

Celebrating
100
years

Annual Review

2024 – 25



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Celebrating our success and looking to the future



In these uncertain times, the role of open, democratic spaces such as libraries is ever more important.”

Welcome to the final annual review of our progress on our ‘Reaching People’ strategy. ‘Reaching People’ takes us up to September 2025, which also happens to be the mid-point of our special programme of events and initiatives in celebration of our centenary. To say we’ve been busy is an understatement!

We’ve seen record numbers of people visiting the Library on George IV Bridge in Edinburgh for exhibitions and events – many of which are increasingly sold out. Our major exhibition celebrated Scotland’s relationship with its European counterparts during the Renaissance period, allowing us to lean into the lush and colourful design of the times. Visitors were simultaneously intrigued by our exhibits relating to early images of Italy and Robert Louis Stevenson’s time in the Pacific.

Author events have been particularly popular. Damian Barr treated us to a preview talk ahead of the National Theatre of Scotland’s (NTS) production of his memoir ‘Maggie & Me’ touring the country. Later in the year we partnered with NTS once again during Carers Week, when journalist Paul English interviewed Juano Diaz about his memoir ‘Slum Boy’.

I had the great pleasure of speaking to renowned author Denise Mina about ‘Rizzio’, her novel about the murder of Mary, Queen of Scots’ private secretary, and Val McDermid about ‘Queen Macbeth’ – both novels from the Darkland Tales series. I was also delighted to interview Margaret McDonald on her home turf in Glasgow, at Kelvin Hall, about her celebrated debut ‘Glasgow Boys’, which made her the youngest ever winner of the Carnegie Award.

Sticking with writers, we were thrilled to acquire former Makar Jackie Kay’s archive this year. It’s not just her literary archive, it’s her personal archive, making this a rich resource for researchers and fans of Kay’s work. You’ll find other intriguing highlights of acquisitions inside, including works related to Burns and Byron, but also more contemporary names such as Iain M Banks.

We are the home of Scotland’s writers, from the dawn of manuscripts to the present day. Many of them tell us they wouldn’t be where they are today without libraries. Two such authors, Val McDermid and Damian Barr,

helped us kick off 2025 to much fanfare as our Centenary Champions. They are helping us to spread the word about our centenary and what this means for the people who live in Scotland. They are also helping us to raise awareness of the role of libraries in the heart of communities across Scotland.

Many of you will know that national libraries are like icebergs; only part of the operation is visible at first. Below the surface there are millions more collections, people conserving and protecting the collections, building exhibitions, paying our bills, updating webpages, cataloguing hitherto ‘hidden’ collections, carrying out scholarly research, digitising material, or trawling through the hundreds of kilometres of shelving to bring your orders to our reading rooms.

We have big dreams to make your national library a place of inspiration fit for the 21st century and part of this means opening up some of the work below sea level for people to engage in. This will be a major focus of our forthcoming strategy for 2025–2030, ‘The Next Chapter’.

While drafting ‘The Next Chapter’, we’ve been reviewing our progress on ‘Reaching People’. I’m sure many of you will agree that since we launched our last strategy in 2020, the world has undergone a vast amount of change and the pace of that change is ever accelerating. It’s impacting us as individuals, as households, as communities. In these uncertain times, we find that the role of open, democratic spaces such as libraries – where knowledge, information can be shared and enjoyed – is ever more important.

And you – that is, donors and supporters – are helping us to fulfil this need. We could not have done it without you.

With your continued support, we will continue to serve Scotland through collecting, protecting and sharing its stories. 📖

Amina Shah
National Librarian and Chief Executive

Safeguarding Collections

Acquisitions



Photo by Neil Hanna

Jackie Kay archive

We were thrilled when award-winning writer and former Makar Jackie Kay chose us to be the home for her literary and personal archive.

She visited the Special Collections Reading Room at George IV Bridge in September 2024 for a media event to celebrate and promote the acquisition, and discussed the contents of the archive with National Librarian Amina Shah.

Items shared with us include Kay's press cuttings, letters, photographs and notebooks.

The collection offers unique insight into Kay's life and work, which are often inseparable, and is of significant research value to academics, students, biographers, historians and all fans of her work.

At the heart of Kay's archive is her family – son Matthew, a documentary filmmaker, and her late parents, the political organisers Helen and John Kay.

Kay told our 'Discover' magazine: "[My parents] were such extraordinary people. My archive being here in the National Library is as much an archive of them, of who they were and what was important to them."

Her correspondence includes with



New York poet and equal rights activist Audre Lorde (1934–1992), while her tapes include a recording of an interview with American poet and civil rights activist Maya Angelou (1928–2014).

"All these people are part of me," Kay, who was raised in Glasgow, told us. "The books you read, the music you listen to, the landscapes you love, it all becomes part of you."

"I'm really interested in the melting pot of ourselves – without the literature we love and people we've met, we'd be entirely different people."

We are grateful to the Soutar Trust and Friends of the National Libraries for their generous support of the acquisition of Jackie Kay's archive.

An archive cataloguing role was funded by donors to the 2023 Writer's Archives Annual Appeal.

Beth Junor archive

Poet and political activist Beth Junor kindly donated her archive, which includes mementos and ephemera from her time living at the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp in the 1980s and '90s.

The Lanark-born writer has been involved with a number of social justice organisations, reflected in the 23 boxes of material now being housed and made public through the Library.

Junor lived at the peace camp for three-and-a-half years, telling our

'Discover' magazine that it was "the most marvellous education".

Her archive includes diaries, newsletters, photographs, legal case papers, letters and sound recordings from her time there. The material was created by Junor and her fellow protesters as part of their daily activism.

She said: "I hope [the archive] will inspire women today, in whatever sphere they're working and living, to really have the courage to say 'no, that's enough'."

Selected items from the archive were



Junor (centre) with campmates at Greenham Common

Drawings by Jessie Marion King for 'The Enchanted Capital of Scotland', 1945



This is an important addition to our archive collections relating to significant Scottish women artists. This collection of drawings is from the last book illustration project by Jessie Marion King (1875–1949).

'The Enchanted Capital of Scotland' describes the adventures of two siblings and their cousins in a dreamlike version of Edinburgh, in which they meet Mary, Queen of Scots, J. M. Barrie and Robert Louis Stevenson while on a quest to save the city from an invasion by a swarm of bees.

The book was sponsored by the publisher Noel Fyfe in a bid to increase tourism to Scotland after the Second World War but, perhaps too reminiscent of the conflict itself, it was not a commercial success and King's

designs remained in the Fyfe family's collection.

