

# Open Collections, New Connections: Fostering Engagement with Digitally Accessible Archives

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The [Archives & Access](#) project (2012-2017) is a large-scale digitisation and outreach initiative developed by Tate and supported by a grant from the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund.

The project made over 52,000 pieces from Tate Archive of British Art digitally accessible, and produced a range of interactive digital resources to foster online discovery and use of the collections.

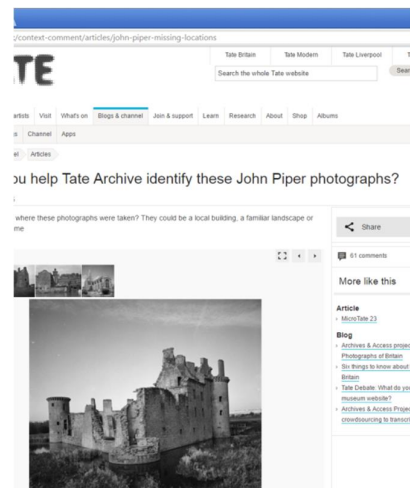


The project therefore recognises the new opportunities digital affordances present for cultural institutions—digital access enables global audiences to find arts, heritage and cultural content at unprecedented scales and speeds. However, the notional 'archive' has long held connotations of specialism. Moreover,

the provision of digital access does not ensure engagement if audiences are unconfident with, or unaware of, an archive's potential. Online publication may provide access, but will not guarantee that collections are accessed.

In cognisance of this, *Archives & Access* aimed to both provide digital access to collections whilst altering perceptions of what archives are, and who they are for.

This presentation will describe the approaches taken by Tate to offer an array of entry points to collections access, drawing on *Archives & Access* outcomes.



Rather than drawing firm conclusions, this presentation will explore emerging questions: what challenges do organisations of varying sizes face when offering digital access to their collections? What mode and scale of participation can be supported? What is the role of inter-institutional collaboration? And how can we best share this learning with the cultural sector?