

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 suggested 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 £150,000 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 an overdue brand refresh I redesigned the visual language of
our sites. I communicated, through a series of global webinars, the rationale behind
the changes, managed the updates to our UI library and circulated release notes.

As part of the User-Experience Team I helped to gather business requirements, to
validate them and translate them into user-needs. The interpretation of this evidence
led to the integration of third-party tools such as Campaign Monitor, Salesforce,
Shorthand, Bookey and Stripe Payments.

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

I was also, on secondment, the Lead 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 trialled in Korea, which were quickly adopted
across Asia for their sustainability and impact. We ran concurrent eight-week

engagements with Country teams starting face-to-face and then moving the collaboration remote. We refined an 80:20 global-to-local offer and tested other customer-led design features and functional platform enhancements.

We successfully met an aggressive two-year roll-out plan launching 90 websites, with 700 global editors, to migrate all our content from Obtrees 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, stakeholder management, 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 (ongoing)

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