The collection includes 45 original pen-and-ink drawings by King showing Edinburgh from a child's perspective. Her preliminary drawings reveal how carefully she planned her compositions and the interweaving of text and image throughout the book. The drawings feature many elements of her more famous earlier work, filling the page with flowers and fairy-tale creatures as well as detailed studies of Edinburgh's architecture and cityscapes. For the title page, King included a drawing of herself as a witch on a broomstick, carrying her artist's palette and paintbrushes in place of a wand.

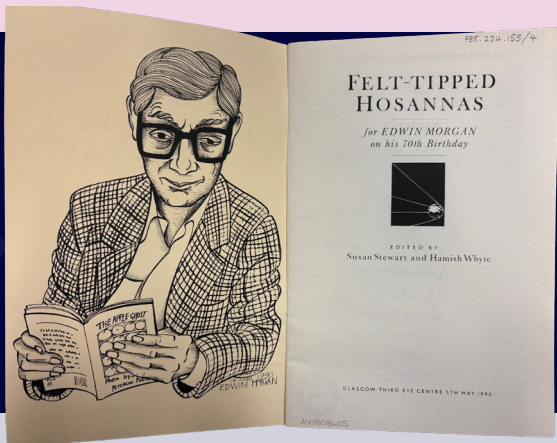
This acquisition was made possible through the generous support of the Magnus & Janet Soutar Trust.

Sketchbook of Mary Newbery Sturrock

Mary Newbery Sturrock (1892–1985) was a painter, ceramicist and embroiderer who was the daughter of the 'Glasgow Girl' designer Jessie Newbery and Fra Newbery, the director of the Glasgow School of Art.

Mary exhibited regularly with the 'Edinburgh Group' of artists from the 1910s to the 1950s. Other members included Cecile Walton, Eric Robertson, Sir William Oliphant Hutchison and David Macbeth Sutherland, who are already represented strongly in our collections.

This purchase was an opportunity to address a gap in the archives relating to Scottish women artists of this period.



'Felt-Tipped Hosannas for Edwin Morgan on his 70th birthday', 1990

This 70th birthday tribute to former Makar Edwin Morgan (1920–2010) features celebratory poems by Liz Lochhead, Iain Crichton Smith and Norman MacCaig, among others, as well as a poem by Morgan called 'Seven Decades'. The title page (pictured) is by Alasdair Gray and the pamphlet is also signed by many of the contributors.

on display until September 2025 in our permanent exhibition, 'Treasures of the National Library of Scotland'.

Junor's archive will be among the collections items used for research by one of our new PhD students, Hannah Grout, for her work 'Archiving Anti-Nuclear Scotland: Feminist Archival Imaginaries and Women's Peace Activism'.

1. Assorted items related to Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, from the archive of Beth Junor
2. Beth Junor attending an exhibition opening at her gallery, the Junor Gallery. Photo by Caroline Trotter

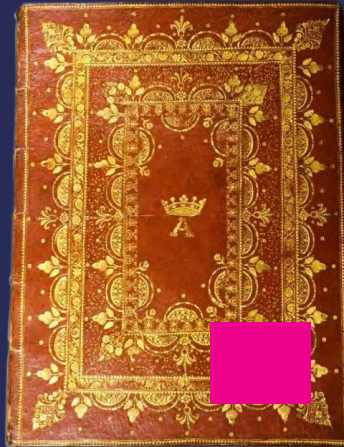


'Disputatio juridica, ad legem Corneliam de falsis, et ad Senatusconsultum Libonianum', Gilbert Burnet, 1703

This thesis for admission to the Faculty of Advocates by Gilbert Burnet (c. 1643–1741) is contained within an exceptional example of early 18th century, gilt-tooled Scottish binding.

The book was dedicated and presented to William Johnstone, first Marquess of Annandale (1664–1721) – a significant figure in pre-Union Scotland – and a crowned initial 'A' sits in the centre of the cover. The purchase was funded by the

Higher-res pic needed



Elizabeth Soutar Charitable Trust and the Library's Acquisitions Circle, which launched in 2024. Learn more about the Circle on page 20.



Signal book for Bell Rock Lighthouse

This beautifully illustrated book is believed to have been the copy for the Regent Tender, one of the ships that served the east coast lighthouse.

Bell Rock is one of the seven wonders of the industrial world and is the world's oldest working sea-washed lighthouse.

Its lanterns were lit for the first time on 1 February 1811 after four years of construction work. Bell Rock's designer, Glasgow-born engineer Robert Stevenson (1772–1850), and his dynasty built most of Scotland's lighthouses for more than 150 years. This signal book joins other documentary heritage items in our collections that relate to Stevenson's engineering skill and legacy.

This acquisition was made possible thanks to the Soutar Trust and the Friends of the National Libraries.



'Cottar's Saturday Night and Other Poems', Robert Burns, 1907

This miniature edition of Burns's poetry measures only 35x54mm, with 357 tiny pages and silk binding in Victoria tartan. The book was one of those in Queen Mary's doll's house.

The title was published in 1907 by Glasgow firm David Bryce and Co – one of the most significant publishers of miniature books. The company was celebrated for the clarity of its texts when looked at using a magnifying glass.

This book by Burns (1759–1796) fills the most significant gap in our collections of the firm's publications. We also hold miniature copies by Bryce of the New Testament, complete Bible and the Koran.

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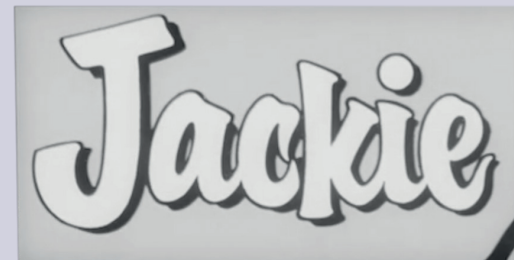


DC Thomson vintage TV advertising

A collection of 99 films for comics such as 'Dandy', 'Bunty' and 'Jackie' have now been restored, digitised and shared online after being discovered in the basement of a building in Dundee owned by publisher DC Thomson.

The television adverts, which date back to the 1950s and '60s, offer a fascinating record of the social history of the time.

The footage – found in rusted-shut film canisters – was uncovered in 2016. Lacking both the equipment to view the films and proper conditions to store them, DC Thomson approached our Moving Image Archive team.



for go-ahead teen

Manuscript of 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Cantos I and II', Lord Byron, 1812

Byron describes the foreign travels of a world-weary man in this epic poem, which was an overnight success and propelled him to fame.

This was the house of John Murray's first published work by Byron (1788–1824) and marked the beginning of a long-standing relationship, which is well-documented in our John Murray Archive.

