

# An ICT strategy for London's Museums, Archives and Libraries

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## Vision

Information Communications Technology (ICT) offers all of those working in London's museums, archives and libraries the opportunity to deliver new services to more people, and to offer better existing services in innovative ways.

London's Museums, Archives & Libraries (LMAL) is committed to exploiting ICT and its applications to maximise the benefits users of all kinds can derive from the capital's museums, archives and libraries.

LMAL is also committed to developing and delivering user-focussed, user-accessible ICT-facilitated tools to enable the widest possible access across all of London to the resources, services and collections throughout our City. Users are at the heart of this document – without users, ICT and its many possibilities for all of our services remain a worthless endeavour.

## Strategy context

This strategy document is relevant to:

- London's museums, archive and library sector
- Managers and front line staff
- Boards, Elected Members and Trustees
- ICT developers
- Users of museums, archives and libraries
- ICT Managers in other sectors
- Funding bodies

For users of museums, archives and libraries there are issues of commonality across the development of ICT and its use in delivering improved and different services:

- Onsite and online access to information about services and collections
- Seamless access to information whatever the source of the information
- Interoperability between standards within the individual domains

It is acknowledged that museums, archives and libraries are at different stages of development in their use of ICT, and whilst LMAL believes there are real opportunities in the domains working together in many areas, some areas of focus will by necessity be different.

For example, key areas for museums include:

- The need for both capital investment in ICT infrastructure and revenue funding to maintain and sustain systems and services.

- Developing the ICT skills and expertise needed to realise the full potential of ICT applications to enhance access to collections and services.
- Widening access to collections through the digitisation of collections information and retrospective catalogue conversion.

For archives:

- Electronic records pose exciting but challenging issues in terms of the management, preservation and access of digitised images and records 'born digital'.
- Widening access to new audiences through the retrospective conversion of hardcopy catalogues to electronic format across the Internet.
- Archives are too often invisible in wider ICT strategies and thus have not been able to progress.

For libraries:

- For public libraries, the sustainability of the People's Network is a key issue.
- Across the domain in London, realising the aim of a "single distributed resource" is challenging because of the vast numbers of items and explosion of information.
- Locking libraries into wider agendas is challenging as libraries of all kinds lack the sustained funding levels required for ongoing ICT innovation.

This document is supported by a range of LMAL services, including:

- LMAL's advice and support services
- LMAL's funding officer

This strategy explores short term (1 year) and medium term (3 years) issues. ICT and its applications, plus the drivers for museums, archives and libraries, are changing so rapidly that whilst the general vision for this strategy will remain relevant beyond 3 years, practical tasks will often be superseded many times over.

What we want this strategy to deliver
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This document aims to set out an ICT strategy for the sector that will help London's museums, archives and libraries to co-operate on ICT developments and develop in a systematic, planned way. In order to achieve this LMAL will first undertake a review of the current use of ICT in London's museums, archives and libraries (strengths and weaknesses, synergies and differences, gaps and opportunities).

LMAL's ICT Strategy will deliver the following

- A strategic framework for the future of ICT in London's museums, archives and libraries that reflects regional needs within the overarching *Resource Strategic Plan for ICT and the Development of Museums, Archives and Libraries*.
- A regional strategy that aims to ensure that every museum, archive and library in London has an appropriate level of ICT infrastructure to enable them to deliver and enhance services for their users and increase access to their collections.
- Identified priorities for the strategic development of ICT use across the sector, building on strengths and synergies but recognising differences.
- An action plan to deliver those priorities (both cross-domain and domain-specific).
- Place the ICT needs and priorities of London's museums, archives and libraries within the wider context of ICT development in the UK and internationally.
- A well-researched and authoritative document to help LMAL lever additional funding to support the implementation of the strategy.
- Ensure that the LMAL ICT strategy underpins all LMAL activities

## Wider ICT developments

There are a number of critical driving forces that are influencing the shape and development of ICT services.

