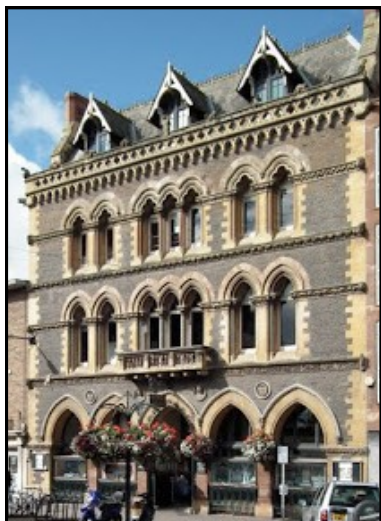




Draft

This is a proposal by the Hereford Library Users Group for a complete renewal of the Library and Museum in Broad Street, with exciting innovations.

- ☐ An exceptional opportunity has arisen to improve the library and museum building in Broad Street by changing the interior completely.
 - ☐ We propose that it be called The Rankin Centre to mark the role played in its building by a notable philanthropist whose generosity caused the building to happen in the 1870s.
 - ☐ The interior will almost entirely be replaced, thus rationalizing the cubic capacity of the building, by adding floors and virtually doubling the usable space.
 - ☐ The library itself will look quite different with modern shelving systems and new and innovatory guides for users to 'discover' books and digital material. We call the concept 'discoverability'.
 - ☐ There will be an opportunity to make use of the huge museum resources by creating thematic spaces where relevant books, archives, artefacts and audio visual material can be seen alongside each other.
 - ☐ In the digital age there will be new approaches to how the online world can be accessed.
 - ☐ Special features for children and space for parents and children to participate in activities and events will enhance one of the most popular aspects of the present library.
 - ☐ A floor will be dedicated to serious research and it will include facilities for the new Herefordshire University.
 - ☐ It will be a place for people to meet with a cafe and other amenities.
 - ☐ Access to the customer services of the Council will be on offer and the need to provide proper advice on health and social care issues.
 - ☐ A special unit will provide advice to new and established businesses alike.
 - ☐ The new Centre will be a place for tourists to visit, for residents of the city and county to enjoy and, as a result, will make a major contribution to the local economy.
 - ☐ **It will become an important landmark in the centre of the city.**
- A magnet for visitors and a community and a cultural hub**



This is a unique Hereford building, iconic: a splendid example of mid-Victorian Gothic. It is a landmark in the range of buildings in Broad Street. It houses the county library, the Hereford museum and an art gallery. It was originally built in the 1870s largely due to the generosity of James Rankin, a founder of the Woolhope Club, which is still housed in the building. Now disaster has struck, for during building works asbestos was discovered and the entire building is currently closed to the public. It will cost a substantial sum of money to put right.

But even then it will fall way below the standards expected of a county library and museum. For the building has been neglected for years, for decades. The Hereford Library Users Group believes there is a unique opportunity to bring the building into the 21st century.

The User Group has been invited, with other interested parties, by the Herefordshire Council's Cabinet to explore how it might be best developed into a 21st century innovative, cultural and community centre for the city. With radical thinking and the employment of the full resources of the digital age, it will be possible for this building, which we propose should be called **The Rankin Centre**, to take on an entirely new lease of life. It will be revitalized by a number of unique innovations using synergy between the library and the museum collections. It will become, again, a major attraction for residents and tourists alike, worthy of Hereford and Herefordshire.

The Proposal

What follows is an entirely new concept in the heart of the city of Hereford. The present building is the county's central library and houses the main museum in the county. At present it fulfils neither of these functions adequately. It should become a major focus for cultural, educational and information seeking activities in the city and the county, as well as an attraction for tourists.

The proposal has a number of distinctive innovations that include a new way of integrating library and museum offers, and a better way of accessing the library resources by introducing the concept of 'discoverability', including an informed gateway to archive sources.

Over the next few years Herefordshire could have a new and innovative university which will require a library facility. There is also an intention to apply to be a European City of Culture but the poor quality of what is at present on offer would almost certainly disqualify any bid. This major omission must be dealt with for the bid will fail in the absence of a first rate library and museum. The Library Users Group proposes a cultural and information hub to bring together community services, a meeting place for young and old, tourism, business support, digital access, a modern library display and meeting areas and with links to services such as museums and archives – a real hub for the county. There are excellent examples of such centres elsewhere, such as at the Norwich Millennium, Centre, the Winchester Discovery Centre, The Hive. Worcester, Brighton's Jubilee library and the Tower Hamlets Idea Stores, all of which have been extraordinarily successful in rejuvenating and inspiring the communities they serve. Such a centre in Hereford would support and reinforce the positive effects that the establishment of a university will bring to the county.

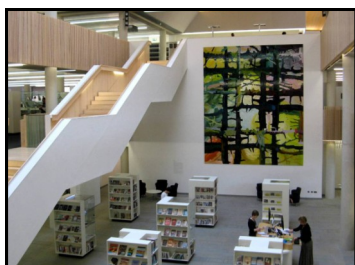
The key to the proposal is a complete re-development of the interior of the present Broad Street building, with its listed and striking Victorian Italianate façade, which is in an excellent location in the heart of the city. However, the building is quite inadequate for a modern library and museum and is unable to provide the facilities that a 21st century cultural hub needs. It does not attract people to use it as is evident from falling numbers. Present use of space, access and services is poor and is a gross under utilization of a prominent city centre site. The inner structure of the library needs to be torn out and a completely new arrangement of floors and access between them set in place. See the architect's outline section, below.



Norwich Millennium Centre



The Winchester Discovery Centre's Art Gallery



Worcester's The Hive

How might the transformation of the building be achieved?