The Archive contains more than 10,000 items relating to Byron and his circle, including printer proofs, letters, legal documents and playbills.

We also acquired a composite volume of music related to Byron, containing 54 printed music publications and a handful of music manuscripts. Some of these were inscribed and presented to

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Anne Isabella Milbanke (1792–1860), who married Byron (1788–1824) in 1815.

They separated after less than a year.

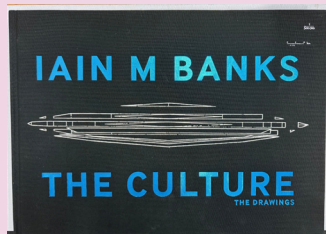
The volume includes the Tyrolean song by Thomas Moore, Byron's friend and literary executor, plus Scottish music not previously held in our collections.

'Adelaide de Narbonne, with memoirs of Charlotte de Cordet', Helen Craik, 1800

Helen Craik (c. 1751–1825), a correspondent of Robert Burns, wrote five novels, which were all published anonymously. She was also a poet and inscribed a dedicatory poem at the beginning of the poetry volume of Burns's Glenriddell Manuscripts – our most significant holding of the Bard's manuscripts.

'Adelaide de Narbonne' is one of Craik's most innovative works and an early example of the historical novel. She allies her fictional heroine, Cordet, with the feminism of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Robinson and Helen Maria Williams, the foremost chronicler of the French Revolution.

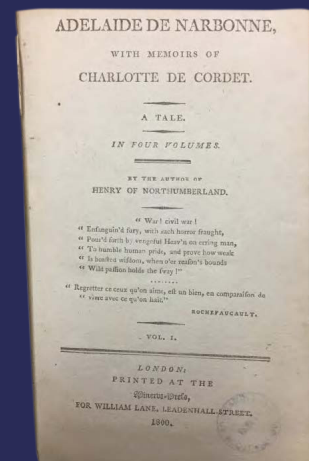
Craik also drew on contemporary Gothic romances to fashion a historical Gothic that addressed the destructive consequences of women's lack of political and economic rights in France.



'The Culture', Iain M. Banks

This deluxe boxed edition reproduces notebooks kept by Dunfermline-born author Iain Banks (1954–2013) in the 1970s and '80s. They depict in incredible detail the ships, habitats, geography, weapons and language of Banks's 'Culture' series of science-fiction novels, providing insight into his creative process.

Banks published his 13 science-fiction novels as Iain M. Banks, while his literary novels – such as 'The Wasp Factory' and 'The Crow Road' – were published under Iain Banks, with the initial helping readers to tell his sci-fi from his mainstream work.



This led to a successful collaboration that has pieced together the history of these films, which showcase both technical and advertising innovations.

The films are an important addition to both our collections of adverts from the early days of commercial television and relating to comics and magazines for girls and women.

The adverts can be viewed at the Moving Image Archive at Glasgow's Kelvin Hall or online at movingimage.nls.uk



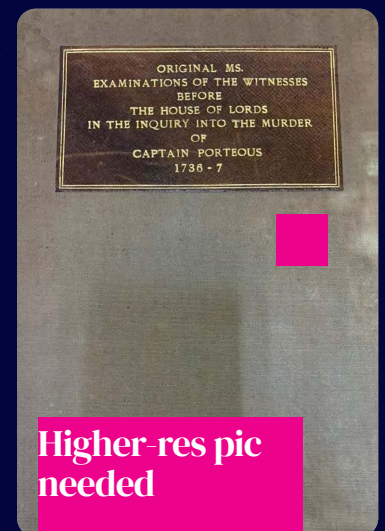
Witness examinations for the enquiry into the murder of Captain Porteous

The Porteous riot was one of 18th-century Edinburgh's most infamous episodes and the backdrop for Sir Walter Scott's novel, 'The Heart of Midlothian'.

Following the execution of smugglers in 1736, Captain John Porteous of the Edinburgh Guard tried to quell crowd trouble but this resulted in several deaths.

Enraged and fearing he would escape justice, a mob hanged Porteous in the Grassmarket.

The witness statements illustrate the efforts to establish the events that led to the death and greatly complement our collections relating to the Porteous riot.



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Donation of 200 films from media co-op



A collection of 200 films was donated to us by media co-op as part of its 20th birthday celebrations.

The not-for-profit, women-led, workers' cooperative works with the public sector, charities and social enterprises to produce films, animations, podcasts and branding for social justice and climate justice.

We also held a special anniversary screening event for media co-op at Kelvin Hall on 12 June, featuring films that challenged perspectives, amplified marginalised voices and inspired action.



Media co-op's 20th anniversary celebrations
Photos by Robin Mitchell

Conservation

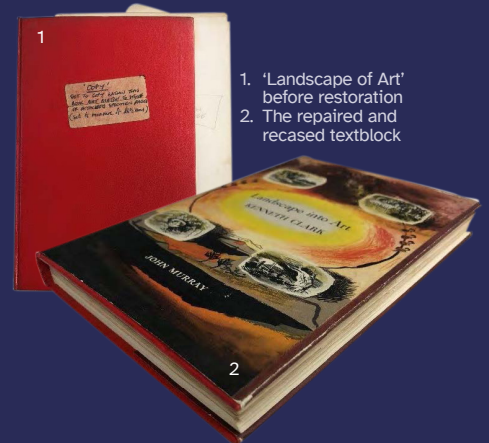
John Murray Archive

Conservation work continued on the John Murray Archive, which boasts fascinating information about the creation of some of the most important and popular works in British literature.

The John Murray publishing house's authors included Jane Austen, Lord Byron, Charles Darwin, James Hogg, David Livingstone and Sir Walter Scott. The archive contains business papers from the 18th to the 20th centuries, including ledgers and correspondence.

Over the past year we have been carrying out repairs to many items, including inaccessible files, plus working to rehouse photographic materials within the collection – part of our photographic survey.

Just one example of the repair work is a restoration of 'Landscape of Art' by Kenneth Clarke. Our conservators reconstructed sections of the textblock using Japanese tissue. They then resewed it and lined the spine, removing the endpapers and lining for strengthening before recasing the textblock.



1. 'Landscape of Art' before restoration
2. The repaired and recased textblock

Adam Collection

The Adam collection donation includes a 19th-century Bible inscribed with family history details, plus more than 40 photographs of members of the Adam family, who ran a wool business in Leith.

Conservation work has included repairs to a hand-coloured daguerreotype of 'Grandmama Adam' (Janet Adam, née Smith, 1791–1857), photographed by Ross & Thomson of Edinburgh circa 1850. A daguerreotype is an early photograph produced on a silver or a silver-covered copper plate.

