



LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY

Citation:

Heeson, SJA (2022) A personal journey to raise positive awareness about Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boater Communities through reading lists and Wakelets. *Aliss Quarterly*, 17 (4). pp. 25-31. ISSN 1747-9258

Link to Leeds Beckett Repository record:

<https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/id/eprint/8753/>

Document Version:

Article (Accepted Version)

The aim of the Leeds Beckett Repository is to provide open access to our research, as required by funder policies and permitted by publishers and copyright law.

The Leeds Beckett repository holds a wide range of publications, each of which has been checked for copyright and the relevant embargo period has been applied by the Research Services team.

We operate on a standard take-down policy. If you are the author or publisher of an output and you would like it removed from the repository, please [contact us](#) and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

Each thesis in the repository has been cleared where necessary by the author for third party copyright. If you would like a thesis to be removed from the repository or believe there is an issue with copyright, please contact us on openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk and we will investigate on a case-by-case basis.

A personal journey to raise positive awareness about Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boater Communities through reading lists and Wakelets.

Samantha Heeson

Librarian, Data Analyst and Inclusion Champion at Leeds Beckett University

Background: Diversifying reading lists

In 2018, a small group of colleagues from diverse backgrounds, including myself, succeeded in resurrecting the local equality and diversity group in the library at Leeds Beckett University (LBU). (J. Bayjoo, A. Campbell, K. Carney, N. Gordon, personal communications, 2018) A limited number of others also joined the group, which first met in September 2018 and intermittently thereafter, at first on campus and then online while staff were working remotely due to the pandemic.

Our original group were keen to address a probable lack of wider representation of the global majority in the library's collection of learning resources and in February 2020, a small project was approved to develop an online toolkit to kickstart diversifying reading lists at the University. This resulted in the development of a series of pages on the library website to support academics with identifying more inclusive materials, which covered: an introduction to the diversifying reading lists toolkit; reading list best practice; diverse research; student recommendations; searching for inclusive resources; Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) publishers and book lists; and an exemplar reading list for BAME resources by subject area; and went live in July 2020. (Leeds Beckett University, Library and Student Services, n.d.a) (Campbell, n.d.)

We were also members of various equality fora at the University and working with the members of the Gender Forum and the Faith, Belief and No Belief Forum, as well as the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager, we produced two more exemplar reading lists: "100 inspiring works by and about women" for International Women's Day on 8th March 2021 and "Believe It or Not! Celebrating and challenging belief (and non-religious belief) systems in contemporary life" in anticipation of Inter Faith Week in November 2021. (Carney & Gordon, n.d.) (Heeson, n.d.a)

Reading List: Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities

I was also inspired to create the reading list: "Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities" for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month (GRTHM) in June 2021, being a member of the Gypsies, Travellers, Roma, Showmen and Boaters into Higher Education network (GTRSBintoHE). (Heeson, n.d.b) (Buckinghamshire New University, n.d.a)

Through the reading list, I aimed to: raise awareness of the communities amongst academics, students and professional services; present an authentic and positive image of the people from the communities and some of their needs; bring together some of the excellent resources for learning and research, plus other information sources, that are available in the UK and further afield; and demonstrate that it is not a difficult exercise, as, technically, it was outside of my normal remit as a data analyst librarian within the library.

Some of my considerations for the reading list were that it needed to: include LBU resources and suit our subject areas; reference other libraries and museums' GTRSB collections; reflect the communities and their achievements, cultures, histories, plus the issues they face; mention other services with relevant information that could be of use to students and colleagues, as well as the

communities and their service providers; and ultimately, showcase community produced information and resources, and community led organisations.

The reading list is divided into sections and sub-sections, which are reflected in its linked table of contents, starting with:

- 'Community Voices' - community produced short films and documentaries; radio broadcasts and podcasts; and articles and archives;
- 'Community History, Awareness Days and Events' - the Porrajmos and the Holocaust; Romani Resistance Day; Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month; Roma Genocide Remembrance Day; and World Fun Fair Month;
- 'Community Organisations' - local, national and international groups led by and for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers; Showmen; Boaters; plus All-Party Parliamentary Groups; and cultural awareness training providers;
- 'Higher Education' - access and participation information including the Office for Students briefing on GRT communities; the GTRSBintoHE Pledge; GTRSB initiatives and research from a range of institutions; and higher education data.

