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## **British Library and brightsolid partnership to digitise up to 40 million pages of historic newspapers**

- *Mass digitisation to make millions of newspaper pages available online and in the Library's reading rooms*
- *Innovative deal will help safeguard the future of the world's greatest newspaper archive*

**The British Library's Chief Executive, Dame Lynne Brindley, will today announce a major new partnership between the Library and online publisher brightsolid, owner of online brands including findmypast.co.uk and Friends Reunited. The ten-year agreement will deliver the most significant mass digitisation of newspapers the UK has ever seen: up to 40 million historic pages from the national newspaper collection will be digitised, making large parts of this unparalleled resource available online for the first time.**

Spanning three centuries and including 52,000 local, regional, national and international titles, the British Library holds one of the world's finest collections of newspapers. Each year the Newspaper Library at Colindale is used by 30,000 researchers in subjects ranging from family history and genealogy to sports statistics, politics and industrial history. This vast resource is held mainly in hard copy and microfilm, necessitating a trip to the north London site for people wishing to use the collection.

The partnership between the British Library and brightsolid will enable the digitisation of a minimum of 4 million pages of newspapers over the first two years. Over the course of ten years, the agreement aims to deliver up to 40 million pages as the mass digitisation process becomes progressively more efficient and as in-copyright content is scanned following negotiation with rightsholders.

Delivering the keynote speech at the Westminster eForum this morning (Wednesday 19 May), Dame Lynne Brindley outlined how the partnership will transform access to this vital part of the national memory.

"I am delighted to announce the British Library's partnership with brightsolid to embark upon the most significant programme of newspaper digitisation this country has ever seen," said Dame Lynne. "Historic newspapers are an invaluable resource

for historians, researchers, genealogists, students and many others, bringing past events and people to life with great immediacy and in rich detail. Mass digitisation unlocks the riches of our newspaper collections by making them available online to users across the UK and around the world; by making these pages fully searchable we will transform a research process which previously relied on scrolling through page after page of microfilm or print. brightsolid have an excellent track record of digitising archive materials and making them available to new audiences – I look forward to announcing the web service resulting from this partnership, which will launch and then steadily grow from next year.”

Digitised material will include extensive coverage of local, regional and national press across three and a half centuries. It will focus on specific geographic areas, along with periods such as the census years between 1841 and 1911. Additional categories will be developed looking at key events and themes such as the Crimean War, the Boer War and the suffragette movement. The aim will be to build a 'critical mass' of material for researchers – particularly in the fields of family history and genealogy.

brightsolid, a subsidiary of Dundee-based publisher DC Thomson, was selected following an EU procurement process. brightsolid has previously delivered the highly successful **1911census.co.uk** project in partnership with The National Archives (TNA) and owns the leading family history resources **findmypast.co.uk** and **genesreunited.co.uk**. brightsolid is taking on the commercial and technical risks of the project, with no direct costs to the British Library. The firm will digitise content from the British Library Newspaper Library, which it will then make available online via a paid-for website as well as integrating it into its family history websites.

This resource will be available for free to users on-site at the British Library and copies of all scanned materials will be deposited with the Library to be held in the national collection in perpetuity.

Chris van der Kuyl, Chief Executive of brightsolid, said: “We’re delighted to be working with the British Library on such an exciting project. Digitisation will mean that those people who haven’t previously been able to access the physical resource will now be able to access it from anywhere at any time. In particular it is an important resource for the genealogy community, which we are closely involved with through our brands **findmypast.co.uk** and **genesreunited.co.uk**, helping them to bring to life how their ancestors lived. It will also offer a unique insight into major events and key periods of historical interest.

"We're also closely linked to the publishing community through our parent company, DC Thomson and we very much see this project as a collaboration with the industry. In fact we are already in dialogue with some rightsholders and expect this to continue throughout the project. As a business, our core strength is in building innovative online businesses around people and places, and this project fits perfectly within our expertise. We are looking forward to working with the British Library on this project and developing this hugely important online resource."

Along with out-of-copyright material from the newspaper archive – defined in this context as pre-1900 newspaper material – the partnership will also seek to digitise a range of in-copyright material, with the agreement of the relevant rightsholders. This copyright material will, with the express permission of the publishers, be made available via the online resource – providing fuller coverage for users and a much-needed revenue stream for the rightsholders.

David Fordham, President of the Newspaper Society said: "This initiative is a hugely significant and exciting development which will unlock many of the great newspaper treasures that lie within the millions of pages in the British Library Newspaper archive at Colindale. It represents a particularly exciting opportunity for regional newspapers which have a long and rich heritage and capture changing times in local and regional areas across the centuries. I look forward to watching the project develop and hope that it makes a major contribution to the industry."

