetry mentor in schools and libraries, whilst still pursuing his boxing dream.

- **Frank Sidney Smith from Druids Heath**

An artist hailed as 'Better than L.S. Lowry', 82-year-old Frank is known for his autobiographical paintings and sculptures telling the story of his eventful life, starting with his humble beginnings in a Kent workhouse. Frank is a regular at Druids Heath Library, which he regards as a home from home.

- **Dalvinder Cheema and Mary Ashman from West Bromwich**

After falling in love with a cupcake shop whilst travelling in Australia, Mary and Dalvinder returned with the dream of creating their own, but with none of the business knowhow required. Luckily, Business Insight at Birmingham Central Library helped them set up their now thriving business.

- **Samuel and Nathaniel Chan from Birmingham**

Samuel, 7, and Nathaniel, 10, weren't into reading until mum Jenny took them into the Centre for the Child in Birmingham Central Library. After borrowing audiobooks to engage the boys in storytelling, they quickly became intrigued by different stories, and developed their love of books.

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- **Wal Warmington from Edgbaston**

Wal was a lapsed reader until he came across William Boyd's 'Any Human Heart'. The book helped Wal to rediscover his love of books, and led him to join the book club at Spring Hill Library. His prominence in the group led to an appearance on BBC One's 'The One Show'.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Described by its architect Francine Houben, founding partner of international architects, Mecanoo, as a 'people's palace', the Library of Birmingham will include enhanced facilities including extended gallery and exhibition space to allow more of the city's rare treasures, world class archives and photographic collections to be shown publicly for the first time, and a revolutionary BFI Mediatheque, providing free access to a wealth of material from the National Film Archive.

Forming a physical link with the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, a shared entrance and creation of a new shared 300-seat studio theatre will provide opportunities for poetry and music performances, and collaborations between the two organisations.

The Library will enhance the wealth of offerings already available, including traditional services such as borrowing books, CDs and music scores to researching family trees, plus help with learning English or writing CVs, obtaining business or health advice, participating in workshops, using computers and joining in children's activities, and new additions including a recording studio. The Library of Birmingham also promises to be the perfect place for simply meeting friends and enjoying the panoramic views from the terraced garden.

The Library of Birmingham is also a cornerstone of the Birmingham's bid to be City of Culture 2013 and its opening would coincide with the celebrations if Birmingham is selected.

The Library of Birmingham brand has been developed by the Library of Birmingham team in conjunction with Birmingham-based branding specialists KLM.