

Johanna Allen

Design Team Leader



Deputy Head of Visual Design
British Council

2020–Today

Lead Visual Designer
British Council

2014–2020

Introduction

Hi, I'm Jo – a designer of digital experiences, systems, brand and product identities. I bring people together to form high-performing teams. We follow human-centred design principles focusing on empathy, creativity and continuous improvement.

Experience

As Deputy Head of Visual Design I ensure the quality and timely delivery of a range of design services. I manage a multi-disciplinary team allocating resource to the highest impact opportunities. I work with stakeholders and suppliers to align projects with strategic business priorities.

My role supports the organisation'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 digital transformation.

My responsibilities include overseeing the unification of the organisation's inconsistent design identity. I set standards of compliance and promote best practice in accessible interaction design.

I have a thorough understanding of our products, audiences and technology. I share my knowledge through the maintenance of digital playbooks and pattern libraries. I contribute to steering groups and a Community of Practise.

I create an open and inclusive working environment for my team. I motivate, empower and endorse the conditions in which my team can thrive. I am an active member in our IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility) media club.

I am also embedded in an agile delivery team. We are responsible for developing the organisation's first identity service. Our aim is to converge siloed data through SSO (single sign-on) and profile management. We're working toward an aggressive target to integrate the full portfolio in 18–24 months.

Before which I led the design of a component library for a new headless content publisher. This React-based framework should replace our Bootstrap + Drupal 8 CMS in early 2025. I designed the third site in partnership with UK Government's GREAT Campaign.

As Lead Visual Designer I line-managed a small team of talented individuals. I sought opportunities for us to become design specialists and expand our remit. Together we broadened our knowledge of emerging technology and design trends.

I was the design lead for a large portfolio of themes serving 140 multi-lingual websites. And, a diverse range of programme and partnership sites. These included Aardman's Learning Time with Timmy and the BFI's LGBTQIA+ film festival Flare.

I gathered business requirements, validated them and translated them into user needs. I integrated features such as Campaign Monitor, Salesforce, Shorthand, Bookeo and Stripe Payments. Alongside other user-led design and performance enhancements.

Following a brand refresh in 2018, I redesigned the visual language of our websites. I managed the development backlog and release schedule. And, communicated the rationale for the design updates through a series of global webinars.

I also led the design of UK Government's pilot SELTs (Secure English Language Test) registration and payment system.

Visual Designer
British Council

2012–2014

As part of the Visual Design team I helped deliver the responsive theme of a new Drupal CMS. I supported with designing 30 content-types for English learners in Korea. Which, following extensive user-testing, were adopted Asia-wide.

We met a two-year roll-out plan to launch 90 websites in more than 40 languages. And, migrated 30,000 pages – with the support of 700 editors – from Obtree and Wordpress onto Drupal.

We ran eight-week engagements with Country teams to refine their global-to-local product offer. I worked alongside business analysts, stakeholders, engineers and content creators. We followed an agile methodology, agreeing an MVP and iterating to deliver at scale and pace.

Designer
Other Creative Ltd

2009–2012

My responsibilities included designing websites, apps and social media pages. 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. And, charities Refugee Council, Freedom from Torture and the League Against Cruel Sports.

Designer
Hamiltons Architects

2007–2009

I created advertising for press, events, awards ceremonies and exhibitions. And, collated pre-qualification questionnaires, tenders and planning submissions. I standardised design documentation and conducted Adobe training. I updated the company website, Asset Management System and intranet.

Skills

Design tools
Figma, FigJam and/or Miro.

Designing compelling, usable and inclusive cross-platform digital experiences. Developing design strategies, conducting design reviews, writing documentation – design specifications and assessment criteria.

Project management tools
Atlassian, Notion and Slack.

Managing sustainable projects, problem solving and effective decision making. Building trust, establishing credibility and influencing through creative facilitation.

Qualifications

IDEO U
2022

Certificate
Advanced Design Thinking

UAL, London College of Communication
2003–2006

BA (Hons)
Information Design

UAL, Camberwell College of Art
2002–2003

Foundation Diploma
Art, Communication and Design

I am a trained Mental Health First-Aider with MHFA England. And, I am studying for my British Sign Language Level 1 qualification with Signature.