This daguerreotype showed signs of glass disease, with tiny droplets or weeping on the right-hand side. If left untreated, the droplets could have caused permanent damage to the surface. Conservators separated the component parts of the daguerreotype, allowing the surface glass to be treated. They also dry-cleaned the mount and

case and resealed the daguerreotype, with a custom-made four-flap enclosure created to house the item.

Also treated was an ambrotype in a cardboard case (without front cover/lid) of 'Muriel Mary Adam, taken about 1895'. The photographer or studio is unknown.

An ambrotype is a collodion negative on glass – when viewed with a black backing, it appears as a positive image. Ambrotypes were a more affordable alternative to daguerreotypes. The black backing can be painted on the reverse of the glass, or it can be a piece of black cloth – often velvet.

Our conservators disassembled and cleaned this ambrotype as the glass was especially dirty. They then placed a new piece of black paper at the back before resealing, to enhance the image. Conservators repaired the case using toned Japanese paper and added a custom-made four-flap enclosure.



1. The original Adam ambrotype
2. After cleaning and repairs

Digitisation

Moving Image and Sound

There have been a number of notable additions to the collections, with 1,192 new catalogue records and 921 digitised films by September 2024. These include:



Ando Glaso Collection

The Ando Glaso charity was established in 2016 to empower

and connect Roma communities through culture and heritage, and to encourage greater understanding.



Gillespie Collection

These short videos by BAFTA Young Presenters 2024 winner Kara Gillespie focus on her experiences as someone living with deafness and autism. Kara started sharing her clips on her TikTok channel as Cochlear Kaz (@cochlear_kaz). The teenager also creates content for the BBC's The

Social digital platform.

'3 Weeks Later', 2023

The zombie apocalypse has reached Prestonpans in this short film, funded by EIFF Youth.

'Elephant in the Room: Remembering, Commemorating and Celebrating our Shared Experiences of the COVID-19 Pandemic', 2023

This short documentary looks at the 'Elephant in the Room' art project run in day centres in Renfrewshire, which aimed to commemorate the Covid lockdown period.



Maps

We now have more than 420,000 maps online. Exciting additions over the past year include the following:

Abraham Ortelius, 'Theatrum Orbis Terrarum', 1592

This attractively coloured world atlas offers a comprehensive geography of the late 16th century European world.

'Theatrum' was the world's first regularly produced atlas and first published in 1570. This later edition, with accompanying text in Latin, includes four Addimenta, which expanded the atlas to include 134 separate maps in 164 numbered plates.

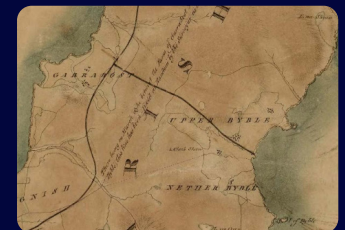


Plan of the Island of Lewis (1817)

The earliest detailed estate map of Lewis was put online in June, showing the rural landscape before the expansion of sheep runs and deer forests during the 19th century.

Lewis was surveyed in 1807-1809 by James Chapman and this map is a coloured, manuscript copy of that survey, drawn by Alexander Gibbs in 1817.

The map can be viewed as part of the 'Stornoway and environs historic maps' web resource.

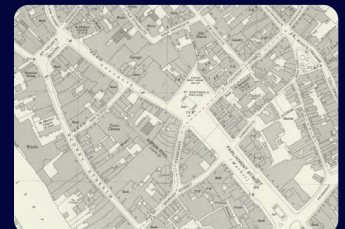


Ordnance Survey maps of England and Wales (1940s-1970s)

The digitalisation of these Ordnance Survey maps of England and Wales represents our largest ever online addition - 137,859 OS National Grid maps at 1:1,250/1:2,500 scales.

These are the most detailed maps published by OS of England and Wales after the Second World War and show features such as house numbers, street names, parkland and trees, and public buildings.

The maps were constantly revised, with successive editions, so incredibly helpful for viewing changes to landscapes over time.



Power nap

Essential maintenance work and upgrades to our infrastructure meant we had to have a 'power down' in early 2025.

We had to close our buildings to the public while we turned off the mains and back-up power from the evening of Friday 4 April until midnight on Sunday 6 April. George IV Bridge and

Causewayside remained closed to the public on Monday 7 April.

The shutdown was timed to minimise disruption to both our operations and Library users.

The exercise went smoothly and successfully and helped us gather vital information to improve our business continuity plans in the future.

Protecting people and collections

We introduced a new fire alarm system at our Lawnmarket building as part of efforts to improve fire safety within our estate.

The aging 'break glass' units have been replaced, with retrofitting work carried out on the fire doors and new detection heads. The overhaul included enhanced testing and fire drills to help protect our staff and visitors.

Improving Access



Website upgrade

July 2024 marked the beginning of a two-year major project for the main website, nls.uk, aimed at boosting user confidence and improving discoverability of our resources. The initiative focuses on a complete redesign, featuring a fresh structure and refined content for a welcoming and user-friendly presence.

The project prioritised user research and stakeholder engagement to guide design and content decisions, incorporating the refreshed Library brand. User testing with the public validated a new structure, labelling and navigation.

We undertook detailed accessibility testing and consultation to ensure our compliance with accessibility guidelines and inclusive design principles. The development phase focused on building priority features of a new cloud-hosted CMS (content management system), ensuring a robust and user-friendly platform.

We've engaged with more than 300 people, identifying key user needs, tasks and behaviours to

lead ongoing design, structure and content. We also audited and analysed 2,000 pages of content to redesign priority content to reach new audiences as well as those who already use our site, increasing engagement with our valuable resources. The new site takes advantage of scalable, flexible and secure environments with a transition to cloud-based hosting.

Our new website, which launched in summer 2025 for our 100th birthday, will drive online user engagement to our valuable digital and physical resources.

People should find the website easier to use thanks to the modern and intuitive design, with a refined navigation and streamlined user journeys through the site. Focusing on user needs, tasks and behaviours has supported our decision-making to ensure we deliver a user-centred digital presence.

Following the site's launch, we will continue to develop functionality, content design and reflect on user feedback through a further year of development.

This year's intake:

Total intake	Newspapers	Other
119,494	17,122	2,620
Print books	eBooks	Maps
46,954	7,331	511
Print serial issues	eJournal issues	
38,261	6,695	



Mackinnon Collection photography now online



Stunning images from the Mackinnon Collection have now been made available online thanks to the efforts of our digitisation team.

The collection contains more than 16,000 images of Scottish life, dating from the 1840s to the mid-20th century.

