

# Manchester City of Literature



## Virtual Writer Residencies at the Festival of Libraries

Manchester City of Literature and Manchester Literature Festival are offering two virtual writer residencies to take place this June during the Festival of Libraries.

During the three week residency, writers will be hosted by one of Manchester's historic libraries with the opportunity to explore their online collections and archives, meet librarians to find out more about Manchester's literary heritage and collections, and enjoy virtual tours of the city. During the residency, writers will be encouraged to share their experience of the city with Manchester's literary community via social media, to take part in other meetings and talks including sharing their work and their influences, and to produce a new piece of writing responding to Manchester or links between the city and their own UNESCO City of Literature. There is a fee of £1,500 for each residency. The residencies are open to published writers with strong links to a UNESCO City of Literature.



The activity during the residency may include:

- Writing in English or translating into English a short story, essay or series of poems (up to 2000 words) inspired by the residency that can be shared on the Manchester City of Literature and Manchester Literature Festival websites.
- An online talk as part of the Festival of Libraries about your work and the writers and libraries that have inspired you
- Meeting a writing group from Manchester online
- Presenting a virtual tour of your city, either as an illustrated talk, audio recording or self-recorded film.
- A conversation with a Manchester host or writer about your residency and the work you produced. This could be pre-recorded digitally or livestreamed in October as part of Manchester Literature Festival's 2021 Festival.

# Manchester City of Literature

## How To Apply

If you are interested please send a written application by email to [Mcrcityoflit@gmail.com](mailto:Mcrcityoflit@gmail.com) by the deadline of 10 May 2021. In your application please include responses to the following prompts:

- Tell us about yourself;
- Tell us about your writing;
- Tell us why you would like to be considered for this virtual residency and what you hope to get from it;
- Tell us about libraries in your life and if there is a particular library in Manchester you would like to be hosted by;
- Tell us about your connections to a UNESCO City of Literature.

Please also include a CV including publication record.

## Timeline

Residency announced: 6 April

Applications close: 10 May

Interviews: 14, 17 or 19 May if necessary

Residency starts: w/c 24 or 31 May

Festival of Libraries: 9-13 June

## The Four Historic Libraries of Manchester

### Chetham's Library

Chetham's Library, founded in 1653, is the oldest free public library in the English-speaking world. Established with the bequest of Humphrey Chetham, who believed that poverty could be overcome by curing ignorance, Chetham's Hospital included a free library and a free school for local poor boys.

The Grade I listed building that houses Chetham's Library dates back even further to 1421 and is of significant historical value as one of the most complete medieval complexes in the north-west of England. Originally constructed to serve as accommodation for the priests of the Manchester Parish Church, the site eventually fell into disrepair before being purchased by the governors of Chetham's will in 1653.

Chetham's Library has now been in continuous use for over 350 years, overlooking and recording Manchester's transformation from a sparsely inhabited pre-industrial town into a busy urban centre. During this time, it has acquired a vast collection, which has been designated as a collection of national and international importance under the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council designation scheme.



A UNESCO City  
of Literature

# Manchester City of Literature

Today Chetham's Library specialises in the history and topography of Greater Manchester and Lancashire. Local history buffs can be transported into Manchester's past through the library's materials on Belle Vue, the North-West in the English Civil War, Peterloo, Industrialisation, local history images and maps. Chetham's Library also boasts a strong collection of early printed books in the European intellectual tradition. <https://library.chethams.com/>

## The Portico Library

The Portico Library was established in 1806 as an independent subscription library and newspaper room using the money raised from 400 subscription fees. The purpose-built venue on Mosley Street was designed by the architect Thomas Harrison in the Greek Revival style and is now a designated Grade II\* listed building.

The Portico remains a subscription library, but entry is free to the public and researchers. Following in the footsteps of previous readers and associates, such as John Dalton, Elizabeth Gaskell, Peter Mark Roget, Emmeline Pankhurst and Eric Cantona, visitors are still asked to sign in, a tradition running since the institution first opened its doors. The Portico runs a free exhibitions programme that uses the Library's historic collection as a lens to examine contemporary issues and ideas. The exhibition space is housed beneath the awe-inspiring glass panel and plaster dome surrounded by the Library's 215-year old collection. The Library's collection mainly focuses on material from the 19th century and covers subjects such as travel, biography, science, poetry, architecture, history and 'polite literature'. It holds over 25,000 books in its collection.

Built in part with wealth derived from colonial expansion and exploitation, and initially an all-male institution, The Portico Library now confronts these inequities and their legacies through collaborative and eclectic public activities. <https://www.theportico.org.uk/>



## Central Library

In 1926, architect E. Vincent Harris won a competition held for the design of an extension to Manchester's town hall and a new building to contain the city's library, which had moved sites several times. Harris admired Roman architecture and drew some inspiration from visits to American libraries. Both these influences can be seen in the imposing dome structure that we recognise as Central Library today. However, Central Library's history precedes its current incarnation on St. Peter's Square. Following the Free Libraries Act of 1850, the Mayor of Manchester, John Potter, led a campaign to purchase books and a building to establish the Manchester Free Public Library. In

# Manchester City of Literature

September 1852, Manchester became the first authority to establish a rate-supported public lending and reference library under this act when the Manchester Free Public Library opened at Campfield (near the Museum of Science and Industry's Air and Space Hall today). Construction of the permanent library began in 1930 and was officially opened four years later in 1934 by King George V.