A coffee shop with enough sitting space to provide a meeting place for visitors, but then capable of adaptation to an auditorium for events and displays

This proposal would keep the perimeter and rear walls of the building with the entire interior and possibly the roof being rebuilt using a new internal frame. This would allow modifications to the floor levels to be rearranged to give far more space and effective and efficient use of the building with greater use of natural lighting. It would also allow for some valuable environmental engineering showcasing the county's expertise. The street level entrance and information area leads to a raised ground floor so enabling the present basement to be expanded to full height and fully utilized for the lending, reference and Internet services of the library. At the entrance would be a new form of retail outlet and a café with moveable furniture to create events space. Facilities for the Wellbeing Information Signposting Herefordshire programme could be within easy reach. Raising the level of the rear ground and first floors creates full and level access to the historic Woolhope Room and library which would be maintained in its present location, but the rearrangement of the floor levels would allow for access by the disabled. The upper floors could be allocated to serious non-fiction, reference books, the local history collection and online access with accommodation for the new university on the top floor. Vital to the Centre will be a first class children's area (see below). A lecture and display area, a youth zone and a modernized museum and art display space with a roof top café and restaurant should also be considered. New lifts and administration areas would be installed.

Whilst reconstruction is going on the library service would need to be transferred to a temporary location in one of the city's vacant buildings or empty sites. This is a must! It is possible that the project might allow a staged return of the services to Broad Street and this option should be explored.

What the Rankin Centre could offer.

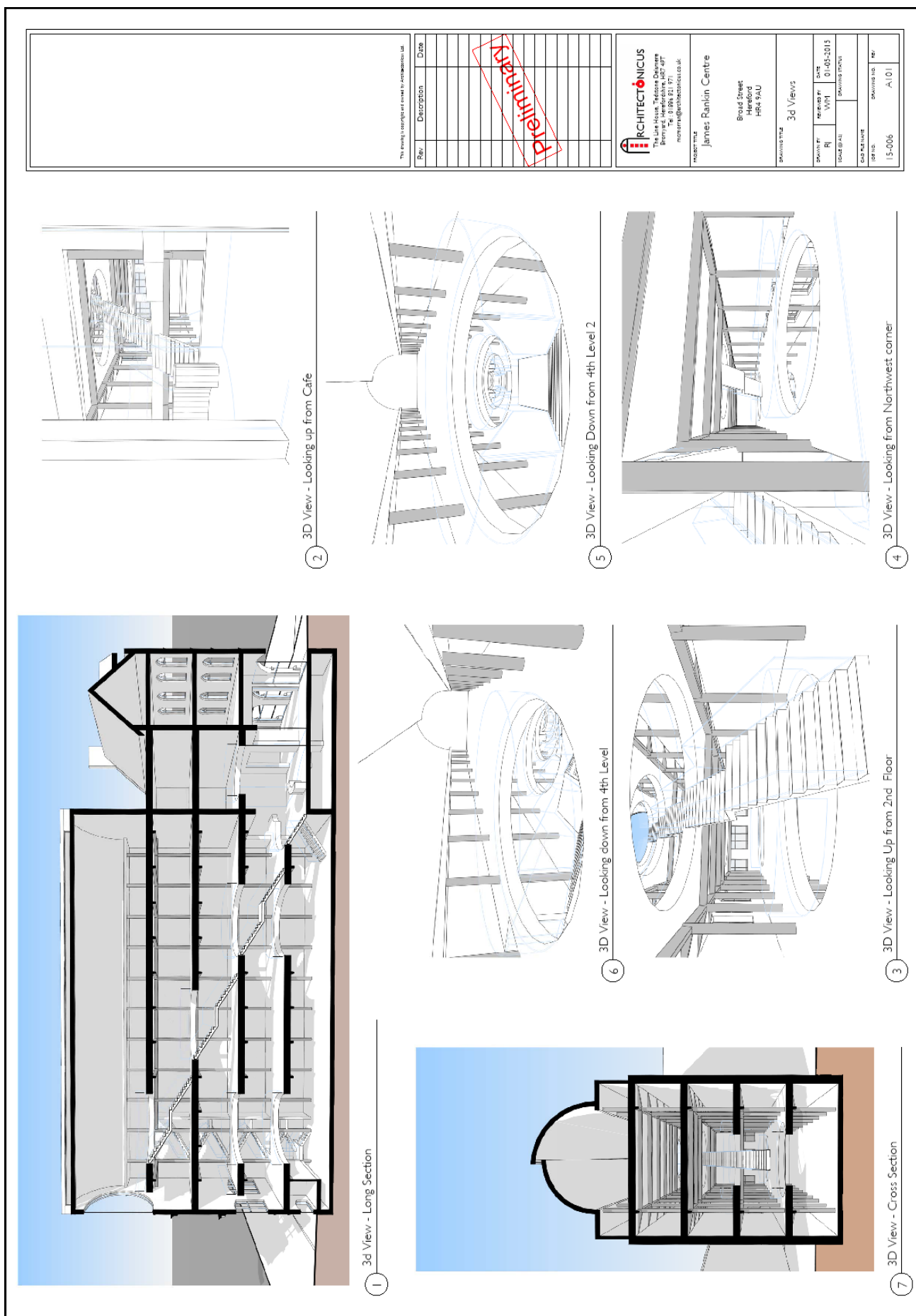


Julia Donaldson, author and a children's book laureate, reading at the Wigan library.

- Although the frontage, the Woolhope Room and the staircase leading up to it are listed, the rest of the interior is not. The conversion of the building should provide much more than just a modernised library and museum.
- 📖 Young children will first encounter the joys of reading.
 - 📖 Children and young adults are able to improve their literacy skills.
 - 📖 Students can pursue their studies from school to further and higher education.
 - 📖 The elderly could meet others with similar interests.
 - 📖 Enable the reading of news papers and journals in print and digital forms.
 - 📖 Make available a full range of local, historical and national maps.
 - 📖 All kinds of activities could happen for those interested in the arts and culture.
 - 📖 A gateway open to the increasingly complex digital world, with expert advice on offer.
 - 📖 Artefacts from the museum collection would be made available by entirely new way of displaying the rich collection of items in the Museum Resource Centre.
 - 📖 A Citizen's Advice Bureau, or similar facility will be available.
 - 📖 Access to archives, both local, national and international.
 - 📖 A user friendly Tourist office is provided for visitors.
 - 📖 The requirements for WISH could be found within the building.
 - 📖 Availability of information about economic regeneration, small business know-how and entrepreneurship.