The photographs were compiled by enthusiast Murray MacKinnon, who established a successful chain of film-processing stores in the 1980s, beginning with his pharmacy in Dyce, near Aberdeen.

The images cover a range of subjects – from family portraits and working life to street scenes, sporting pursuits, transport, landscapes and cityscapes. They also come in a variety of formats, such as prints, postcards and ambrotypes.

The collection also includes work by pioneers of photography, such as William Henry Fox Talbot, David Octavius

Hill and Julia Margaret Cameron.

We acquired the Mackinnon Collection in 2018, in a collaboration with National Galleries of Scotland, and conservation, cataloguing and digitisation work has been continuing ever since.

The first tranche of the images was shared on our website over the past year.

Meanwhile, we carried out extensive treatment on several photograph albums from the Mackinnon Collection in preparation for display at the National Portrait Gallery, as part of the exhibition 'Celebrating 40 Years of Scotland's Photography Collection'. This ran from October 2024 until March of this year.

The bound volumes that went on display all showed deterioration, with split joints, losses, tears and creases.

Images from the Mackinnon Collection can be viewed on our Digital Gallery at digital.nls.uk/gallery

1. James Valentine, 'Fingalls [Fingal's] Cave, Staffa (Looking Out)', 1860s–1870s, albumen print

Hidden Collections milestone

We began our Hidden Collections programme 10 years ago – a special initiative to unearth and catalogue undisclosed collections.

Since then, we have now provided access to more than one million previously inaccessible items.

A huge amount of work, collaboration and dedication from colleagues across the Library contributed to this achievement.

In total, 77,436 items were made accessible as part of the Hidden Collections initiative over the past year.

Thousands pick up a Fast Pass

More than 2,000 people have taken advantage of our Fast Pass access over the past year.

The initiative allows visitors to enjoy study spaces at George IV Bridge for the day, without the need for a Library membership card or the sharing of personal information.

Fast Pass holders can enter the General Reading Room and Discovery Room, view general reference books and use online resources. The initiative is proving hugely popular with visitors from across Scotland, the rest of the UK and abroad.



Exquisite Inglis manuscripts online

Digital copies of each of our Esther Inglis manuscripts have been made freely accessible online as part of our 'Early Manuscripts' resource.

The addition to our Digital Gallery allows people to view these remarkable objects from home and unravel their secrets – and those of the Scottish Renaissance woman who created them.

Inglis (c. 1570–1624) was one of the Scottish Renaissance's most extraordinary artisans and writers. At the



age of just 21 she created a manuscript (now in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California) addressed to Elizabeth I of England that used 40 different styles of handwriting.

Inglis was a calligrapher, artist, embroiderer, poet and mother and her manuscripts tell the story of a genre-defying early modern woman who wrote herself into history.

We shared her manuscripts online to help mark the 400th anniversary of her death. They were also on display in two exhibitions, 'Renaissance:



Scotland and Europe 1480–1630' and 'Treasures of the National Library of Scotland'. You can view the manuscripts in our Digital Gallery at digital.nls.uk/gallery

Supporting Learning, Research and Discovery

Students create our centenary mural

We commissioned students from Edinburgh College to design special murals to help mark our centenary year.

The murals, now on display at George IV Bridge, commemorate our origins while celebrating our evolution into a vibrant, inclusive organisation.

The students were inspired by our building's art deco architecture and the sculptures by Hew Lorimer (1907–1993) which adorn the exterior.

The sculptures, created in 1954–1955, depict seven branches of knowledge, as mirrored on the mural's book spines – medicine, science, history, poetry, law, theology, and music. The fanned design gives a nod to the Library as a repository of books.



Art and Text conference

The relationship between art and the written word in Scotland was the focus for a two-day conference at George IV Bridge in February.

The packed programme for the event – held in partnership with the Scottish Society for Art History – included talks about artists Margaret Stirling Dobson (1882–1965) and Cecile Walton (1891–1956).

Place and Poetry in Premodern Scotland

This web resource is dedicated to how places were presented, imagined and described in the poetry of premodern Scotland. This covers the medieval and early modern periods, from around 1400–1700.

The project, a collaboration with the University of Bristol, is the result of a British Academy Midcareer Fellowship by Sebastiaan Verweij.

A seminar in May at our Causewayside building brought together researchers working in a number of fields to discuss the histories of early maps and texts.



Open Shelves

Open Shelves, an ever-changing display of reference material in the General Reading Room, is dedicated to showcasing under-represented themes.

The space helps widen access to our collections as a source of inspiration and learning.

Over the past year, Open Shelves has highlighted the work of women artists (pictured), Japanese fiction, empowerment through arts and crafts, climate and nature and Gaelic publications.

Top award for our Fitba team

We were honoured to receive a prestigious award for our project celebrating the sporting history and achievement of people of colour in Scotland.

The 'Fitba Research Club: Andrew Watson's Legacies' initiative involved young people from under-represented and minority communities.

Watson (1856–1921) was Scotland's – and the world's – first black international footballer.

We partnered with poet, activist and scholar Malik Al Nasir – an ancestral cousin of Watson – to develop the project, which was based at our Kelvin Hall site in Glasgow.



The innovative venture won the 2024 Project Excellence Award from the Scottish Libraries and Information Council (SLIC).

At the award ceremony in November, SLIC Chair Alan Clarke said the project “showed a clear willingness and intention to be led by the voices it was trying to promote”.

He added: “Delivering far more than its already

Celebrating young filmmakers

We teamed up with the Scottish Youth Film Foundation for the 'Films of Scotland' competition.

Filmmakers up to the age of 26 were invited to create and submit work about modern Scotland, with the winners being added to our Moving Image Archive at Kelvin Hall, Glasgow.

The under-12 victor was 'Am Panter Phàislig' (The Paisley Panther), by pupils

at the town's West Primary School, while the 13–18 winner was 'There's No Place Like Home' by a group from Perth. In the 19–26 category, the prize went to 'Da Lass Dat Made The Bed For Me' by Edinburgh's Juliet Storey.

The initiative was inspired by the 'Films of Scotland' committee which commissioned films showcasing Scotland for the 1938 Empire Exhibition in Glasgow.

Accessible web archives

Dr Andrea Kocsis was named as the National Librarian's Research Fellow in Digital Scholarship for 2024–25.

She will be connecting web archives with users, particularly bridging the digital literacy gap between users and dataset creators. The project will use research conducted on the UK Web Archive's Archive of Tomorrow dataset.

The Archive of Tomorrow – Talking about Health project ran from 2022–2023, exploring and preserving online information and misinformation relating to health, including the Covid pandemic.