### **E-government**

The Office of the e-Envoy is leading the drive to get the UK online, to ensure that the country, its citizens and its businesses derive maximum benefit from the knowledge economy. To support this aim, the Office has four core objectives to:

- make the UK the best place in the world for e-commerce
- ensure that everyone who wants to can access the Internet by 2005
- deliver electronically, and in a customer-focused way, all government services by 2005
- co-ordinate the UK government's e-agenda across different departments

### **Accessibility and interoperability**

The following standards and guidelines are key to improving accessibility and interoperability and represent the minimum standards that all publicly funded websites should aim to meet:

- Website design guidelines recommended by the World Wide Web Consortium Web Accessibility Initiative [www.w3c.org/WAI](http://www.w3c.org/WAI)
- The standards required by the Guidelines for UK Government websites <http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/webguidelines.htm>
- eGovernment Interoperability Framework [www.govtalk.gov.uk/interoperability/egif.asp?order=title\(eGIF\)](http://www.govtalk.gov.uk/interoperability/egif.asp?order=title(eGIF))

### **Public access to ICT**

- Internet Access

The UK has experienced strong growth in Internet take-up in recent years and is now one of the world's most 'connected' economies. In 1998, less than 10% of UK households had Internet access. In the period April to June 2002, that figure stands at nearly 45%. Virtually all schools are now 'wired up' and almost 95% of businesses are online. In total, 57% of the UK adult population - some 26.3m people - have now used the Internet.<sup>1</sup> Users of museums, archive and libraries are

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/oeo/oeo.nsf/sections/briefings-top/\\$file/access.htm](http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/oeo/oeo.nsf/sections/briefings-top/$file/access.htm) Accessed 31/12/02

increasingly able to access the Internet and ICT facilities through a number of different routes:

- The People's Network and UK Online Centres represent a major government investment in providing community access to the Internet. By the end of 2002 there will be around 6000 UK Online Centres at readily accessible points. These centres are focusing heavily on community learning and new approaches to learning. There are already over 1,200 UK Online Centres that provide ICT access in shopping centres, through a mobile unit driving round rural areas, in centres for the homeless, and in local schools and libraries.<sup>2</sup>
- Digital TV (DTV) brings consumers interactive services offering choices in viewing and extra information. Combined with a telephone line, DTV also provides Internet access, including e-mail, home shopping and home banking, and improved access for viewers with disabilities. DTV offers content providers the opportunity to develop imaginative services not only for entertainment but also for information, education and sales.<sup>3</sup> Around 40% of UK households are already connected to digital television and 7% of adults have used DTV to get online.
- Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) technology is designed to make web pages available on mobile phones. There are obvious limitations in viewing material on a mobile phone screen but WAPsites can be used quite effectively to provide information for people on the move and reach new audiences. An early example of a museum using this technology is The London Canal Museum, which was quick off the mark in developing a WAPsite ([www.canalmuseum.org.uk/wap/index.wml](http://www.canalmuseum.org.uk/wap/index.wml)), which can be accessed using a WAP mobile or an Internet based WAP simulator. This WAPsite includes details about location, opening hours and charges, canal mooring information and a WAPwalk – a guided canal towpath walk from Camden to the museum.

## Education

- E-Learning Strategy Unit

The Department for Education and Skills E-Learning Strategy Unit's overriding objective is to achieve coherence in Government ICT initiatives that support learning and teaching. The Unit is responsible for cross cutting issues and its remit is cross-sectoral - that is, covers from pre-school, through school, FE and University to community-based lifelong learning. Key issues concerning the digital divide,

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/elearningstrategy/faq.cfm?qID=10> Accessed 31/12/02

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/oeo/oeo.nsf/sections/reports-anrep2001-top/\\$file/03.htm](http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/oeo/oeo.nsf/sections/reports-anrep2001-top/$file/03.htm)  
Accessed 31/12/02

access to the Internet, and community-based skills initiatives are core strands of the Unit's work.

