

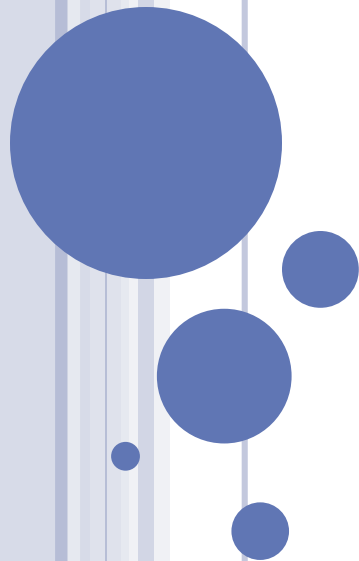
**MEASURING THE IMPACT OF
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND
ARCHIVES IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
OPPORTUNITIES AND
CHALLENGES**

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OVERVIEW

- Introduction – RLUK Special Collections Programme (SCP)
- Evidencing the impact of special collections and archives
 - Case Studies
 - Survey Results
- Conclusion



RESEARCH LIBRARIES UK (RLUK)

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Opening up collections and making an impact through collective work

About RLUK

RLUK is a consortium of the most significant research libraries in the UK and Ireland, and whose purpose is to shape the research library agenda, and contribute to the wider knowledge economy through innovative projects and services that add value and impact to the process of research. We also contribute to the health of society through the preservation and sharing of knowledge: one of the pillars of an open society.

Find us online



<https://www.rluk.ac.uk>



RLUK SPECIAL COLLECTIONS PROGRAMME (SCP)

- Improve access to special collections.
- Maximise their value and impact.
- Support staff's professional development.
- Establish leadership within the sector.
- Develop collaborations and partnerships and share best practice.



RLUK SCP – DEVELOPMENT PHASE

Over a 12-month period:

- 7 challenge areas were identified
 - Audience; Leadership; Discoverability; Significance; Recognition; Funding; Collective Involvement
- Regional workshops
 - Leadership, Audience, Significance and Preparing for Success



RLUK SCP – DEVELOPMENT PHASE

- Setting up of key relationships and networks
 - SCLN, SCP Advisory Network, Funders Network (ACE, AHRC, TNA, HLF, Wellcome, Arcadia, Leverhulme, Jisc).



- Collecting case-based evidence of impact and scoping hidden collections.
- SCP related events at DCDC.



