

# 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 set standards of compliance, promote best practice and conduct  
expert reviews to benchmark improvements 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, Booqo 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 for a pilot in Korea, which was quickly adopted  
across Asia for its impact and sustainability. We ran concurrent eight-week

engagements with Country teams starting face-to-face and then moving our 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 MVPs 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

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