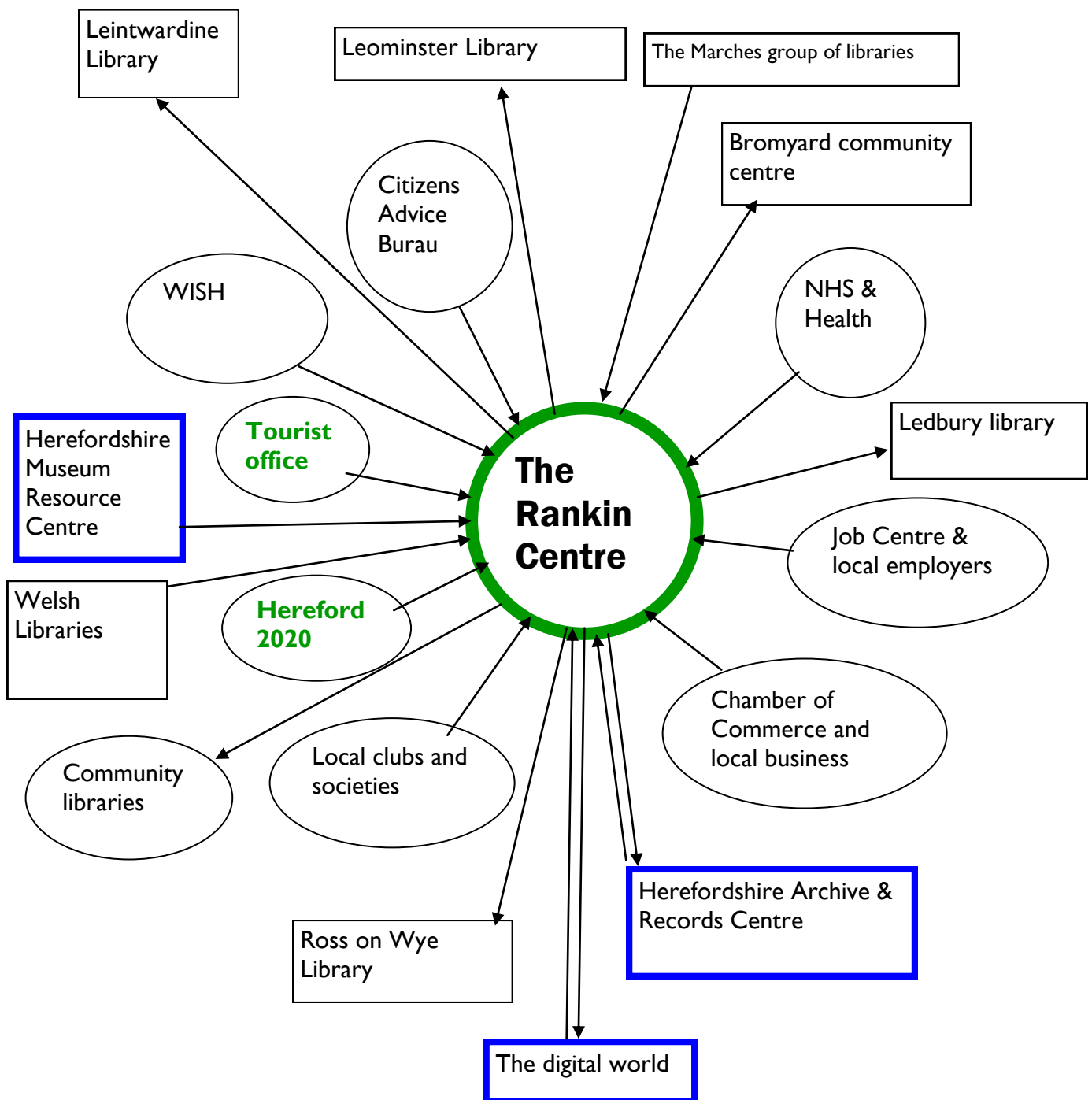
In sum, this would be a place that provides a full modern library service, access to the museum collection and a gateway to the burgeoning range of digital records. It would become a valued learning and meeting space for the local community, tourists and visitors alike.

Architectonicus plan of the cross section of the library and museum building after reconstruction to achieve 5 floors.



Architectonic 3D drawing of what the interior of the building might look like

The Rankin Centre in Broad Street and its role as a community hub



The Rankin Centre in Broad Street will not be just a library, nor just a museum. It will become THE community hub for the county of Herefordshire as well as a first port of call in the city of Hereford itself. It will:

Provide the services of a county library linked to branch and community libraries.

Be a showcase for choice items from the Museum Resource Centre.

Be a place in the city centre where the county's archives can be consulted online.

Be the first stop for tourists.

A valuable resource centre for local businesses.

Provide full access to the digital world with experts on hand to help.

Provide a link with neighbouring library services.

The Rankin Centre as the community hub

Social Care – Wellbeing Information Signposting Herefordshire WISH

The role of libraries in helping to deliver an effective Social and Adult Care service to people in need is well documented. The Council's proposal to meet the requirements of the Care Act 2014 by adapting the Broad Street building was well meaning but not ideal. The answer in any major redesign of the building is to make sure that then needs of old people or those requiring care are provided for by all that the library can offer, including a quiet place to come and possibly meet friends.

The CAB—a new home

The Citizens Advice Bureau, who will now be looking for a new home, should also be taken into account. Claire Keetch, Herefordshire Citizens Advice Bureau chief executive, said: "We need people to understand that the CAB provides a different type of support to that provided by WISH. There remains a need to ensure specialist legal advice continues in Herefordshire."

Getting people into jobs

The role for libraries in helping people into work has now become important. The Rankin Centre should be well provided with computer access points for job searching, ideas, and help with writing a good C.V. Some libraries even have a branch of the Job Centre or its equivalent actually in the building and it may well be that one or more staff are trained to help potential job applicants with their enquiries. The library will become an important avenue for job seekers to find work and for employers to obtain willing and competent workers.

Health

In recent years there has been a serious body of research that shows that the library can play a significant role in keeping people healthy or by helping them in recovery. The Society of Chief Librarians has launched a very successful programme, *Books on Prescription*, already much used in Hereford. The potential for the Rankin Centre to play an even more important role should be carefully explored with local health authorities and with regard to the online sources such as NHS Choice or the Patient web site.

