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# Engaging archives with *Inspiring Learning for All*

A report prepared for MLA North West

## Executive Summary

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September 2005

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# Engaging Archives with *Inspiring Learning for All*

This report has been prepared by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) for the Museums Libraries and Archives Council North West (MLA North West)

September 2005

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned from the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries in the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester (RCMG) by MLA North West. The research task was to identify and analyse the challenges and barriers which militate against archives in the North West engaging with *Inspiring Learning for All*, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) framework for enabling learning in its broadest sense in archives, museums, and libraries.

### Context of the report:

- In 2004 MLA launched *Inspiring Learning for All* its national framework for accessible learning.
- The archive domain has been identified as an area where there are particular challenges to developing capacity in relation to learning.
- This report will map out and analyse the internal and external challenges and barriers, to the archive domain, which explain its lack of engagement with *Inspiring Learning for All*.

### Findings of the report:

- There is very little knowledge or understanding of *Inspiring Learning for All* in the archive domain. In the main it is viewed negatively viewed as something which will increase workloads. The opportunities of engaging with it are not recognised or understood.
- The domain does not consider the facilitation of accessible learning as defined by MLA to be a central function of archives.
- The domain does not operate and define itself on the basis of modern public policy objectives such as social inclusion, cultural diversity, and life long learning, which are the responsibilities of all organisations with a public remit.
- The domain's failure to modernise organisationally, attitudinally, or culturally means that it is very difficult for it to understand or know how to integrate a modern policy agenda such as *Inspiring Learning for All*.
- There is very little research on broad-based learning outcomes in archives; therefore there is no evidence on which to develop strategic initiatives which would educate archive staff and others (including potential partners) about the different kinds of learning they already enable.

- There is no domain wide clearly articulated contemporary vision which informs archive management and development.

**Recommendations of the report:**

- Our central finding is that in order for the archive domain to engage with contemporary learning agendas fundamental change will be required.
- We have provided a three step way of drawing archives into a change process which is built around contemporary learning agendas and *Inspiring Learning for All* in particular.
  1. **Purpose of archives:** A contemporary vision for archives must be developed. A vision that is modern in that it is focused on providing access to archives to a diversity of users, making the facilitation of accessible learning a central function of archives will enable this change.
  2. **Drivers for change:** external drivers must be identified and used to enable a process of modernisation to occur in the archive domain.
  3. **Strategies for organisational change:** a set of strategies must be identified and used as a motivator for change in archives in the North West.