Marking Livingstone's legacy

We were delighted to co-host the '#Legacy150: The Museum will not be Decolonised' event, held to mark the 150th anniversary of the funeral of explorer David Livingstone (1813–1873).

Presentations and panel discussions took place at our George IV Bridge building, as well as at the David Livingstone Centre in Blantyre, South Lanarkshire.

Delegates travelled from as far as Botswana, Nigeria, Malawi and Zambia for the conference, held in April 2024.

AI Challenge finalists

We were shortlisted as one of three finalists for the inaugural Futurescot Public Sector AI Challenge in 2024.

Judges were impressed by our proposals for using AI to help audiences discover and connect with Scotland's audio-visual heritage. The other finalists were the Scottish Parliament and the eventual winner, NHS Forth Valley.

Family history fair

This free drop-in event in October 2024 welcomed individuals interested in researching their ancestry and learning more about genealogy. Representatives from Edinburgh Central Library, Edinburgh City Archives, National Museums Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, and the Scottish Genealogy Society joined our experts to inform attendees about the records and services available to assist with their searches. Hundreds of people attended the day, highlighting the popularity of family history resources and services.



Modern Literary Archives symposium

How do we preserve the archives of contemporary writers? This day-long event at George IV Bridge in November explored the challenges that come with collecting work that traverses mediums, formats and functions.

From a conversation with James Kelman to an exploration of digital archives

at the British Library, there was plenty for attendees to enjoy.

Speakers discussed the technical challenges of born-digital archives, the importance of collecting diverse Scottish voices, the complexities of dispersed collections and how people interact with these archives.

ambitious aims, it has directly affected participants' confidence, language skills and attainment levels, not to mention inspiring a new SFA Women's Social Football Coaching Programme tailored to minority communities."

A number of community organisations were also involved, along with the Scottish Football Association, the Scottish Football Museum and Show Racism the Red Card.

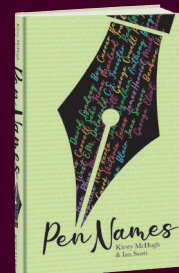
1. Head of Collections Graham Hawley shows off our SLIC Project Excellence Award
2. Andrew Watson with the Scotland team at the 1881 international match against Wales
3. Poet and activist Malik Al Nasir © Bradley Ormesher



'Pen Names' in print

Research by our curators Kirsty McHugh and Ian Scott for our 2022 exhibition 'Pen Names' has resulted in a book of the same name.

'Pen Names' was published in March 2025 and explores the stories of why authors use an alias – from fitting in with social convention to defying it, or even carving



out a new literary identity. Through 40 novelists, including PL Travers (1899–1966) and George Eliot (1891–1880), the book explores the motivations for taking on a pen name and offers insight into authors, publishers and readers over the past 200 years.

Engaging Audiences

1

Watch

our special centenary short film on our YouTube channel at youtube.com/@NLofScotland/videos



1. Centenary Champion Val McDermid kicks off celebrations
2. Centenary Champions Damian Barr and Val McDermid with National Librarian Amina Shah (centre)
3. National Librarian Amina Shah helps launch our 'Love Libraries' campaign in Dundee. All photos by Neil Hanna

2



3



Celebrating our centenary

Celebrations for our 100th birthday kicked off in style in early 2025, and we invited people the length and breadth of Scotland and beyond to help us mark this milestone occasion.

Our landmark series of events and programmes was unveiled in January. This included:

- Authors Val McDermid and Damian Barr being named as our Centenary Champions.
- Our major centenary exhibition, 'Dear Library', which celebrates libraries, books and reading.
- The nationwide 'Love Libraries' campaign, highlighting the importance of libraries and librarians and encouraging people across Scotland to share their love for their local library.
- Our loan of the last letter by Mary, Queen of Scots to Perth Museum, as part of our 'Outwith' national programme. Other items will also go loan across the country, including to Aberdeen and Shetland.
- Tours and talks throughout the year.

Celebrations officially kicked off at a curtain-raiser event on 28 March at our main building on George IV Bridge, with Damian and Val in conversation about their love for libraries with National Librarian Amina Shah.

Unveiling our centenary programme in January, Amina said: "We increased our efforts to reach more and new people with the collections in recent years with great success, and our intention is to accelerate this during the year of our 100th birthday by working in partnership with Scotland's network of amazing libraries. It is our ambition that the impact our centenary programme will have on communities throughout Scotland will continue far beyond 2025."

Val told guests, including the media, that "libraries open windows that let us all fly", while Damian described how his local library "saved my life – it gave me a warm, safe place to be and the books were my passports to other worlds".

Installations and displays were also installed at George IV Bridge, including art deco-inspired murals and an audio trail.

Our permanent exhibition, 'Treasures of the National Library of Scotland', received a new display about our history along with two nationally significant items given to us in the 1920s – the Glenriddell Manuscripts, one of the greatest collections of Robert Burns' handwritten work, and the 'Order for the Massacre of Glencoe' (1692).

Our 'Love Libraries' campaign – in partnership with groups including the Scottish Libraries and Information Council and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland – launched on Valentine's Day.

We created a toolkit for libraries and other supporters across the country, containing posters and advice on how to engage their communities. We also shared a series of case studies highlighting the positive contribution of libraries and librarians. You can read our 'Love Libraries' case studies at citips.org.uk/advocacy-campaigns/love-libraries-case-studies/

Our centenary celebrations will continue throughout 2025 and into 2026 with the continuation of the 'Outwith' programme.

Visitors enthralled by events at Kelvin Hall

The team at Kelvin Hall has been smashing it in the events area this past year, putting our audience development plan into action, and attracting new audiences to the Library. From poetry and plants to films, folklore and family fun, we have held events to suit every age and interest.

We celebrated International Women's Day in March by showing the documentary 'Since Yesterday: The Untold Story of Scotland's Girl Bands', featuring trailblazing pop stars, punks and pioneers.

Free family workshops and activities were also held in March, all themed around Glasgow's 850th birthday.

A special programme of events to celebrate this milestone birthday included our 'Glasgow: City of Poets' event in January, celebrating the past, present and future of poetry in the city. The event – held in the lead up to Burns night – reflected on the Bard's legacy and featured footage and audio from our Moving Image and Sound collections. 'City of Poets' was in partnership with St Mungo's Mirrorball.

Also in January, renowned folklorist and folk singer Margaret Bennett enchanted visitors by sharing Scotland's rich tradition of plants, their uses, lore and songs, interspersed with footage from our Moving Image Archive.