- The National Grid for Learning

The NGfL was launched in 1998 following the publication of the Government's paper *Open for Learning*. It is the main vehicle for promoting and facilitating the use of ICT in schools. Between 1998 and 2002, £657 million was made available to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) through the Standards Fund. This funding has been allocated to developing ICT infrastructure, effective links to the Internet and access to educationally valuable content. Over 99% of secondary schools and 96% of primary schools are now online, making the UK first in the G7.

- Use of ICT in HE

The HE sector has good track record in exploring the potential of ICT to increase access to learning resources and opportunities. For example, UK eUniversities Worldwide (UkeU)<sup>4</sup> is a government-backed company set up in 2001 to market and support the online provision of degree courses from UK universities to students outside of the UK and businesses worldwide. UKeU also has a mandate to help widen access to higher education in the UK. UKeU is on track to launch its first degrees online in spring 2003. In London, much work has been done on realising improved access arrangements through developments such as the Access Eligibility Tool. Inform25 has also been instrumental in mapping and promoting access to a host of archival material across the Capital.

- Use of ICT in Further Education

ICT is also playing an increasing role in FE. It is currently estimated that colleges spend around £100m on ICT each year. In addition £74m of capital funding has been committed to improve the sector's ICT infrastructure. This funding is providing a National Learning Network linking all FE colleges with HE institutions. Financial support to update college computer equipment; support for college staff to update their ICT skills; commissioning and purchase of new IT-based learning materials; in-house development of materials and the acquisition of multimedia authoring skills by college staff.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ukeuniversitiesworldwide.com/> Accessed 09/01/03

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/elearningstrategy/faq.cfm?qID=10> Accessed 31/12/02

## Priorities

The LMAL ICT Strategy has been shaped by a group of key stakeholders from within the museum, archive and library professions in London, who participated in a cross-domain brainstorming meeting hosted by LMAL in May 2002. The meeting identified the following five key priority areas for ICT across the sector.

### **1. Infrastructure development and sustainability**

- Hardware and software

In order for museums, archives and libraries to develop and deliver their services (both internally and externally) electronically it is imperative that they have access to adequate, affordable and sustainable ICT infrastructures. This encompasses both capital and revenue funding for hardware and software. Consortium purchasing was cited as a potential way of capitalising on economies of scale. However, the need for additional capital funding was identified as a particular need in many museums and archives. Longer term revenue funding will also be required across all three domains to maintain, sustain and develop ICT infrastructures.

- ICT strategy development

The development of ICT infrastructures within museums, archives and libraries should be planned within a coherent long-term ICT strategy for the individual organisation within the context of broader organisational and business aims. The lack of such strategies has often resulted in a fragmented and unsustainable approach to ICT infrastructure development in parts of the sector.

For libraries, having a coherent ICT Strategy was an essential requirement before access to the People's Network funds was granted. Public library services also have to demonstrate how ICT will underpin and develop the service that is reported upon through the statutory Annual Library Plan. This planning rigour is essential in maintaining a current and on-going debate about the potential and impact of ICT.

- For users and staff

The provision of access to IT facilities for both users of museums, archives and libraries and their staff needs to be addressed within the context of ICT strategy and planning. The number of funding opportunities for developing electronic services for users within public spaces such as museums, libraries and archive search rooms and online via the Internet has outstripped the IT facilities for

'backroom services' for practitioners themselves. Projects such as Access to Archives<sup>6</sup> has enabled electronic access to the catalogues of over 45 archives in London via the Internet on a site hosted by the Public Record Office. However, not all of the A2A contributors are able to store and access their own data electronically as they do not have the hardware or software to enable them to do this onsite.

- Broadband connectivity

Broadband networking increases the range of services that can be provided over the Internet by providing faster data lines capable of transferring electronic information more quickly and more efficiently. There are two basic benefits:

- Web information is provided to the user at least ten times faster than a standard 56K modem
- Multimedia resources (e.g. video, sound) become usable over the network

The implementation of the People's Network will enable a projected 93% of libraries in England to have broadband (2Mb+) access to the Internet.<sup>7</sup> In London, 100% of libraries will be connected, and many will have significantly larger and faster links. The extension of broadband connectivity to museums, archives and other library services is a key factor in developing a broadband network for the region. As a result of Resource's collaboration with BT, museums and archives have been added to the list of learning institutions that are able to purchase broadband access and BT's LearningStream products at a special educational discount.