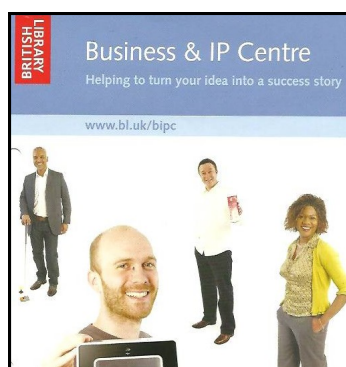
Tourism

There will be much about the Rankin Centre that will be attractive to tourists. The whole building will, in effect, act as an exciting Tourist Information Centre. There will, however, be a need for a dedicated tourist bureau within the building, dispensing advice and possibly offering links to local accommodation, eating places and places to visit. Some form of interactive display or map could prove to be a very attractive feature for the Centre. Links can also be made to the local history collection and to the special displays or 'pods' dotted around the building.

Business

The city of Hereford is now embarking on yet another makeover, with significant sums being allocated to the refurbishment of High Town. The newly formed Hereford 2020 group is actively encouraging new developments in the city centre. The Rankin Centre should play a crucial role in all this, acting as a focus for budding entrepreneurs to explore the possibilities that are opening up in the city and the count. There will be a host of sources of advice, with dedicated online access to specialized information and access to experts in the city. Many libraries across the country are now playing this role, often in cooperation with local, national and international enterprises, such as the exciting new development at the Manchester City Library that has just launched the highly innovative Google Garage (see Appendix for details).

The British Library Living Knowledge Network works with public libraries as part of its new strategy **Living Knowledge**. Initially the BL is focusing on expanding the Business and IP Centres from 6 to 8, and ultimately wants to work with up to 20 public libraries and broaden the remit beyond business to encourage public libraries to gain from the BL' work around education, research and culture



Entrepreneurship

There has been a significant increase in business start-ups, often by young people. They need advice, support and help. The Rankin Centre will be provided with much that will help them find the right answers.

See the Local Government Library Technology web site for information on shared services

A number of studies highlight the economic benefits of libraries, but one of the most recent, by the Arts Council in 2014 concludes that:- “Evidence is already sufficient to conclude that public libraries provide positive outcomes for people and communities in many areas – far exceeding the traditional perception of libraries as just places from which to borrow books. What the available evidence shows is that public libraries, first and foremost, contribute to long term processes of human capital formation, the maintenance of mental and physical wellbeing, social inclusivity and the cohesion of communities. This is the real economic contribution that public libraries make to the UK. The fact that these processes are long term, that the financial benefits arise downstream from libraries’ activities, that libraries make only a contribution to what are multi-dimensional, complex processes of human and social development, suggests that attempting to derive a realistic and accurate overall monetary valuation for this is akin to the search for the holy grail.” Other recent studies by the Carnegie Trust come to similar conclusions. See list of sources at the end for other economic reports.

A project team needs to be put in place. For whilst the proposal originated from Hereford Library Users’ Group, realization of the project requires an independent, well-informed and enthusiastic working group to be established including various user groups and interested members of the public, together with representation from the Council, the proposed university, the colleges, and professionals from the library, museum and customer services operating staff.

The task of this group would be to:-

- ☐ Resolve the uses of the building and how they may be introduced.
- ☐ Find the necessary funding for initial studies, examine future revenue and expenditure.
- ☐ Develop an outline design and estimate of costs.
- ☐ Explore alternative models for delivery, e.g. by setting up a charitable trust or some other form of independent body and define its relationship to the Council (see section on Organization and Structures below).
- ☐ Find a temporary location for the present library.
- ☐ Liaise with council officers as the present owners of the building.
- ☐ Establish the management of the project and future operations.
- ☐ Investigate sources of finance for the subsequent detailed design & construction.

In the first instance the experts at the Arts Council of England would need to be consulted together with the fund raisers working for the local authority. In addition there are a number of bodies in the region who have been highly successful in raising funding and we should learn from them - one such, on our doorstep, is the Waterworks Museum, that has raised considerable sums from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is recognized that what is being proposed here will not be cheap. But the renaissance of such an iconic building in central Hereford would also be likely to be a candidate for a substantial Heritage Lottery Fund subvention (cf. the recent Brecknock Museum and Brecon Library Co-location project). There are other examples of independent sources of funds such as the Carnegie UK Trust, the Clore Duffield Foundation, the Bill Gates Foundation and the Wolfson Foundation, all of whom have recently offered funding for radical improvements to library and heritage buildings.

By its very nature a library service, free for much of its activities under the terms of the Public Libraries act 1964, will not be a sustainable totally self funding business model. But the benefits to the city and to the county will be considerable. Such matters cannot be costed easily but their worth to the community is undeniable: examples abound from enlightened developments elsewhere in this country (see above) and around the world. However, the **museum and art gallery** are in a very different position. Their future remains unclear until the Cabinet has decided on its support, presumably after the consultant’s report, currently awaited, has been digested. The possibility that the Council’s support will be withdrawn from the museum service, with the exception of the Resource Centre, will have serious consequences on the eventual design and management of the Rankin Centre.

**So What Needs To
Be Done?**

**Money
Finance**

Money: Revenue

The basic idea of a public library, that of offering free borrowing and access to reference works free of charge to all users does not provide any sort of business model. But the offer remains in place as long as it is protected by the Public Libraries Act 1964. quite apart from the legal obligation the Council taxpayers derive all kinds of benefits from a public library, not least its presence in the city or town centre as a natural community hub, for all ages and all walks of life. The value of this is considerable and can ease the need for expenditure elsewhere in the Council's services. It must be a given that the Council and therefore the taxpayer must continue to make a reasonable contribution to running costs, however much the new body attempts to ameliorate them. Further capital costs may be raised by further funding appeals once the success of the Rankin Centre becomes well-known.

Money: Income generation

Charges for non-statutory requirements could be brought in, including the use of computers, fees for access to archives searches, borrowing non statutory items. None of these are desirable but it may be a case of 'needs must'.

Events: a newly laid out building would be able to create spaces for events such as meet the author sessions where a (modest) charge might be applied. Note the revenue generated by events at the neighboring Hay Festival.

Merchandize: Herefordshire's libraries, museums and archives are sitting on an amazing range of items capable of being exploited commercially. A visit to a London museum or gallery is a reminder of just what is possible. The British Library's commercial exportation of its collection and the synergistic links with related merchandize contribute to a major source of income. Herefordshire has so far failed to capitalize on this valuable asset. For people visiting a public space that excites their interest like to be able to walk out with mementos. It is suggested that a separate body be formed as a trading company to exploit this considerable potential.