That same month, we presented an afternoon of poetry, prose and conversation with migrant writers based in Scotland. The event was with 'the other side of hope', which is the UK's first literary magazine edited by migrants.

We braved the cold in December to present 'Winter tales: films for the season', a specially curated selection of frost- and festive-themed silent films from our Moving Image Archive. These were accompanied by live music plus poetry and prose by our Scots Scriever, Susi Briggs.

We got crafty in November for our 'Book Week Crafternoon', with visitors making bookmarks and paper book buddies.

Things got spooky and gloriously Gothic for Halloween, with a free screening of 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' (2022), starring Scottish 'Bridgerton' actor Lorn Macdonald. This version of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale was produced by the National Theatre of Scotland and filmed largely in Leith, Edinburgh. The screening was followed by a Q&A with creatives involved in the film.

We also hosted a spooktacular day of crafting for Halloween. Visitors made masks and decorations and we shared some themed films from our archives to help get in the spirit of things.

For Black History Month in October, we showed 'Pressure' (1975), a groundbreaking film about the struggles of a young black man in 1970s London. Before the screening, we showcased historical publications relating to Black lives in Scotland, Black British cinema and Afro-Caribbean publishing.

Glaswegian author Margaret McDonald joined us in July 2024 for an 'In Conversation' event about her debut novel, 'Glasgow Boys', a poignant coming-of-age story about mental health, queerness and the Scottish working class. McDonald has since become the youngest ever recipient of the Carnegie medal for writing for 'Glasgow Boys'.



Meanwhile, a special screening of the award-winning film 'Beats' (2019) drew a crowd back in May 2024. This was followed by a Q&A with Kieran Hurley, who wrote the original play. We also displayed 90s music memorabilia from our collections.

The movie, set in a small town in the Central Belt, follows best friends Johnno (Cristian Ortega) and Spanner (Lorn Macdonald), who head out for raving together in the summer of 1994.

1. 'Crafternoon' fun at Kelvin Hall
2. Author Margaret McDonald



Year in numbers

7,522,166

Website use (web sessions)

158,607

Items from collections digitised

157,232

Exhibition visitors

(includes newspapers and England and Wales maps)

119,494

Additions to collections

80,275

Hidden collections catalogued

52,681

Reading room visits

5,874

Newspapers digitised

352

Public events and workshops

Our Renaissance moment

You might not consider Scotland to have had a major role in Europe's Renaissance, but it emerged from the Middle Ages alongside its Continental cousins in a flurry of science and innovation, poetry, craft, music and philosophy.

This contribution was showcased in our exhibition, 'Renaissance: Scotland and Europe 1480-1630', which ran between June and April at our George IV Bridge building in Edinburgh, curated by Dr Anette Hagan and Dr Ulrike Hogg.

From the late 15th century to the early 17th century, Scottish scholars, writers, musicians, intellectuals and craftspeople travelled extensively throughout northern Europe to work, study and teach. They returned with thought-provoking ideas and achievements and contributed to the European Renaissance.

The 'Renaissance' exhibition included books, manuscripts and other objects from this cultural, intellectual and artistic movement, including poems by James VI and Mary, Queen of Scots, artefacts produced by a court jeweller and writing by refugees to and from Scotland.

Visitors were also able to learn about some of the leading characters of the time, such as calligrapher Esther Inglis.

We also had creative activities for all ages, with costumes, embroidery and illuminated letter-writing.

We are grateful to Campbell Armour and Angus McLeod for their generous support of the exhibition.



Images of Italy

Tourists have been flocking to Italy for centuries, ranging from the wealthier classes on what they called their 'Grand Tour' to present-day art lovers and epicureans sharing images with their friends and followers online.

The earliest photographers of tourist attractions lugged around cumbersome, heavy equipment to capture the landmarks and landscapes we know so well today.

We showcased the results of those efforts at this exhibition, along with some of the earliest examples of photographs of Italy created by Scots using the entirely paper-based calotype process.

Also on display were pre-photography renderings of iconic sites in rich



engravings, woodcuts and lithographs.

Thanks to a loan from the Ruskin Museum and Research Centre at Lancaster University, the exhibition included examples of daguerreotype photographs – direct positive images on silver-coated copper plates – by the celebrated writer and art critic John Ruskin.

In October, we welcomed the Scottish Arts & Humanities Alliance, the Consulate General of Italy for Scotland and Northern Ireland and the Italian Institute of Culture Edinburgh for a special tour of the exhibition. Curator Graham Hogg showcased the items on display, discussed their history and explained why they were selected for this display.

'Images of Italy (1480-1900)' ran between May and November.

1. Title page of 'Campo Phlegraei' by William Hamilton, envoy to the court at Naples
2. Veronica Ferrucci, Italy's Consul General for Scotland and Northern Ireland, with National Librarian Amina Shah at the Images of Italy display
3. Eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1779
4. A visitor enjoys the exhibition



Our greatest treasures

Our free and permanent exhibition, 'Treasures of the National Library of Scotland' continues to attract and delight visitors. New items are added twice a year, so there is always something fresh to discover and enjoy.

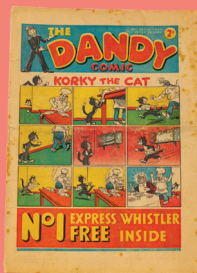
The displays feature a vast array of maps, manuscripts, letters, photographs, poems, books and cultural ephemera from our collections, reflecting the ideas, innovation and creativity and social change across the centuries in Scotland. Highlights from the past year include:

First edition of 'The Dandy', 1937

Britain's longest-running comic was launched on 4 December 1937, six months ahead of its sister title, 'The Beano'.

The comic marked the first appearance of Desperate Dan, the beloved cowboy character created by Dudley D. Watkins, who had co-created 'Oor Wullie' and 'the Broons' the year before.

All were published by Dundee's D.C. Thomson and became bestsellers, with 'The Dandy' annual continuing to sell millions every Christmas. This first edition of 'The Dandy' reflects an important part of Scotland's publishing history.



First edition of 'The Broons' annual, 1939

Our curators had been searching for a first edition of 'The Broons' for at least a decade, before finally acquiring this copy. This is the only known copy in a public collection in Scotland.

'The Broons' annual has appeared every two years since its inception, alternating with its sister title 'Oor Wullie'.

Their enduring popularity over eight decades makes the annuals and characters a publishing phenomenon.

'Astronomicum Caesareum', 1540

The 'Astronomy of the Caesars' is one of the most extraordinary and beautiful books in our collections.