This is followed by LBU subject specific content about the communities:

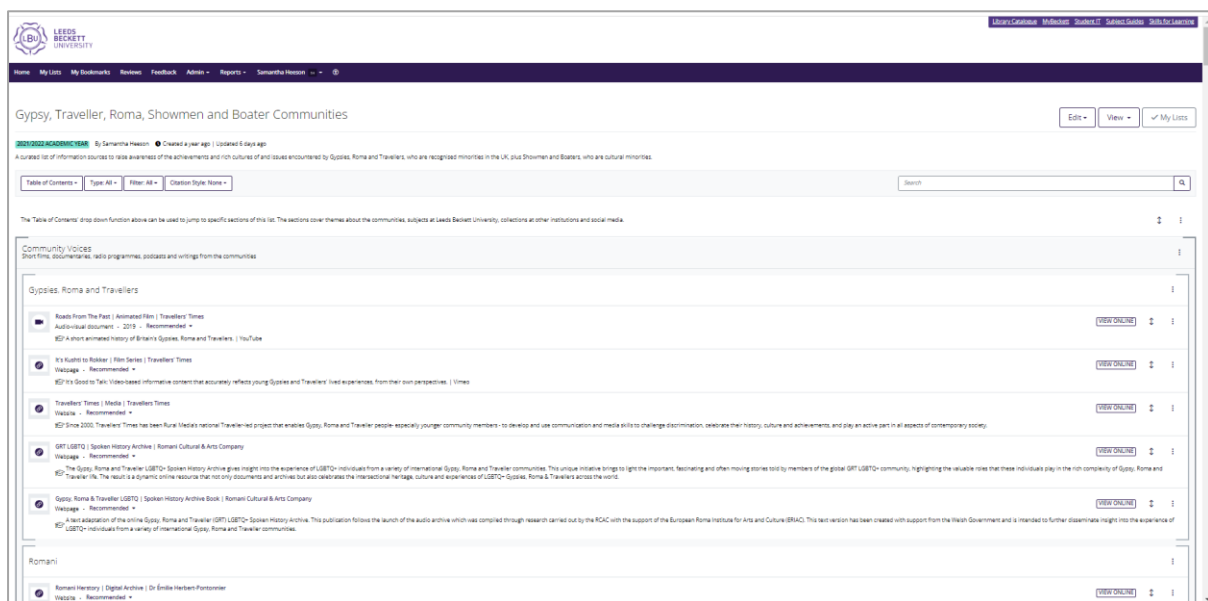
- 'Schools and Education' - inclusion information and teaching resources, for example, good practice guides; research; community based educational advisory organisations;
- 'Children's Literature and Story Telling' - stories for and by children from the communities;
- 'Cultural Studies and Humanities' - the cultures and histories of the communities through archives and showcases; and other information resources;
- 'Health and Social Care' - inclusion information such as guides, information packs and toolkits; and research articles, projects and reports;
- 'Human Geography, Planning and Housing' - information about community accommodation and services including negotiated stopping; site design, allocation and planning provision;
- 'Law and Criminal Justice' - books and research articles on the prejudice in these systems;
- 'Marketing, Public Relations and Journalism' - reports on challenging prejudice in the media;
- 'Social Studies' - information about the communities covering anti-gypsyism; lived experience; identity; inclusion; and activism;
- 'The Arts' - community digital archives; art, architecture and engineering; and performing arts.

The penultimate section of the reading list is for community related archives, collections and exhibitions at other 'Libraries, Museums and Societies' on a local, regional, national and international level.

The final section covers 'Social Media' such as Twitter and Instagram accounts, mostly for community led organisations, many of which are mentioned in the previous sections of the reading list, plus links to related Wakelets, which are detailed below.

Items are added to the reading list through its bookmarking functionality, which pulls metadata from the library discovery system or a web page and is inserted into the relevant section of the reading list. The process is a little awkward and the data often needs editing to make it more meaningful to users. I added a short description for each section and resource to guide users to pertinent information, as little seems to be known about the communities by the wider population. The descriptions of individual items are adapted from the resources themselves. The reading list was created in Talis Aspire's online resource list management platform, which also has functionality to select items by type, such as article, audio-visual, book and website; filter by physical or online resource; or to search for a specific term.