Retailing: the frontage of the Broad Street building is prime retail space (Zone A). It is quite wrong for this to be used for some administrative purpose. Ideally a tenant should be sought who would sell amongst other forms of merchandize, the county's trading companies products (above)

Rentals: apart from retailing there could be to a café franchise. There are plenty of examples of this happening elsewhere in English libraries, for example, very successfully in the Hampshire Discovery Centres. A report from the now defunct Museums and Libraries Authority demonstrated that the add-on that library users most want is a café. One only has to see the impact in places like the Birmingham or Manchester central libraries, or Worcester's The Hive to realize the potential.

Fees for the delivery of health advice, social care services and job centre charges.

Combined these activities could generate a substantial income!

Money: Expenditure

Once the nature of the building and its workings become clear, then careful thought must be given to the mix of expert staff and the use of volunteers. We must not make the mistake of thinking that a 21st century library can be managed by anyone else but highly qualified experts (see note above on the digital dimension). Savings could be made from derived energy sources. The possibilities of a heat sink and/or Solar panels could be explored. Again The Hive provides an interesting comparison.

The rising costs of books, papers and journals, together with the hidden costs of providing high quality digital material must be taken into account. The need for professional staff whose pay is also rising as the skills sets required in this digital age demand salaries commensurate with these skills.

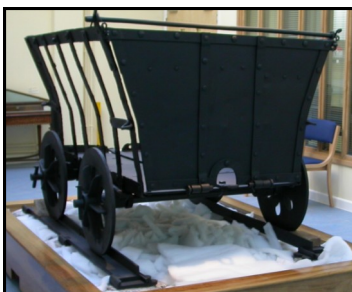
Stock: much could be crowd sourced either by gifts of books or sponsorship schemes. Stock levels can be supplemented by combing the second hand market - many desirable titles are available very cheaply (see the ABE books web site). In addition, substantial collections of valuable books could be willed to the library. There must be a preparedness on the part of library staff with volunteer help to process these books into the library collection.

Staff: apart from the very necessary professional staff, volunteers could fulfill many roles in the library and museum service (they already do a number of back office tasks in some of the county's libraries). The use of volunteers is heavily documented, notably, for example by a detailed report by the Council of Women's institutes. Whilst the positive effect on a library staff should not be underestimated, the reservations are many - not least the tendency of volunteers to fail to turn up when they are most needed. Some of the costs of administering a county library service could be shared by a larger administrative body, combining several library authorities.

Synergies for the Rankin Centre



Winchester Discovery Centre
A museum themed display



From the Hereford Museum
Resource Centre's
extraordinary collection

The Museum and the Library

The museum currently uses about half of the first floor space. It is sadly neglected and was recently described as one of the worst county museums. The bulk of the remarkable collection of artefacts and paintings are held in the Friars Street store and are not normally accessible to the public. Furthermore the Council is considering withdrawing all funding except for the maintenance of the Museum Resource Centre in Friars Street. Even if that funding were to be kept in place there would be no money available for the maintenance of a museum in the Broad Street building, nor staff to for the displays. This proposal addresses these issues with a highly innovative solution. There is a close link between parts of the library collection and the relevant artefacts in the museum. The study of local history is enlivened by a well designed museum display. The same could be said of many aspects of the museum collection: local fine art; the theatrical tradition in the border country; local literature; the impact of the early industrial revolution on the county (the tramways, for instance); the huge importance of the River Wye and its tributaries to the life and the economy of the county.

To take but one example:

Agriculture. The library has a unique collection of books on aspects of agriculture, with, for example, its collections of books on apples and on bee-keeping. The museum contains a number of artefacts and illustrations that would complement the book collection. Set them alongside each other to the benefit of both and introduce an audio visual element, which could be assembled by specialists, such as the local company, Rural Media, with its fine collection of archived film. Digital simulations would also provide a valuable audio visual dimension to the display. The focus could be on local apples and cider, bee-keeping, Hereford cattle, hops and breweries etc. These so-called 'Pods' could also feature artefacts from pre Roman history; costumes of the 18th century; the geology of the county and the region; the emergence of a theatrical legacy; and many other aspects of the rich and varied history of the county.

The Hereford Museum

The Museum Resource Centre in Friar Street houses a remarkable collection of artefacts and pictures that should rightly be seen by the general public. But the inadequacy of the Broad Street premises building at present and the closure over a decade ago of the Churchill Gardens museum, has prevented access to about 99% of the huge and quite remarkable assembly of everything. Paintings by well known local artists, such as Brian Hatton, historic vehicles, first used on the innovative Hereford-Abergavenny tramway, rarely see the light of day. What the Rankin Centre needs to do is offer a flavour of the county's historical legacy. The disposition of this material will depend much on the finalized architectural plans. Account might be taken of the potential for dedicated areas given over to specialized exhibitions whic as in common practice elsewhere, could levy an entrance fee. Cooperation with the Hereford Colleges and eventually the university might also be fruitful, offering value to students and informed visitors alike. An education learning room could also be valuable.

The overall effect, given a creative designer, could be stunning: of great value to school children; of interest to adults; and a valuable tourist attraction. It could also provide an incentive for young people wishing to enter this important part of the county's economy.

Another synergy: libraries can play a valuable role in the education of all ages

Every child and every young person visiting a public library (physically or digitally) is inspired by an exciting environment which makes reading for pleasure irresistible. Access to a range of books and information resources supports growing confidence in literacy and formal and informal learning and offers opportunities for participation and engagement with a range of fun reading and book-based activities.

Despite a recent drop in library borrowings of children's books (which ought to be very worrying if we value the nation's literacy) children's book publishers reporting striking growth figures. Judith Kerr's latest Mog book is a Christmas bestseller. A children's book illustrator has provided the design for a political leader's Christmas card. The UK's children's books should be a source of pride: they remain well and imaginatively written and are probably better illustrated and produced than at any time in the past. Today's generation of readers deserve access to them.

