

Johanna Allen

Design Team Leader & Creative Information Designer



Deputy Head of Global Visual Design
British Council, Department of Digital
and Technology

2020–Today

Lead Visual Designer
British Council, Department of Digital,
Partnerships and Innovation

2014–2020

Senior Visual Designer
British Council, Department of Digital
and E-Commerce

2012–2014

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I'm a visual storyteller, a designer of systems, brand and product identities.
I follow human-centred design principles focusing on empathy, creativity and
continuous improvement.

Work history

My current role supports the British Council's aspiration to adopt a digital-first operating model. I raise awareness and understanding of the value of data-driven design decisions and how user research can inform business transformation.

Digital's 40-person team is responsible for unifying the organisation's inconsistent design identity. We promote best practice, set standards of compliance and conduct expert reviews to benchmark refinements to our products and services.

As part of the investment in Digital my team has been tasked with developing a bespoke component-based design system for a new "headless" content publisher. This innovative React framework will replace our heavily templated Drupal 8 CMS in November '22.

In December '21 we were awarded £XXX,000 to deliver the third site on the new platform (EDD March), in partnership with the UK Government's GREAT campaign.

As Deputy to the Head of User-Experience and Visual Design I am responsible for the planning, prioritisation and sign-off of all design-related sprint activities, which includes the allocation of internal and agency resource.

Previously, I was the design lead for a large portfolio of CMS themes serving the British Council's 140 multi-lingual websites and a diverse range of programme and partnership sites. The latter included the Aardman Animations/BBC 'Learning Time with Timmy' and the annual LGBTQIA+ film festival 'BFI Flare'.

In response to a brand refresh in 2018 I redesigned the visual language of our sites. I managed the updates to our UI library, circulated release notes and communicated, through a series of global webinars, the rationale behind the changes.

As part of the User-Experience Team I helped to gather business requirements, validate them and translate them into user needs. This evidence led to the integration of Campaign Monitor, Salesforce, Shorthand, Bookeo and Stripe Payments, for which I was responsible for the seamlessness of the front-end implementation.

I line-managed a small team of talented designers, together seeking opportunities to share knowledge of emerging technology and design trends.

I was also, on secondment, the Lead Visual Designer on the high-profile off-platform Government pilot for the booking and payment of SELTs - Secure English Language Tests - for UK Visas and Immigration.

I began my career at the British Council under the expert direction of Tom Dew (Thoughtworks). The role involved developing the front-end responsive theme of a Drupal CMS, the largest of its kind in the world, for the British Council globally.

I helped design 30 content-types for our audience in Korea. Following user-testing

these were quickly adopted Asia-wide for their creative impact and sustainability. We then ran concurrent eight-week engagements with Country teams to refine an 80:20 global-to-local offer. The collaboration, which began face-to-face, also included proposals for customer-led design features and functional platform enhancements.

We successfully met an aggressive two-year roll-out plan to launch 90 websites, with 700 global editors, and migrate all our content from Obtree and Wordpress.

I liaised with engineers and technical experts, business analysts, stakeholders and suppliers. We followed agile methodologies, agreeing an MVP and iterating to deliver at scale and pace.

Designer

Other Creative Ltd

2009–2012

At this family-run integrated communications agency my responsibilities included designing websites, social media pages and API's. I produced creative content for digital campaigns and visualised concepts for pitches.

My clients included Expedia, Turner Broadcasting, Network Rail, Smart Technologies, Jones Lang LaSalle, RBS, NatWest and Unilever. As well as charities Refugee Council, Freedom from Torture and the League Against Cruel Sports.

Designer

Hamiltons Architects

2007–2009

In my first design role I worked in the marketing team of a large architecture practice creating advertising for press, events, awards ceremonies and exhibitions.

I collated pre-qualification questionnaires, tenders and planning submissions, standardised design documentation and conducted Adobe training. I also updated the company website, Asset Management System and intranet.

Skills and competencies

Design tools

Figma, Sketch, Adobe Creative Cloud, Zeplin, FigJam, Miro, Mural

Designing compelling, usable and accessible cross-platform digital experiences. Developing design strategies, conducting research, defining patterns, writing design guidelines and acceptance criteria.

Management tools

Jira, Confluence, Notion, Dropbox, Basecamp, Trello, Asana, Slack

Managing large-scale projects, problem solving and effective decision making. Conflict resolution, facilitation and expectation setting. Building trust, establishing credibility and influencing.

Motivating high-performing multi-discipline teams. Quality assuring design solutions, prioritising delivery and outcomes over process. Embedding an open, inclusive and supportive working environment.

Qualifications

Online

2022

Certificate

Advanced Design Thinking

IDEO U

London College of Communication

2003–2006

BA (Hons)

Information Design

University of the Arts London

Camberwell College of Art

2002–2003

Foundation Diploma

Art, Communication and Design

University of the Arts London