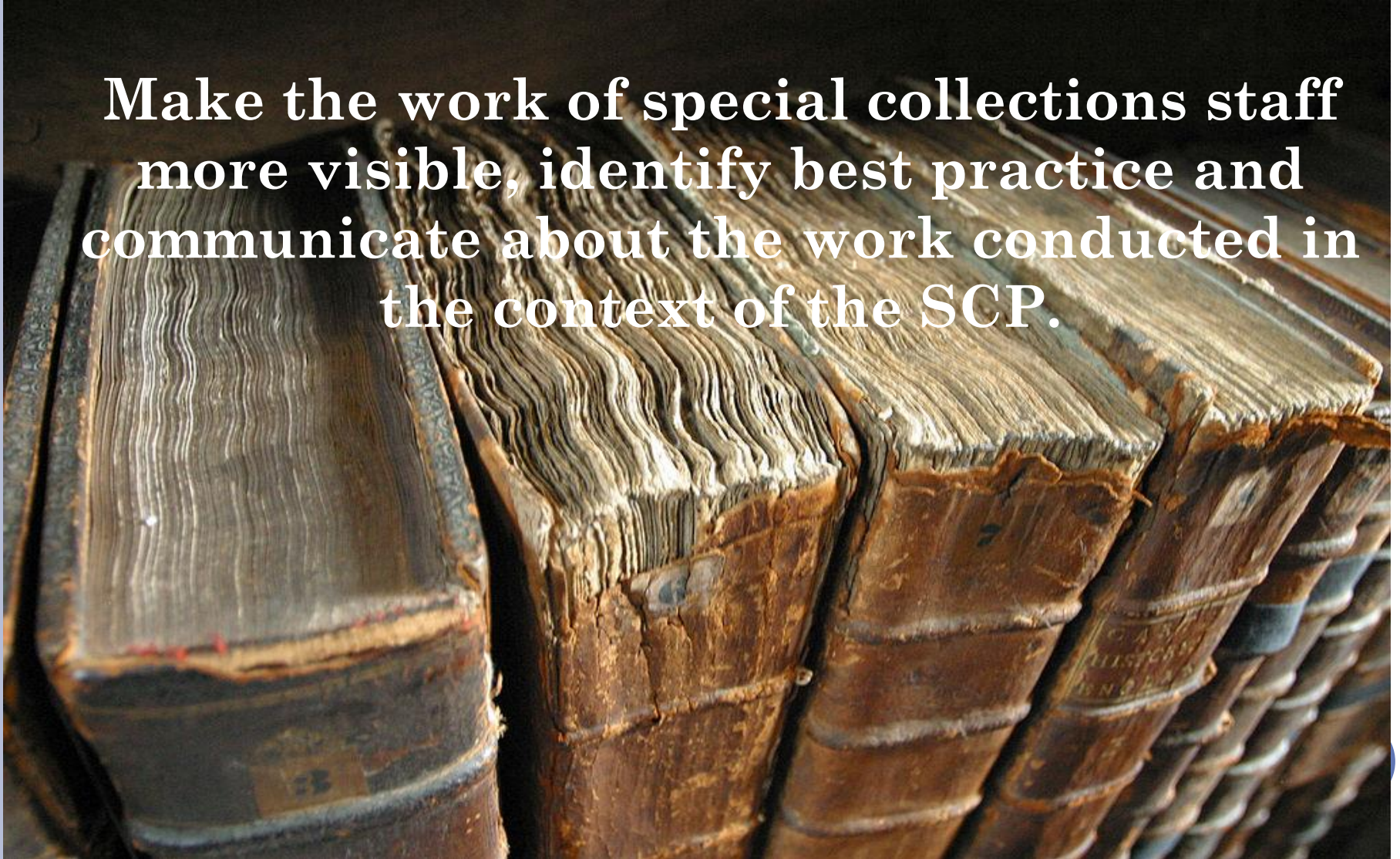
RLUK SCP – DELIVERY PHASE

- Embed relationships with networks and partners.
- Focus on exploring collaborative partnerships with academics and expanding our current network.
- Organise and deliver themed workshops and training events.
- SCP has a strong presence at DCDC (3 events at DCDC18).
- Create opportunities for professional development
 - Professional Fellowships Scheme in collaboration with The National Archives (as part of MoU) - exclusive and high-profile fellowships (up to 4 fellows).



EVIDENCING THE IMPACT AND VALUE OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Make the work of special collections staff more visible, identify best practice and communicate about the work conducted in the context of the SCP.