The reading list contains many useful resources. Nevertheless, its nature as a reading list means it is very text heavy and it is a lot of work to maintain, especially when information is evolving regularly. It is currently publicly accessible, as the information is also helpful beyond LBU and has the potential to be used widely. However, it could become private to LBU users if library policy were to change.



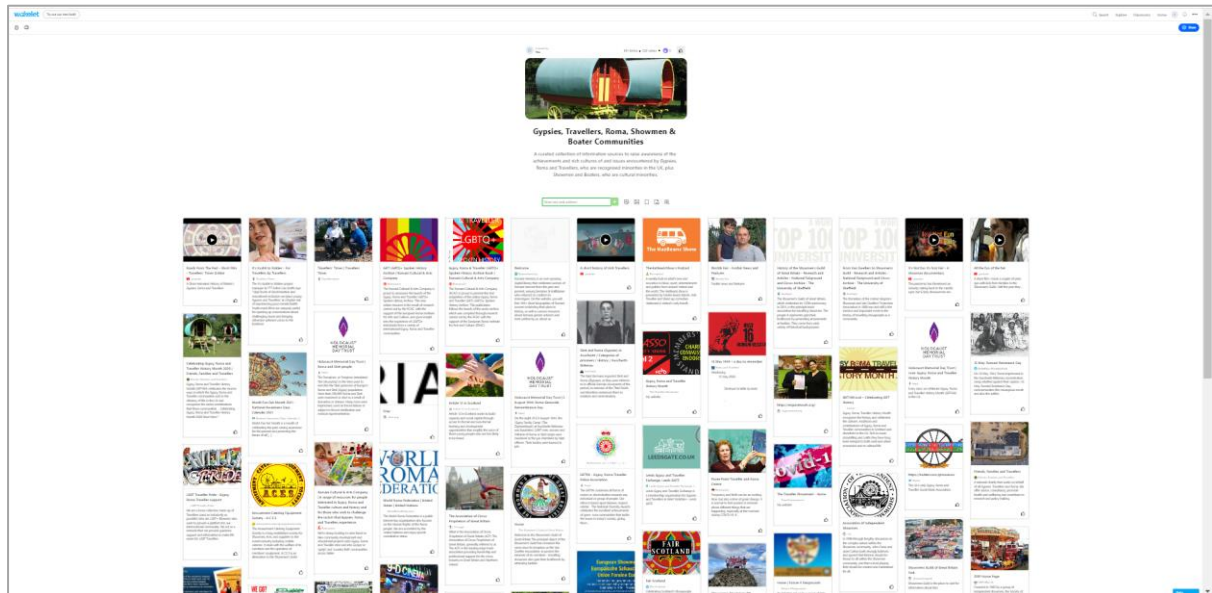
Wakelet: Gypsies, Travellers, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities

A range of social media is used by LBU's library to promote its collections and activities, and highlight related matters, especially around equality, diversity and inclusion. One of those is Wakelet, which is a free online platform for saving, organising and sharing web page links and multimedia content. (Leeds Beckett University, Library and Student Services, n.d.b)

Due to the aforementioned disadvantages of a reading list, I also created a Wakelet, with the aim of ensuring the collection of GTRSB related information remained publicly available, as well as assessing whether it would be easier to maintain and more appealing to a wider range of users, especially as Wakelets are more readily accessible and highly visual. (Heeson, n.d.c)

It was the first time I had used Wakelet, but it was relatively easy to do. It required signing up for an account on the Wakelet website, which did not need much information. For autonomy, I made it a personal account. A new collection was started by choosing a layout and pasting in web links or uploading files through a relatively simple form. A 'mood board' layout was selected, which resulted in slightly random placement and no sections. In most cases, an image and text were pulled through from the content, or were added manually if not. The text and images for a number of items would have benefitted from some tweaking, but there was not time to do that.

The “Gypsies, Travellers, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities” Wakelet has much the same content as the reading list, although not everything lends itself to a Wakelet, for example, resources behind subscription paywalls are only available to LBU users, but it is also possible to directly upload multimedia content, which the reading list system does not accommodate. It is also easier to set up a Wakelet and add content to it than the reading list.



