

Oxford graduates to fast track for events

A new rail link is helping both town and gown in Oxford and its surrounds graduate to a new level

Bodleian harness AR

An Artificial Reality (AR) project is set to bring new life to Oxford's Bodleian Library.

Oxford is one of 12 of England's historic cities which have collaborated to develop an innovative AR product designed to bring heritage to life. The new AR experience was launched on 31 March to celebrate English Tourism Week. It consists of an app and videos that transport the user back in time to unveil the hidden lives of some of history's most fascinating characters, including at the Bodleian Library.

The premise of the app is to capture significant historic moments in time while providing tourists the opportunity to explore England's most historic cities.

Hayley Beer-Gamage, chief executive at Experience Oxfordshire, expects the AR initiative to attract a younger audience to the city to experience the Bodleian Library, "and Oxford's many other attractions, at first hand".



Oxford has always had a wide geographic catchment area, ranging from the Midlands to the south east. However, rail links to the area have not always matched the demand from event organisers.

A new £320m rail link to London now connects Marylebone to Oxford Parkway and Bicester Village. The first year since the line opened in October 2015 saw 1.5m passengers use it. The link is part of the new East West line to be built between Oxford and Cambridge.

Oxford is home to the oldest University in the English-speaking world and event organisers can tap into the city's academic prestige via Conference Oxford, the official conference and event marketing

office for the University colleges.

The office represents 63 venues, including museums and libraries and offers a free venue search service.

Examples of the world-famous buildings available for event hire include the Bodleian Library, one of the oldest libraries in Europe; the Ashmolean Museum, founded in 1683; the Sheldonian Theatre, a Grade 1 listed venue designed by Sir Christopher Wren; the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, the Pitt Rivers Museum and Christ Church Great Hall (familiar to fans of the *Harry Potter* films).

Facilities for non-residential conferences, dinners and receptions are available throughout the year and residential conferences may be booked during vacations, although »

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