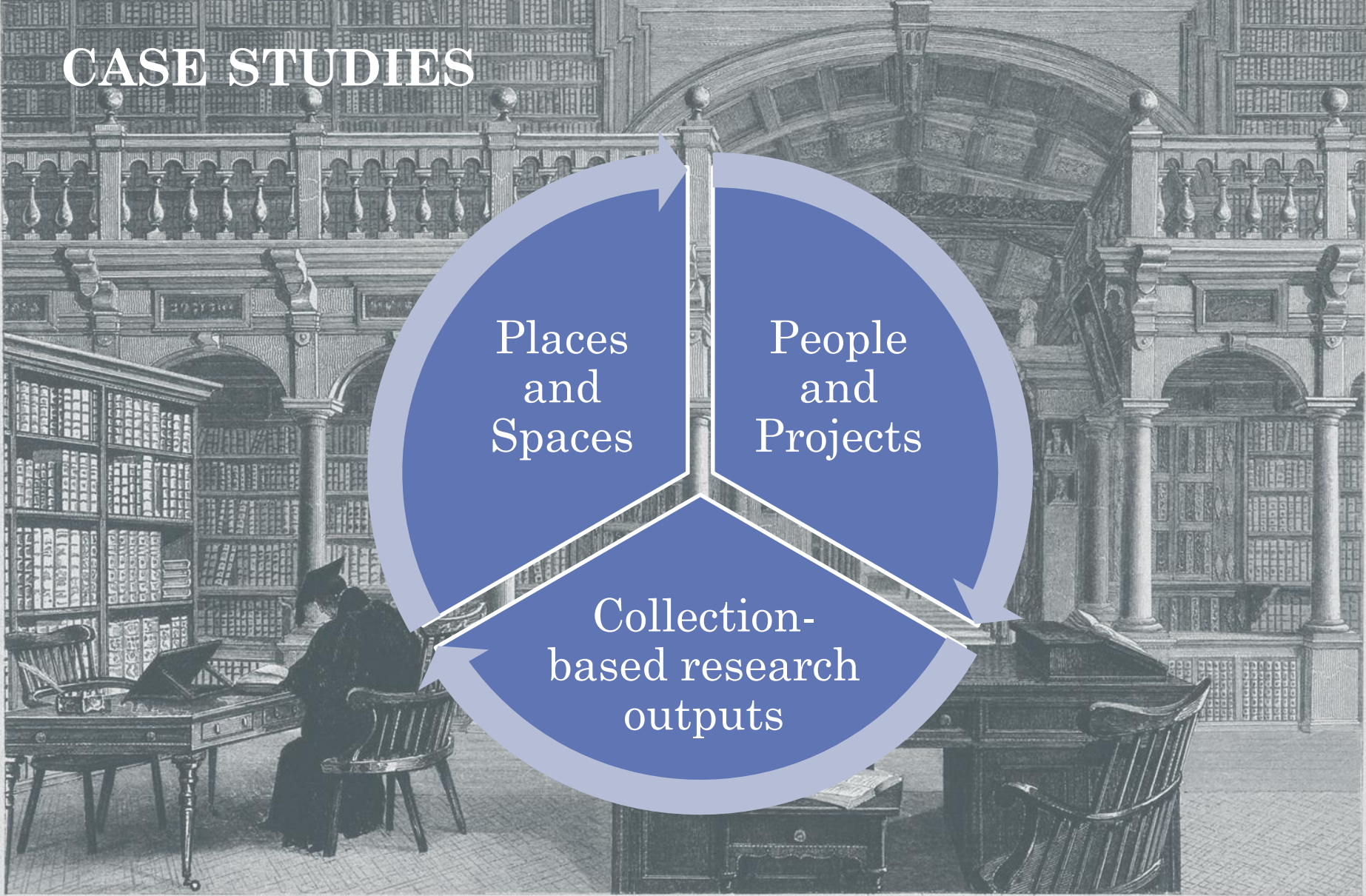


METHODOLOGY

- 26 case studies collected as part of the RLUK Special Collections Programme (SCP).
- Qualitative survey across the RLUK Membership to learn more about the characteristics of successful impact cases and the entailed challenges.



CASE STUDIES



Places
and
Spaces

People
and
Projects

Collection-
based research
outputs

F. Mackenzie.

J. Le Keux.

THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY.

SURVEY

- 16 RLUK institutions took part
- Questions:
 - Types of collections and audience groups
 - Impact definitions
 - Types of activities aimed to increase impact
 - Successful projects/initiatives based on special collections
 - Benefits and challenges of being involved in such initiatives
 - Methods/future plans for measuring the impact of collections
 - Degree of awareness of use of special collections in projects across the institution and beyond – methods for capturing these outputs