Wakelet: World Fun Fair Month

World Fun Fair Month (WFFM) was celebrated for the first time in September 2021. It was established by Future 4 Fairgrounds, a group of six Showmen ladies, to “celebrate the past, raise awareness for the present and protect the future” of travelling fun fairs. (Future 4 Fairgrounds, n.d.)

As I am of Showmen heritage, i.e. part of my family are fairground people, I wanted to contribute something to the initiative and thought a Wakelet would be a great way to do so. With the blessing of Future 4 Fairgrounds and permission to use some of their artwork, I went on to do so.

The “World Fun Fair Month” Wakelet includes some of the Showmen specific materials from the GTRSB Wakelet, plus a few more that build on that content. (Heeson, n.d.d)

It has a ‘media’ or list layout, which means headings can also be added, enabling the collection to have sections, which cover information about:

- World Fun Fair Month;
- Future 4 Fairgrounds;
- Videos featuring Showmen talking about things that matter to them;
- Books and learning resources, including the children’s book “The Show Must Go On” and its accompanying learning resources which were co-written and illustrated by Showmen and Romani community members; (Pearson, 2021)
- Professional bodies that represent and work with Showmen around the world;
- Health and safety information and organisations;
- News sources;
- Archives and museums, such as The National Fairground and Circus Archive; (University of Sheffield, n.d.)

- The Showmen’s Mental Health Awareness Charity, a community led organisation that promotes good health and wellbeing amongst Showmen; (Showmen’s Mental Health Awareness Charity, n.d.)
- Education information and resources from the GTRSBintoHE network. (Buckinghamshire New University, n.d.b)



The initial entries for the reading list and Wakelets were based on resources of which I was already aware, due to my family background, plus searches of LBU’s collections and research repository using terminology that was familiar to me, as well as materials that came to light through the GTRSBintoHE network and related social media accounts. (Leeds Beckett University, Library and Students Services, n.d.c, n.d.d) (Heeson, n.d.e)

Reception: Positive multi-sector feedback

I shared the reading list and Wakelets with the members of the GTRSBintoHE network on several occasions. Positive feedback was received, as well as suggestions for more content. Many particularly liked the Wakelets, due to the engaging visual nature. (GTRSBintoHE network, personal communications, 2021) Future 4 Fairgrounds were extremely happy with the WFFM Wakelet and have promoted it through their social media accounts and continue to suggest new content. (Future 4 Fairgrounds, personal communications, 2021-2022) I was invited to speak about the list and Wakelets at the GTRSBintoHE network’s GRTHM, WFFM and Pledge conferences in June, September and October 2021. (Heeson, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c) Academics within the network also make use of them and promote them when speaking at conferences and events. (GTRSBintoHE network, personal communications, 2022)

LBU library colleagues were impressed by the level of detail and structure that I had given the reading list and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team requested a blog piece for the University website to promote them and GRTHM. (A. Campbell, K. Carney, N. Gordon, personal communications, 2021-2022) (Heeson, 2021d) It was also selected as Talis Aspire’s ‘reading list of the month’ in June 2022. (E. Dodd, personal communications, March & May, 2022) (Talis Aspire, personal communications, June 30, 2022)

June 2022 was also GRTHM, during which I presented on all three resources, at the request of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Yorkshire and Humberside, as part of

their event “Gypsies, Travellers, Roma, Showmen and Boaters: collections and cultures”. (Heeson, 2022) This led to more suggestions for content from community members who were in attendance, as well as the invitation to write this article for ALISS Quarterly. (Conference attendees, personal communications, June, 2022) (H. Dawson, personal communications, June, 2022)

Conclusion: Not just a personal journey

It would seem that the reading list and Wakelets have achieved my aims, as set out at the beginning, and they have triggered further action within the communities and by our allies. I also hope that through raising awareness amongst people less familiar with the communities that I have changed misperceptions and preconceptions.

On a personal note, the feedback and encouragement I have received has given me more confidence that I can safely share my family background and champion the communities, and that the hard work to make a difference is worth it. Thank you to all of those people who have supported me along the way!