The child's enthusiasm for books and reading is now ably supported by the hugely successful Reading Agency, whose programmes and activities form an essential part of the good children's libraries. Regular events in Herefordshire libraries are evidence of their effectiveness. Where child readers (and their parents for that matter) are let down is by the failure of library facilities, with some honourable exceptions, to keep up with these developments.

A good children's library needs to be brightly coloured, child friendly, accessible, with plenty of clues for young readers to follow their interests,

It must have a fluid arrangement of flexible fixtures so that space can be created for special activities, some of which, for the very young will include young mums with their buggies. Care must be taken to ensure age gradations so that young teens for whom there is now a distinctive publishing category, have space to distance themselves from younger children.

It should be uppermost in the library project members minds that the success of the children's library will do much to ensure that a literate and imaginative generation of children grow up in Herefordshire.

With the recent news that the government is prepared to back the new university in Hereford, we can expect developments to happen quite fast, given the dynamic leadership that body is exhibiting. Clearly the new institution will need a student library for study and research. The top floor of the Rankin Centre could provide that. The challenge will be to create a facility will contribute to the NMITE's ambition to establish Hereford as an international centre of excellence in engineering education. The local inspiration for such a library is the wonderful The Hive building in Worcester cleverly combining the role of the city library and the university students needs. Specialized university libraries are fast developing in this digital age. Almost certainly a model to be followed will be the new university library for engineering in the Nottingham University campus. It is worth noting the new venture of the University of Wolverhampton's setting up a Business Solutions Centre in the Hereford Enterprise Zone which aims to provide expert advice to the county's entrepreneurial spirit. Connection between this, the proposed Herefordshire and Ludlow College link with the University of Worcester's Hereford University Centre and the Rankin Centre will be crucial in creating a real synergy of opportunity.

"It is energising to be part of such combined and determined efforts to support world class businesses and develop world class employees, right here in Herefordshire." Karen Usher Co-leader New University for Hereford

Children and reading



Solihull's brilliant children's library



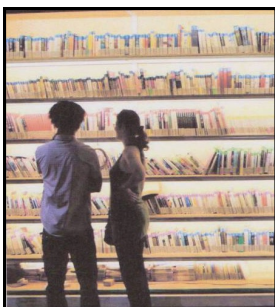
A much expanded children's section, sub divided into areas for early readers, with space for mums to bring their very young to be introduced to the world of books, in a well-stocked and brightly designed space for children's activities as in The Hive (above).

The new university - the New Model in Technology and Engineering



A student area, possibly on the top floor, with direct links to the new Herefordshire University. Maximum use of digital access is made possible by subscriptions to digital sources behind pay walls.

The Importance of 'discoverability' for the modern library and museum.



New book shelves but absolutely no signs, How NOT to do it



Fixture edging in the appropriately named Discovery Centre Winchester



Using an iPad to find book titles.

An Idea Store information point



Finding your way about the digital world is not always easy, especially for older generations. Libraries now often give help and advice, even lessons on usage. Meanwhile a staggering 37% of people in the West Midlands are thought to be 'digitally illiterate'.



The world of print and information in digital form is developing, exponentially. We now suffer from a severe case of information overload.

Take the case of the **printed book**: about 120,000 new titles are published each year in the UK and to add to this formidable list there is more than a similar number of titles published in English elsewhere in the world. This flow of titles is adding to the number of books in print and therefore theoretically available – it is estimated to be in the region of about 1.4 million titles in the UK.

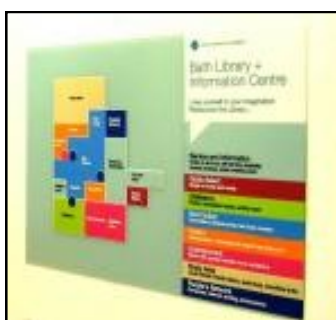
Readers looking for titles by their favourite authors, or wanting to increase their knowledge of a specialist subject will have no reliable and comprehensive way of finding out more from this huge number of possibilities. Many books sought will be out of print.

Faced with this challenge the library user has a limited choice of options:

1. To search the library shelves. This is made more difficult by the arrangement of books following the Dewey decimal systems of classification which was invented in 1876 and can therefore take no account of the emergence of many new subjects that have evolved, especially in recent years. Bookcase headings are too generalized and sometimes missing altogether (noticeable in Herefordshire libraries)
2. Consult the catalogue. Easy if one has the precise reference to hand, but as booksellers well know that over 75% of their customers are unable to furnish this. The present online library catalogue can be unforgiving to any uncertainty in the search data. Online access needs to be much improved and made more user friendly.

It follows that a new system should be set up to make the user's searches and choices easier and better informed. Shelf talkers as employed in some bookshops will help, but we are on the cusp of electronic gizmos, the so-called Internet of Things, to help in the search a sort of touch screen Google of the libraries contents. These developments must be watched closely and then introduced at the first practical moment.

The consequence of these measures will be bound to be an upsurge in library usage.



Bath library's direction finder



Cookham library fixtures— not very elegant but eye-catching

This is Worcester's The Hive area for council customer services— hugely popular!



How libraries must change: the need for a Digital Library with superfast broadband delivery



Stafford library modern digital access.

❑ Could the Rankin Centre be the place to obtain superfast



Manchester City Library. Archive access, recently installed.

Digital Information. Or information overload?



Winchester Discovery Centre



An interactive information board at the Google Garage, Manchester City Library

The concept of a digital library is only slowly emerging. The average library user is still likely to regard the building as a place where one makes use of printed matter. But the digital world is expanding exponentially. However it is not possible to describe what a digital library in the Rankin Centre might be like without further, expert, detailed investigation.

A recent definition of a digital library stated that:

1. It is a field of research and practice with participants from many disciplines and professions, chiefly the computer, information and library sciences; publishing and the cultural heritage sector; and education.
2. Systems and services, often openly available, that (a) support the advancement of knowledge and culture, (b) contain managed collections of digital content (object or links to objects, annotations and metadata) intended to serve the needs of defined communities, (c) often use an architecture that first emerged in the computer and information science/library domain and that typically features a repository, mechanisms supporting search and other services, resource identifiers, and user interfaces (human and machine).