Today Central Library is the second largest public lending library in Britain and is the busiest public library in the UK: 2 million visits per year in 2018 and 2019. On the ground floor a café allows visitors to meet with study groups or catch up with friends and there is a permanent, public exhibition space.

Central Library houses the City Library as well as extensive and varied special collections. Highlights from its collections are a rare books collection, which includes thirty incunabula (books printed prior to 1501) and a copy of the Second Folio edition of Shakespeare's Collected Works from 1632, and the Bellot Chinese Collection, which provides a window into 19th century China. Central Library also holds several important music collections, including Dr Henry Watson's collection. Furthermore, amateur genealogists can explore local history and heritage using the Archives+ service, which is a digital repository for the region's archives and family history.

[https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/447/rare\\_books\\_and\\_special\\_collections](https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/447/rare_books_and_special_collections)

## John Ryland's Library

The John Ryland's Library was founded by Enriqueta Rylands in memory of her husband, who died in 1888. It is not known why Mrs Rylands selected the cramped space on Deansgate for the site of her library, but it presented several challenges for the architect Basil Champneys. Taking ten years to construct, the library finally opened to visitors from 1 January 1900. Despite difficulties in construction, John Ryland's Library is today celebrated as a leading example of neo-Gothic architecture in Europe and numbers amongst the top tourist attractions in Manchester.

Mrs Rylands intended the institution to primarily serve as a theological library as is reflected by the architecture. However, the library's collection has expanded significantly beyond this purpose and its collection covers various subjects in several hundred languages spanning five thousand years. In 1972, the John Ryland's Library merged with the University of Manchester Library and today the library has one of the finest collections of rare books, manuscripts and archives globally. Of particular note, the library holds the largest collection of Aldines in the world and the second largest collection of works printed by Caxton. The library boasts strengths in its archives of recent and contemporary literature and drama and displays the St. John Fragment, thought to be the oldest known fragment of the Bible in the world. The collections include works of poetry and prose from centuries of humanity and from around the world.

Visitors to John Ryland's Library today enter through a modern light-filled extension added in 2013. Any member of the public can visit the library to explore, research, study or simply to marvel at the inspirational surroundings. <https://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/rylands/about/>

## The Festival of Libraries

The Festival of Libraries will be a five day celebration of Greater Manchester's libraries taking place



A UNESCO City  
of Literature

# Manchester City of Literature

between 9 and 13 June 2021. This new, multi-venue festival will feature a vibrant programme of digital art commissions, artist residencies, dance, performance, panel talks and walking tours. The inaugural Libraries Festival has four main aims:

- **Celebrate** people: the librarians who run the spaces, the users who make use of the services and the extraordinary stories that emerge from the everyday use of libraries.
- **Reposition** the public perception of independent and public libraries, as well as specialist libraries (medical, heritage, etc)
- **Engage** with those with low levels of cultural engagement, lapsed library users and cultural tourists.
- **Grow** into an annual celebration and to become a major festival of local engagement and international profile.

Library partners include: Archives+, Central Library, Chetham's Library, John Rylands Library, Manchester Poetry Library, NHS Libraries, The Portico, Working Class Movement Library, the University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and Greater Manchester libraries (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan).

## Manchester Literature Festival

One of the North's most innovative literary festivals, Manchester Literature Festival specialises in showcasing and commissioning imaginative writing from fiction and poetry to song-writing and secular sermons. A firm believer in the transformative power of words and stories, MLF's annual Festival includes some of the most interesting voices in fiction, poetry, literature in translation, art, activism, feminism and culture alongside inspiring events for children and young adults. For Spring 2021, the Festival will be delivering a series of New Commissions by poets Roger Robinson, Caleb Femi and Natalie Diaz alongside special In Conversations with internationally acclaimed writers Kazuo Ishiguro and Jhumpa Lahiri. The annual Festival will take place 8 – 17 October 2021 and we hope you will join us to see some of the most exciting and diverse writers today.

<https://www.manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk/>

## Manchester City of Literature

Manchester was successful in its bid to join UNESCO's worldwide Creative Cities network as a City of Literature in 2017. Joining 38 other Cities of Literature, a consortium including Manchester City Council, the Universities, Manchester Literature Festival plus a range of the city's writers, publishers and literary organisations has formed to enable this to happen. Manchester City of Literature is a charity that manages the UNESCO designation on behalf of over thirty partner organisations. Our vision is to create an innovative, distinctive, equitable, globally connected city of reading and writing. We want Manchester to be a city where diverse voices are celebrated, creative talent and industries are nurtured and where literary activity changes lives. <https://www.manchestercityofliterature.com/>  
'Introducing Manchester City of Literature': 8 minute film <https://youtu.be/CX0xamVdoCg>



A UNESCO City  
of Literature