References

- Buckinghamshire New University (n.d.a). *GTRSB into Higher Education Pledge*. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.bucks.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-stand/gtrsb-higher-education-pledge>
- Buckinghamshire New University (n.d.b). *Taking the Pledge: Event Resources*. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.bucks.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-stand/gtrsb-higher-education-pledge/taking-pledge-event-resources>
- Campbell, A. (n.d.). *Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic resources by subject area*. Leeds Beckett University, Library and Student Services. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://rl.talis.com/3/beckett/lists/78900F26-A61D-0EFB-AEBD-7630E7782004.html>
- Carney, K. & Gordon, N. (n.d.). *100 inspiring works by and about women*. Leeds Beckett University, Library and Student Services. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://rl.talis.com/3/beckett/lists/A10A1EF4-2001-A745-306F-DE8789CB6505.html>
- Future 4 Fairgrounds. (n.d.). *Future 4 Fairgrounds*. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.future4fairgrounds.com/about>
- Heeson, S. J. A. (n.d.a). *Believe It or Not! Celebrating and challenging belief (and non-religious belief) systems in contemporary life*. Leeds Beckett University, Library and Student Services. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://rl.talis.com/3/beckett/lists/7443DFBC-749A-900E-910E-AFB679178B50.html>
- Heeson, S. J. A. (n.d.b). *Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities*. Leeds Beckett University, Library and Student Services. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://rl.talis.com/3/beckett/lists/1A577055-A1E9-27F8-9736-7D59AE7E3BC5.html>

- Heeson, S. J. A. (n.d.c). *Gypsies, Travellers, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities*. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://wakelet.com/wake/QTuhWImW5eepTfLSpRMbH>
- Heeson, S. J. A. (n.d.d) *World Fun Fair Month*. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from https://wakelet.com/wake/PeUcA92mhWA_JvaCMKUt0
- Heeson, S. J. A. [@Samantha_Heeson]. (n.d.e). *Inclusivity GRTSB* [Twitter list]. Twitter. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/i/lists/1091302954789937152>
- Heeson, S. J. A. (2021a, June 24). *Collating Inclusive Curricula materials* [Conference presentation]. Changing the World One Step at a Time: Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boaters in the Professions, Online, United Kingdom.
- Heeson, S. J. A. (2021b, September 29). *Learning resources to help schools, colleges and universities create an inclusive curricula and welcoming learning environment* [Conference presentation]. Showmen Getting a Fair Education? Representation and Inclusion in Education from Schools to Universities, Online, United Kingdom.
- Heeson, S. J. A. (2021c, October 20). *Learning Resources for Use in Education Settings (from Universities to Schools)* [Conference presentation]. Taking the GTRSBintoHE Pledge, Online, United Kingdom.
- Heeson, S. J. A. (2021d, June 1). *Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month 2021*. Leeds Beckett University. <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/lbu-together/2021/05/grthm-2021/>
- Heeson, S. J. A. (2022, June 17). *Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boater Reading List and Wakelet Collections*. [Conference presentation]. Gypsies, Travellers, Roma, Showmen and Boaters: collections and cultures, Online, United Kingdom.
- Leeds Beckett University, Library and Student Services. (n.d.a). *Diversifying reading lists toolkit*. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/guides/mybeckett-and-digital-learning-guides/mybeckett/reading-list-diversification/>
- Leeds Beckett University, Library and Student Services. (n.d.b). *Leeds Beckett Library*. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://wakelet.com/@BeckettLibrary>
- Leeds Beckett University, Library and Student Services. (n.d.c). *Search Leeds Beckett University and beyond*. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://leedsbeckett.on.worldcat.org/discovery>
- Leeds Beckett University, Library and Student Services. (n.d.d). *About the Repository*. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/information.html>
- Pearson. (2021, June 18). *The Show Must Go On: The writers representing fairground culture for young readers*. <https://www.pearson.com/uk/educators/schools/news/schools-blog/2021/06/the-show-must-go-on-the-writers-representing-fairground-culture.html>

University of Sheffield. (n.d.). *About the NFCA*. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/nfca/about>

The Showmen's Mental Health Awareness Charity. (n.d.). *The Showmen's Mental Health Awareness*

Charity. Retrieved July 17, 2022, from <https://www.showmensmentalhealth.com/about-our-charity/>