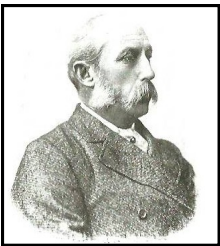
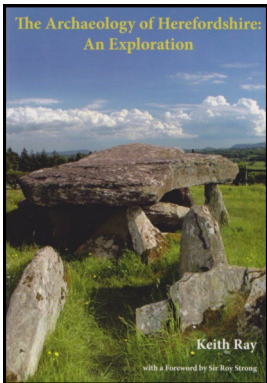
The lesson for the county of Herefordshire is that it will need a massive effort to bring together all the various sources of information, discussion and archives to form one exhaustive digital database, and then to link it with similar emerging databases from the region and elsewhere in the UK. Particular note should be made of the Welsh library authority's plans to set up a unique digital offer for the whole of the Welsh library service. The Welsh government's plans for the library sector, recently published, include a recommendation that a National Digital Public Library for Wales be set up in order to concentrate expertise and make the job of individual libraries much easier and much cheaper, since there will be no duplication of effort. See *Scoping a New Future for Welsh Public Libraries* Museums, Archives and Libraries Division October 2015

In 2014 Google processed an average of 40,000 queries per second or 1.2 trillion a year. It is reckoned that there are about a billion web sites of which about 700 million are live. The exponential explosion of information is overwhelming and means that we are unable to keep up with new technologies. It has been said that "too much data is equated with superficial knowledge and thereby with diminished human ability to take proper decisions."

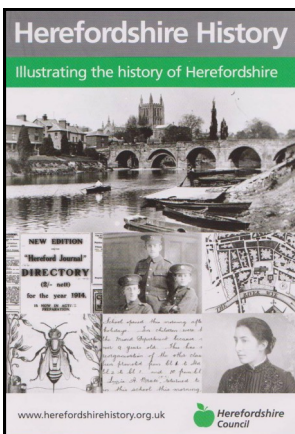
Digital forms can replace printed matter with online versions. But tackling the vast range of material available can be overawing and can quite often leads to misinformation. There is a misconception about the value and accuracy of Wikipedia, which is certainly not of a standard to support serious research, compiled, as it is, by amateurs, sometimes pursuing unfounded prejudices. There is, however, a wealth of information and knowledge available in digital form and in many cases it has replaced previously printed forms. The Oxford University suite of reference books is no longer available in printed form and is accessible only behind a pay wall online. At present many libraries subscribe to the basic offer, but superior versions exist that include access to the *Outline* subject guides that are so invaluable to student essay writers.

Publishers are moving rapidly into the digital market with respected academic publishers setting up special divisions for digital products one recent title is the *Future of the Academic Book*, available as an expensive hardback but using the Open Access protocol, it can be downloaded for free by libraries. The book concludes that future academic publishing will become almost entirely digital. Library innovations are accelerating, such as the Google Garage at Manchester City Library (see Appendix), the creation of so-called Maker Spaces, requiring a 3-D printer, or the Society of Chief Librarians oddly named Code Green which teaches children how to write code. A report commissioned by the SCL, just released recommends a £20m investment in a "unified digital platform" for English libraries.

The uniqueness of Herefordshire



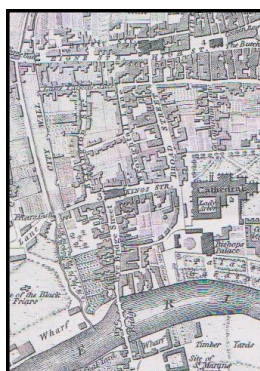
James Rankin whose vision enabled the imaginative Broad Street building to come into being.



The Herefordshire History project with its own web page is a brave start. With the help of volunteers and further funding it will become a first class source of information and discovery.



A Local History resource worthy of the county



"From the moment that we descended one of the county's boundary hills into the lowlands we were conscious that we had entered a world somehow apart." So wrote Sir Roy Strong, the distinguished historian and long a resident of Herefordshire. He was introducing a remarkable book *The Archaeology of Herefordshire: an Exploration*, by Dr Keith Ray, that has just been brought out by the county's leading local history publisher. Beginning with the Ice Age before 4000BC and ending with the impact of the industrial revolution, it is a handsome reminder of the richness of the county's history and, through the books many illustrations, a revelation in the sheer size and variety of the county's museum collection, from Palaeolithic hand axes to an aerial picture of the RAOC Depot (of 1944) photographed for The Woolhope Club. The Woolhope Club room will be the one element of the Rankin Centre that will remain virtually unchanged since it was first installed in the Broad Street building in 1872. It was the prime reason why James Rankin, the Woolhope Club President at the time caused the Museum and Library to be erected, making a major contribution to its building. The Club remains active today and is regarded as one of the most important of the nineteenth century local learned societies. Its yearly *Transactions* continue today to contribute to our understanding of the extraordinary history and culture that is Herefordshire.

The thousands of artefacts currently stored in the Museum Resource Centre deserve to be seen by the public, be they local historians, teachers and their pupils or tourists seeking to find out about this remarkable county. The establishment of the The Rankin Centre will allow much greater access to this collection and it will be, subject to available resources, the place to see themed displays that will complement the rich collection of books, maps and archives that form such a valuable heritage. Dr Ray's book is an apt reminder of the riches to be seen, especially the extraordinary collection of aerial photos, many part of a millennial project, that allow the visitor to see what the county looks like from above. Other photographic archives, currently in store, but slowly being catalogued and digitized will also be available to enhance displays and to be transformed into printed versions in postcard or poster form for the Rankin Centre to be able to sell, in order to generate income.

Opening up and exploiting this treasure trove will have a significant impact on the growing interest in the county of Herefordshire being a place worth visiting and exploring, to the great benefit to local employment and to the county's economy. It will be a reminder of the unique culture that is Herefordshire.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES

Administration

In the first instance a body of interested parties would come together to develop the ideas in this paper and other contributions. This would lead to the setting up of The Rankin Centre project team, which, once formed, would drive the proposal forward. As the project progressed it is likely that specialized roles will emerge and it may well be necessary then to seek expert help in order to be able to deliver the wide range of services to be included in the building including a high-tech, state-of-the-art university library. This could then lead to the establishment of a separate body, possibly some form of charitable trust which would probably benefit from registering itself as a charity, in the expectation that, even in the developmental stage its income is likely to be in excess of the legal minimum of £5000. For it would almost certainly need to raise 'seed-corn' cash in order to fund the initial work in developing the project.

