

Library followers tweet a love-inspired chaotic poem

February 12 2015

A new chaotic poem about love, created by Twitter followers, is on display from tomorrow (Friday 13 February) at The John Rylands Library in central Manchester.

This Is (Not) A Love Poem is the result of a Twitter-led project to create a new chaotic poem inspired by The University of Manchester Library's Special Collections. From 26 January to 6 February, followers were asked to tweet a line of [poetry](#) in response to 12 collection images, keeping within Twitter's 140 character limit.

The project hashtag #jrlpoem15 received over 1.3 million timeline deliveries, reaching over 400,000 accounts. It received support and retweets from poetry associations across the UK, regional poets and writers, other North-West cultural assets and art movements such as Manchester International Festival. Over 200 tweets were considered for the final poem, which was constructed in a public-led poetry workshop held at the Library on Saturday 7 February.

The project is part of a wider initiative to explore how social media can help to open up the Library's collections for new interpretations and the new audiences. The chosen images were created during The University's digitisation programme, which is aimed at increasing accessibility to over one million rare and precious books, maps, manuscripts and visual materials. Featured images included carbonised Greek papyri, William Blake artwork, an illustrated Latin anatomy text and even a cartoon from Punch magazine.

Head of Special Collections at The University of Manchester Library, Rachel Beckett said: "We really want to open up our Special Collections to new media formats and encourage our social media followers to interpret items in a new way. I'm delighted with what they have given us".

Project Manager, Gwen Riley-Jones said: "It's been exciting to work on a project that created something virtual and then made it a physical part of the Library. The poetry workshop was immense fun - some people taking part said this was their first attempt at poetry since school".

This Is (Not) A Love Poem is on display in the main atrium at The John Rylands Library along with a sound recording in the Chamber Gallery. A special poetry corner has also been installed in the Historic Reading Room, where visitors inspired by the poem can leave their love declarations.

The poem is currently being translated into other languages, including Spanish, Italian, Hebrew, Mandarin and Braille, to reflect the broad appeal of The John Rylands Library, Manchester's #1 rated visitor attraction on Trip Advisor.

Provided by University of Manchester

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