- Licensing

ICT software licensing can be expensive and needs to be included within any ICT strategy budgeting. The inability of library services, for example, to negotiate shared licensing deals means that many smaller or poorer institutions in all library sectors simply cannot offer the range of resources accessible elsewhere. Striving to move ahead as a sector, or cross-sectorally, will mean much better services on offer to users.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.a2a.pro.gov.uk/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.peoplesnetwork.gov.uk/infra/trends.asp>

## **2. Access and learning**

Access and learning was identified as a key area where the use of ICT could be used to enhance and develop services to users of museums, archives and libraries. Specific issues include:

- The London Grid for Learning (LGFL), which aims to provide a broadband Internet connection to all of London's schools. This will present a great opportunity for museums, archives and libraries to use their unique learning resources to develop high quality online education services and resources to feed into the LGfL.
- Exploring the potential of expanding traditional ways of delivering education services to ICT context.
- Developing resources both onsite (e.g. gallery interactives) and remotely (via websites, DTV, WAP) that users can interact with to enhance their learning experiences.
- Addressing accessibility issues in the use of ICT as a vehicle for the provision of services and resources to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). ICT applications have enormous potential to widen public access to services and resources. However, the way in which the majority of current websites are designed makes it difficult, if not impossible, for many people with disabilities to access them. Making services and resources as widely accessible as possible (both onsite and remotely) is a key issue for museums, archives and libraries.
- Providing access to online catalogues, exhibitions, interpretative materials, and information about services.

## **3. Skills development**

Addressing the ICT skills development needs of practitioners to enable them to develop and deliver services and resources for their users is key to maximising the potential of ICT across the sector. Priority areas identified included:

- Ensuring all practitioners have an appropriate level of ICT skills to carry out their roles and responsibilities.
- Building up a base of technical knowledge of ICT within the sector
- Ensuring, where appropriate, that staff are equipped to promote information literacy skills that will enable users of archive search rooms, libraries and museums to use the technology available onsite to access collections and related information.

- Equipping practitioners to work effectively with ICT developers
- Building on the impact of ECDL/NOF training

#### **4. Stewardship and standards**

Practitioners within museums, archives and libraries are increasingly using ICT to better manage their collections and services, and to radically alter what can actually be made available, and to whom. This can range from electronic catalogues, accession registers, user databases to environmental monitoring. Developments in creating new forms of resource also impact heavily on core principles in collections management and demand a re-appraisal of this whole agenda for all three domains.

ICT is also a major tool in opening up access to collections and much good work has been done in London (and elsewhere). However, sustainability of this work is a real challenge, as is bringing this new accessibility to the wider notice of existing and potential users. Key priority areas include:

- The use of ICT for collections management
- E-records and the digitisation of collections information
- Standards/interoperability
- Preservation
- New media for new collections

#### **5. Single distributed resource**

There is an argument for the development of a single distributed resource to make information about the resources and services of London's museums, archives and libraries available to users and potential users through a single ICT portal, or series of linked portals. This would need to be explored within the context of pan-London developments like the London Connects<sup>8</sup> and the London Grid for Learning<sup>9</sup>, and national initiatives like Culture Online<sup>10</sup>.

There are already a number of relevant portal projects currently being developed alongside each other. These include domain specific portals such as Cornucopia<sup>11</sup>, The 24 Hour Museum<sup>12</sup>, Access to Archives

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.londonconnects.org.uk>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.lgfl.gov.uk>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.cultureonline.gov.uk>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cornucopia.org.uk>

<sup>12</sup> <http://24hourmuseum.org.uk>

(A2A)<sup>13</sup>, Archives on-line (ARCHON)<sup>14</sup>, AIM25<sup>15</sup>, the M25 Consortium of Higher Education Libraries<sup>16</sup> and the LLDA's What's in London's Libraries Project<sup>17</sup> that allows seamless searching across all 33 Public Library catalogues (with links to HE, museum and archives projects). FiiL<sup>18</sup> (Find it in London) is also pioneering approaches to cross-domain resource discovery.