The successful appointment of brightsolid as its newspaper digitisation partner will help the British Library to fulfil its strategic goals of long-term preservation of and access to the national newspaper collection. The Library's newspaper strategy aims to secure the future of this unique resource by moving the hard-copy collections from the current building at Colindale to a purpose-built storage facility in Boston Spa, West Yorkshire. Access to the collection will be provided via microfilm and digital copies made available at the Library's main site at St Pancras.

"The success of our 19<sup>th</sup> Century British Library Newspapers website demonstrated the public's huge appetite for digitised historic newspaper content," added Dame Lynne. "Our new partnership with brightsolid will enable us to deliver a huge increase in the amount of digitised material available – transforming access and searchability for users on and off-site and reducing wear-and-tear on our often fragile collection items. It will help the newspaper collection to remain relevant for a new

generation of researchers, more used to accessing research information via their laptop than travelling to a physical location.”

She concluded: “The British Library’s newspaper archive is one of the world’s great newspaper collections. Through this partnership with **brightsolid** we will make millions more pages accessible – and to many more people.”

**For further information, images or interviews please contact Ben Sanderson at the British Library Press Office: [ben.sanderson@bl.uk](mailto:ben.sanderson@bl.uk) +44 (0)1937 546126 or Carolynne Bull-Edwards, Head of PR at brightsolid: [cbull-edwards@brightsolid.com](mailto:cbull-edwards@brightsolid.com) +44 (0)7932 723866 or Katie Hayward at Lansons Communications: [katieh@lansons.com](mailto:katieh@lansons.com) +44(0)20 7294 3631 +44 (0)7809 441803**

#### **Notes for Editors:**

1. **The British Library** is the national library of the United Kingdom. It provides world class information services to the academic, business, research and scientific communities and offers unparalleled access to the world's largest and most comprehensive research collection. The British Library's collections include 150 million items from every era of written human history beginning with Chinese oracle bones dating from 300 BC, right up to the latest e-journals. [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)
2. **The British Library Newspaper Programme** is a strategic programme to secure the long-term future of the national newspaper collection. In October 2009 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport announced £33m funding for a new newspaper storage facility to be built at the Library’s site at Boston Spa, West Yorkshire, and which will be the newspaper collection’s new long-term home. From 2012 access to the collection will be via microfilm and digital copies made available at a dedicated Reading Room at St Pancras. For more information see: [www.bl.uk/news/2009/pressrelease20091016.html](http://www.bl.uk/news/2009/pressrelease20091016.html)
3. **brightsolid** began life in 1995 as Scotland Online and is a leading UK independent provider of IT business services to large public and private sector organisations.

**brightsolid** helps its clients to design and implement high volume, high availability, high performance online products and services. It has done this successfully since the mid 1990s when it became one of the pioneering internet companies of the time. **brightsolid** has two divisions, online publishing and online technology.

**brightsolid**'s online publishing division has significant expertise in the digitisation and management of records in a fast-growing online market. It manages [ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk](http://ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk), a partnership between the General Register Office for Scotland, the National Archives of Scotland and the Court of the Lord Lyon. It also operates the 1901 and 1911 Census sites in partnership with The National Archives.

**brightsolid**'s online technology division is a leading UK independent provider of online IT business services. The company's online technology division specialises in managing clients' information availability and online presence

through hosting, internet access, applications and business continuity products and services.

In 2007, **brightsolid** acquired findmypast.co.uk, an online family history site. Findmypast.co.uk was the first website to put the complete birth, marriage and death indexes for England and Wales online. The company also successfully launched ancestorsonboard.com, the online passenger lists records resource, for The National Archives in January 2006. It included details of over 24 million travellers, including the historic details of the Titanic's maiden voyage. **brightsolid** recently launched the online magazines 'Discover My Past Scotland' and 'Discover My Past England'.

In 2010, **brightsolid** completed the acquisition of friendsreunited.co.uk. Friends Reunited is the original social network with 20.6 million members. It was launched in 2000 to put old school friends back in touch with each other and swiftly became a British media phenomenon. Sister site Genes Reunited was launched in 2003 and is currently the UK's largest family history website with over 9 million members worldwide and 650 million names listed. Together with Friends Reunited Dating, the group attracts three million unique users per month. This acquisition further strengthens **brightsolid's** expertise in the family history market.

Headquartered in Dundee, the company is owned by the publishers D.C. Thomson and has offices in Edinburgh and London.

[www.brightsolid.com](http://www.brightsolid.com)