Ownership

At present the building appears to be Council property but there are special considerations about its provenance. It would seem that the Cathedral is in some way involved and this needs to be thoroughly investigated. This raises the delicate issue of a rental charge. If this were to be the case, it should be offset by the economic value of what The Rankin Centre will deliver to the city and to the county. It is also clear that the body that is charged with administering the Rankin Centre should be at arm's length from the local authority, although it may be right and proper that the latter is represented on the governing body by one or more councillors. It is important to acknowledge that fund raising will not work without some form of separation from Council.

Alternative methods of delivering a library & museum service

As a result of the financial pressure on local councils, a number of authorities have allowed the floating off of library and in some cases museum services to alternative organizations.

Thereafter a number of options are open:-

- ☐ Setting up a specific Trust, either for the whole of the Broad Street building's operations or for that part covered by the library and museum elements alone, possibly with an option that the building is managed by the Trust whilst the services remain the responsibility of the Council (subject to budgetary restraints).
- ☐ Setting up a trust for the whole of library, museum and other cultural services of the county.
- ☐ Looking to an existing Trust with experience in the field, e.g. HALO.
- ☐ Create a Community Business, although this would rule out charitable statues.
- ☐ Set up a Public Service Mutual. The Devon County library service is in the midst of doing this.
- ☐ Setting up an an Industrial and Provident Society as a not for profit, charitable organization, as in Suffolk
- ☐ Approach a commercial operator, preferably a non-profit making Social Enterprise, such as Greenwich Leisure & Library Services.
- ☐ Investigate a library and museum consortium with adjacent authorities but this is probably far too ambitious until a simpler solution is found for the immediate future.

NB Natalia Silver assistant Director Community Services, Herefordshire Council services has produced a detailed note on *Options for Cultural Services*, which remains invaluable in assessing different delivery possibilities.

Conclusion

With its central location and special architectural frontage the Rankin Centre can provide a major community resource for information, learning, culture and entertainment for all ages in a transformed and modern interior in a historic setting. It will become a major feature in the cultural life of the city and the county. Such reuse of a valuable heritage site provides an opportunity to achieve major funding from a range of sources.

By introducing a number of unique features, we anticipate that the Rankin Centre, as well as being a national and possibly international venue, will be promoting the entrepreneurial spirit of the city and of Herefordshire as a whole. It will, once again, be a major feature of the city landscape: one to be proud of.

APPENDICES AND NOTES

Manchester Central Library will soon house a Google 'Digital Garage'.

The pop-up, part of a multi-million pound investment, will employ four experts who will provide one-to-one mentoring support six days a week, and a trainer delivering digital master classes. Google is inviting local businesses, start-ups, and anyone interested in a 'digital tune-up' to pop in and learn skills needed to grow their business or career. It comes after research by the American multinational technology company showed that UK SMEs believe digital technology has a vital role to play in the future of their business. The same research also revealed that young people are 'simply not learning enough digital skills', according to Google. The Digital Garage will host bespoke training events for charities, computer science education sessions for local students and teachers, and a range of other events. "This joint initiative will enhance our existing range of services for small businesses across Greater Manchester, strengthening the significant contribution of public libraries to supporting the creation of new jobs and growth within the local economy" said the Council leader. The Digital Garage is the result of a partnership between Google, Manchester Central Library, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Manchester City Council and Manchester inward investment agency MIDAS.. Google's Managing Director for UK & Ireland, said: "It can be easy to think that technology is just for start-ups, but we know it can bring real growth to all businesses. So with fewer than 30 per cent of SMEs having an effective online presence we're working to help jump start the other 70 per cent. "At a time when there is pressure for the UK to boost productivity to contribute to real wage increases, we believe Google can be a real growth engine that helps deliver these gains." The Mayor of Greater Manchester said: "Embracing the opportunities provided by digital technology is vital for Greater Manchester's economic success, so I urge all local businesses to take full advantage of our new Google Digital Garage, which offers free training and advice from industry experts.

Digital Support

A BT and Barclays initiative to bring free Wi-Fi and hands-on digital support to over 50 libraries across England. These centres taking part in the initiative, which will provide online access to broad cross-sections in towns and cities the length and breadth of the country.

Danish Libraries

The largest construction programme in Aarhus, Denmark, for the **European Capital of Culture** in 2017 will be a new library and part of a wider vision for the city and its people. The so-called **Dokk1** will be a flexible and dynamic sanctuary for everyone in search of knowledge, inspiration, and personal development - an open and accessible learning environment supporting democracy and community. Dokk1 provides space for contemplation and knowledge. It is an attractive, intelligent and interactive building, which supports the desire to learn and experience. Citizens, politicians, staff, experts, co-operation partners and networks have contributed to establish the seven core values for Dokk1. The citizen as key factor; Lifelong learning and community; Diversity, co-operation and network; Culture and experiences. Bridging citizens, technology and knowledge flexible and professional organisation; Sustainable icon for Aarhus

Dutch libraries.

There is much to learn from examples of libraries abroad, many of which HLUg has been collecting for some years and by making visits. The Netherlands has, probably, one of the finest library systems in the world, highly organized, intellectually rigorous and with some inspiring architecture. The library voted best is the inspiring Central Library of Amsterdam but there are many examples of excellent libraries in smaller cities and towns, some smaller than Hereford.

The art of the possible: libraries as creative hubs

An Arts Council funded project, The St Helens library service provides access to educational, recreational, cultural and information activities to improve the quality of life for residents. It does this in support of St Helens Council's priorities, in particular to:

- Increase participation in cultural events
- Improve skills and learning of local people, particularly families and young people
- Engage with and meet the needs of local young people
- Support neighbourhood development and community cohesion
- Support events and activities that promote a distinctive borough and town centre
- Promote an environment that supports the health and well-being agenda

Young People at the Library of Birmingham

"There is always something happening at the Library of Birmingham, including events with top authors, creative writing sessions, live performances and much more."

Birmingham City library relates that popular topics for enquiry include Healthy Eating; Giving Up Smoking; Losing weight; Exercising safely; Drug and alcohol issues; Reducing stress; Managing Chronic Illness.

The Hereford Library Users Group has many more examples of best practice in its archives.

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