Ensuring that these resource discovery and access tools link and offer easy-to-use, transparent services for users all over the Capital needs to be a key priority for any LMAL ICT Strategy.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.a2a.pro.gov.uk>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.hmc.gov.uk/archon/archon.htm>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.aim25.ac.uk>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.m25lib.ac.uk>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.llda.org.uk/will/> Accessed 09/01/03

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.fiiil.org.uk>

Cross-domain action Plan
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## 1. Infrastructure development and sustainability

### Objectives

- 1.1 To ensure that the People's Network is developed, utilised and sustainable
- 1.2 To work towards parity in infrastructure provision across all three domains – whilst not descending to the LCD

Objective 1.1: To ensure that the People's Network is developed, utilised and sustainable				
1.1.1	To explore sustainable revenue funding to maintain the People's Network			2003 - 04
1.1.2	Lobby Government for the extension of the People's Network to encompass museums and archives			

Objective 1.2: To work towards parity in infrastructure provision across all three domains – whilst not descending to the LCD				
1.2.1	Commission an audit of current ICT provision and use across London's museums, archives and libraries			
1.2.2	Develop an action plan in response to both cross-domain and domain-specific recommendations arising from the ICT Audit and lobby for funding to support the implementation of the action plan			
1.2.3	Develop a training programme to encourage all museums, archives and libraries in London to develop their own ICT strategy linked to their organisation's scale, overall aims and business plan.			2003 - 04
1.2.4	Promote the importance of investment in ICT to key decision makers and stakeholders across the sector.			
1.2.5	Work with Resource and other funding			

	bodies to investigate cost effective approaches to introducing broadband connectivity for museums and archives and address sustainability requirements across the three domains.			
1.2.6	Work with Resource to lobby NOF, DCMS and other bodies for capital funding to improve the ICT infrastructure in museums and archives to bring them up to a minimum standard			

## 2. Access and learning

### Objectives

- 2.1 Assess the impact of ICT on services provided to users of London's museums, archives and libraries
- 2.2 Support the development of e-learning resources and services across the sector
- 2.3 Promote ICT accessibility standards across the sector

Objective 2.1: Assess the impact of ICT on services provided to users of London's museums, archives and libraries				
2.1.1	Commission an impact assessment study across a range of different types and sizes of museums, archives and libraries			
2.1.2				

Objective 2.2: Support the development of e-learning resources and services across the sector				
2.2.1	Explore the portability of VLEs in FE Libraries to other services			
2.2.2	Work with Basic Skills providers and projects to offer demonstrator projects to museum, archives and libraries			

Objective 2.3: Promote ICT accessibility standards across the sector				
2.2.1				

### 3. Skills Development

#### Objectives

- 3.1 Create a skills base of practitioners who are able to respond to the emerging ICT agendas
- 3.2 Ensure that practitioners have access to ICT training and training providers

Objective 3.1: Create a skills base of practitioners who are able to respond to the emerging ICT agendas				
3.1.1	Conduct an audit of ICT related skills strengths and gaps across the three domains			
3.1.2	Develop an action plan in response to both cross-domain and domain-specific recommendations arising from the ICT Skills Audit			
3.1.3	Host an ICT email discussion group			
3.1.4	Host an annual cross-domain ICT forum bringing together practitioners from across the sector			

Objective 3.2: Ensure that practitioners have access to ICT training and training providers				
3.2.1	Develop a training programme to meet the priority needs identified in the ICT Skills Audit			
3.2.2	Provide up-to-date and relevant information on training providers and events via the LMAL website			