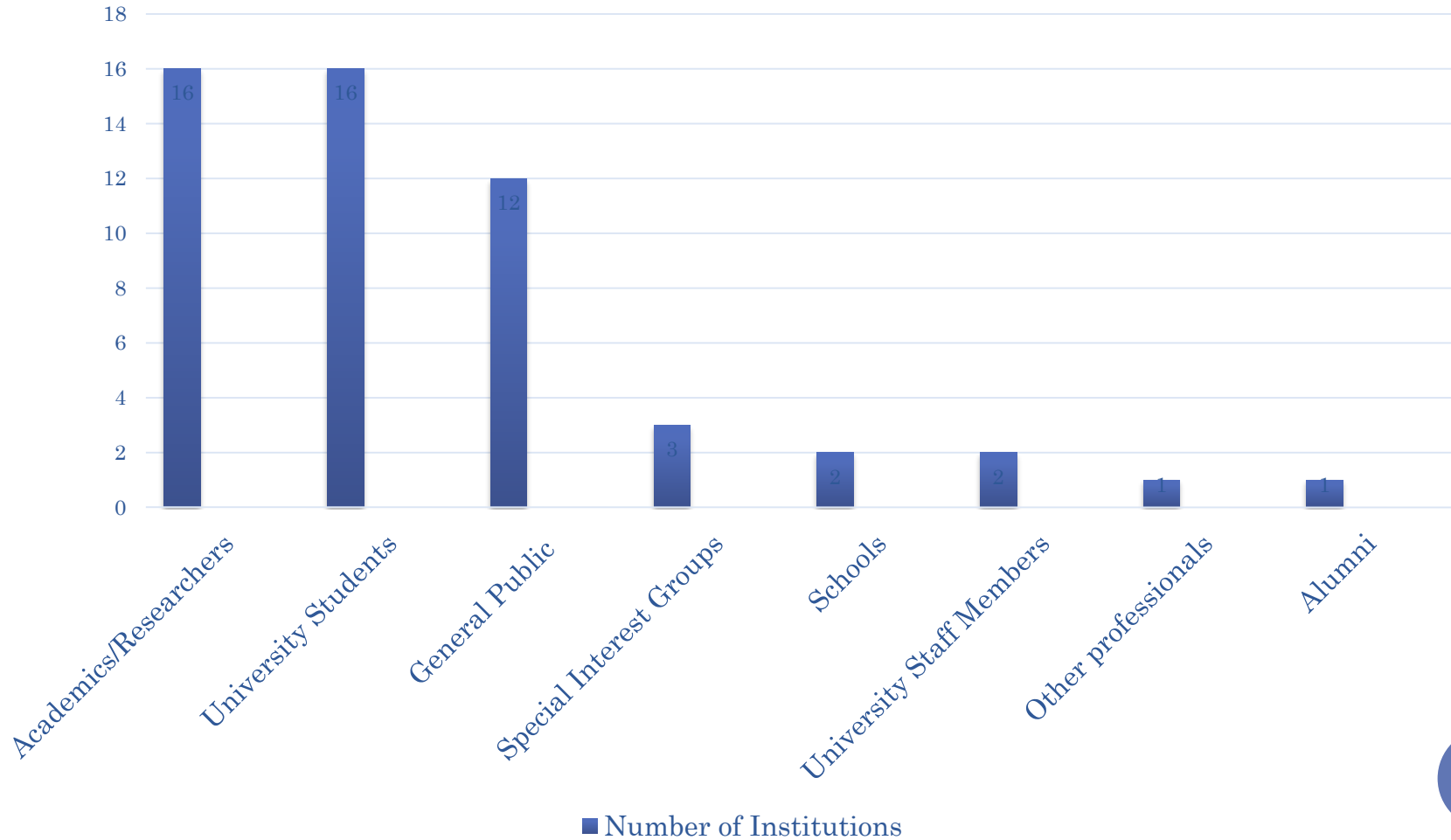


TYPES OF COLLECTIONS & TEAMS

- Diversity in types and formats
 - ranged from print book and manuscript collections to film archives and collections of cultural artefacts and artworks
 - constantly growing digitised and born-digital holdings
 - designated collections
- Collections in linear metres:
 - From 760 to 268,354
- Books:
 - From 7000 to 1.000.000
- Other types of special collections (e.g. maps, art)
 - From 400 to 650.000 items
- Team sizes:
 - From 1.5 to 60 members of staff



AUDIENCE GROUPS



TYPES OF INITIATIVES

- New buildings and spaces (e.g. labs)
- Exhibitions and other public engagement programmes
- Loans to external exhibitions
- Collaboration in research projects
- Support teaching
- Co-authoring/participating in funding proposals within/outside the institution
- Digitisation activities
- Participation in advisory group panels and other networks
- REF case studies based on special collections
- Hosting research fellowships
- Developing communication strategies, e.g. use of social and traditional media





Evidence of Impact

Anecdotal feedback/ Visitor data/ interactive exhibits data/ occupancy rates for reading and search rooms

Questionnaire/ interview data

Metrics/ statistical data

Collating evidence of activity from the academic 'champions'/ items produced for researchers and classes

Impact on external media

Fostering of future research or follow-on projects, citations in publications

Assessment Reports



PURPOSE & BENEFITS

CHALLENGES

- Resources – e.g. expensive events/initiatives, inconsistency of funding, retaining project staff during long term projects (4 years), time when managing many projects
- Negotiating conflicting priorities of many stakeholders in large scale projects – image of library as service provider could be a problem
- Designing initiatives to engage new audience groups
- Sustaining momentum for long term projects
- Learning about new technology
- Dealing with the media



CAPTURING IMPACT

- Direct involvement in a project, providing advice on a funding application, being part of a REF case study
- Working closely with local academics and other users of the collections
- Developing relationships with key people across the university
- Being part of networks and advisory group panels
- Collaborating more closely with other library teams
- Direct requests for access, supply of digital surrogates, or supply of additional information relating to collection/items
- Using toolkits provided by funding bodies
- Some reported no structured ways of measuring impact

CONCLUSION – STEPS FORWARD

- Raising awareness about the role that the Library and its collections can play in creating impact.
- Taking advantage of new tools and approaches to measuring reach and impact electronically is crucial.
 - Capturing impact through mentions in academic publications, especially from external projects.
- Identify appropriate methodologies for measuring and evidencing the two main categories of impact for research libraries, academic and civic as well as long term impact.
- Development of a common language around impact.
- Skills development for library staff.



THANK YOU!

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