

Recycling design – the use of the John Lewis textile design archive as a commercial asset

The opening of the John Lewis Partnership's Heritage Centre marked a sea change in the way the textile design archive was used by the business. Originally created in the Stead McAlpin factory near Carlisle the design archive of around 25,000 designs, dating back to the early 19th century became more easily accessible to internal designers and buyers. The increased interest in the collection resulted in the development of new products across a wide range of textile based assortments and the creation of new relationships between the archive and the creative teams across the business.

This paper will identify key drivers for this change, the challenges of utilising orphan works and the way the archive was able to respond to commercial requests for the creation of electronic resources whilst still retaining the integrity and security of historical documents.