## 4. Stewardship and Standards

### Objectives

- 4.1 Promote best practice in the use of ICT applications across the three domains
- 4.2 Promote the retrospective conversion of collections information and catalogues to support collections management and enhance user accessibility
- 4.3 Promote minimum standards that maximise interoperability and accessibility of digitised material and online content

Objective 4.1: Promote best practice in the use of ICT applications across the three domains				
4.1.1	Collect and publish (on the LMAL website) examples of good practice in the use of ICT applications to help manage, interpret and increase access to the collections of museums, archives and libraries in London.			
4.1.2	Promote ICT related best practice guidelines and news to London's museums, archives and libraries			

Objective 4.2: Promote the retrospective conversion of collections information and catalogues to support collections management and enhance user accessibility				
4.2.1	Audit the level of backlogs in the digitisation of collections information and catalogues across London's museums, archives (and libraries?)			
4.2.2	Lobby Government for additional funding to support the digitisation and retrospective conversion of catalogues (regional grants scheme?)			
4.2.3	Set up a network group of lead officers involved in digitisation and cataloguing projects (who could also act as mentors to smaller organisations embarking on digitisation projects?)			

Objective 4.3: Promote minimum standards that maximise interoperability and accessibility of digitised material and online content				
4.3.1	Work with Resource and other appropriate bodies on the development of minimum standards for content creation, interoperability and accessibility.			
4.3.2	Promote the use of agreed minimum standards in London's museums, archives and libraries			

## 5. Single Distributed Resource

### Objectives

- 5.1 Explore the potential for developing a single distributed resource for practitioners and users of London's museums, archives and libraries

Objective 5.1: Explore the potential for developing a single distributed resource for practitioners and users of London's museums, archives and libraries				
5.1.1	Investigate the potential for making information on the resources of London's museums, archives and libraries available through a single ICT portal, or series of linked portals.			
5.1.2	Support pilot projects that have the potential to fill in identified gaps and provide access to museum, archive and library resources and data			
5.1.3	Grant aid an exemplar cross-domain pilot project including WiLL, London Signpost and FiLL, whilst also seeking external partnership funding			
5.1.4	Publicise case studies via the LMAL website			
5.1.5	Promote awareness of ICT portals and networks to practitioners and users.			
5.1.6	Publish information on ICT portals and networks via the LMAL website and			

	online news alerts/discussion groups			
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## Appendix of source documents and influences

In the lead up to the drafting of this document LMAL hosted a cross-domain brainstorming meeting involving representatives from museums, archives and libraries in London. This document has been informed by the discussions at that meeting and will be developed further in consultation with the wider sector. Participants at the brainstorming meeting held on 30 May 2002 were as follow:

Kevin Ashley, Service Manager, National Digital Archive of Datasets  
Brendan Casey, University Librarian, City University  
Kevin Flude, Director of Old Operating Theatre Museums and Herb Garret, and also Director of Cultural Heritage Information Consultants  
Rachel Hasted, Head of Museums and Heritage, Croydon Museum and Heritage Service  
Emma Halsall, Archives Development Officer, LARC  
Sarah Jillings, Curator of Collections, Jewish Museum  
Patricia Methven, Director, King's College Archives  
David Murray, Director, LLDA  
Adie Scott, Assistant Director, Libraries and Cultural Services, LB Croydon  
Caroline Shenton, Assistant Clerk of the Records (Cataloguing and Online Services), The House of Lords / Parliamentary Archives  
Maggie Warburton, Information Manager, LMA

LMAL's ICT Strategy needs to complement and mesh with other developments. To ensure this, the following sources have been examined and assessed for their impact and relevance to the work of LMAL and this ICT Strategy:

### Local

- Museum of London's ICT work
- Croydon's Library ICT Plan

### Regional

- London's Libraries ICT Strategy
- Archives Strategy
- LondonConnects
- London Grid for Learning
- M25 Consortium's ICT work

### National

- Museums Documentation Association

- Resource's ICT Strategy
- Archives on-line
- Culture Online
- Curriculum Online
- New Opportunities Fund
- National Grid for Learning
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- JISC
- Becta

International
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- Framework 6

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