Written in Latin and printed in Bavaria, it took the mathematician and astronomer



Petrus Apianus eight years to produce. The 'Astronomicum' straddles the medieval and scientific age, with the book being partly a guide to the pseudo-science of casting horoscopes and partly a work

of the advanced mathematics that made possible the calculation of planetary movement, eclipses and the observation of comets.

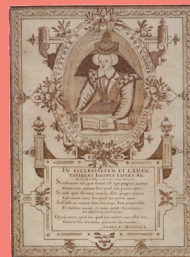
Paper instruments made up of layers of rotatable discs, known as volvelles, allow readers to make their own measurements and calculations of the movement of celestial objects. These intricately designed volvelles are incorporated into the 'Astronomicum' to stunning effect.

Calligraphy of Esther Inglis

French-born Inglis (c.1570-1624) settled in Edinburgh with her parents in the 1570s and became one of history's most celebrated calligraphers, illustrators and embroiderers.

Inglis's beautifully crafted books were presented to patrons in Scotland, France and England, including James VI.

Much of her work is intricately transcribed copies of religious texts, Psalms and Bible verses. Three of her most beautiful calligraphy manuscripts were on display in 'Treasures', along with her self-portrait (pictured).



Map from 'Treasure Island', 1885

This is the iconic map from the first British illustrated edition of Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Treasure Island'.

The book has 25 plate illustrations, most by the French illustrator George Roux. Two drawings are reproductions of work by artist F.T. Merrill from an earlier American edition of the novel.



LGBTQ+ ephemera

These items focus on representations of Scotland's LGBTQ+ history and activism.

The display included Pride Scotland programmes, rights handbooks, a postcard for the Glasgay! arts festival, Equality Network flyers, rainbow badges and Lavender Menace bookmarks.



Sorley Maclean's literary archive

Somhairle MacGill-Eain (Sorley MacLean) (1911-1996) is one of Scotland's most distinguished Gaelic poets.

On display were the manuscripts of two of his most famous poems, 'Dain Do Eimhir' and 'Hallaig'. The Raasay-born former teacher embraced traditional Gaelic song, structures and verse forms, much of which relied on an oral tradition.



Author talks draw crowds

Some of Scotland's most popular contemporary authors, poets and playwrights have been delighting audiences in our buildings over the past year, along with some rising stars.

A series of talks, readings and 'In Conversation' events have drawn crowds to our main building at George IV Bridge.

Former Makar and award-winning writer Jackie Kay joined us in January to discuss the experience of donating her personal archive to our collections.

This treasure trove contained in 34 boxes chronicles her life and literary works and offers valuable insight into her writing and personal journey.

In conversation with National Librarian Amina Shah, Kay reflected on both her memorabilia and hopes for the future.

Kay also hosted a family storytelling event with us on Burns Night, sharing lullabies from her debut children's book, 'Coorie Doon'.

In December we welcomed award-winning crime writer Denise Mina to discuss her book 'Rizzio', her take on the 1566 murder of the private secretary of Mary, Queen of Scots. This fascinating talk was part of our accompanying programme of events to our exhibition 'Renaissance: Scotland and Europe'.

Acclaimed artist and writer Juano Diaz discussed his powerful memoir 'Slum Boy' in October, sharing his experiences in the care system during an 'In Conversation' event with journalist Paul English.

The event during Care Experienced Week was part of the National Theatre of Scotland's Caring Scotland project,

a three-year oral history initiative in partnership with the Library and Who Cares? Scotland.

We welcomed our Centenary Champion Damian Barr in June 2024, when a full house enjoyed hearing him in conversation with Chitra Ramaswamy.

They discussed the process of taking his celebrated memoir 'Maggie & Me' from the page to the stage with the National Theatre of Scotland.

Barr – host of the BBC's 'Big Scottish Book Club' – also discussed his upcoming novel and took audience questions.

In May 2024, queen of tartan noir and our Centenary Champion Val McDermid visited us to discuss 'Queen Macbeth', her dive into historical fiction that focuses on Shakespeare's infamous femme fatale.

We were also delighted in April 2024 to launch 'Thriving Beyond Borders' by Uganda-born Tynah Matembe, in partnership with Enkula Wellness Hub.

This sell-out event celebrated cultural heritage and diversity, amplified marginalised voices and encouraged discussion with those new to Scotland.



1. Denise Mina
2. Paul English and Juano Diaz



Boxing clever on Community Walking visit

Our Community Walking team headed to Oban on 14–16 October, touring the University of the Highlands and Islands campus, Oban Public Library, the Rockfield Centre and Dunollie Museum and Castle.

At Dunollie, we donated a custom-made storage box for a 19th-century puff-sleeved bodice (pictured) that was once owned by Sophy MacDougall (formerly Timins), the wife of the clan's 25th chief.

This donation will help the museum to safeguard this important piece of its textile collection.

Our visit to Oban was timed to coincide with the National Mòd, where we had a stall and shared information about our work and accessing online resources.

Library representatives also visited Stirling and Kilmarnock over the past year.

Community Walking visits help us build relationships with people and organisations across Scotland who are unable to reach our buildings in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The outings also allow us to gather local information and ephemera for the national collections.



Swift fever strikes

Taylor Swift's Eras Tour broke records when it came to Edinburgh's Murrayfield Stadium on 7-9 June, with more than 73,000 fans each night.

Here at the Library, we used the occasion to do a deep dive into our collections and welcomed 'Swifties' to George IV Bridge to see a special display Taylor-made to celebrate the star.

This included literary works that have inspired some of Swift's songs and showcasing novels featured on her albums, such as 'Peter Pan' and 'The Great Gatsby'.

Our staff also made friendship bracelets to decorate the cases, as a nod to the beaded bracelets that fans of the singer swap with one another. Most of our creations featured song titles but others had literary and local twists, including 'National Library of Swifties'.



Stevenson's life and legacy in the Pacific

The impact of the Pacific and its peoples on Robert Louis Stevenson's writing and creative legacy was the focus of our 'Tusitala' exhibition.

Stevenson set sail across the Pacific Ocean from San Francisco in 1888, when he was already established as one of the world's foremost literary figures thanks to the success of 'Treasure Island' and 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'.

But what drew the writer and his family to territories such as Hawai'i and Tahiti, and to settle on the Samoan island of Upolu in 1890, four years before his death?

The display, in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh's 'Remediating Stevenson' project, attempted to answer this question.

We considered the author's Pacific legacy by investigating three of his stories,

'The Beach of Falesá', 'The Bottle Imp' and 'The Isle of Voices', all written and set in the Pacific.

Contemporary adaptations of these tales by Hawai'ian and British visual artists, alongside new Stevenson-inspired works by acclaimed Pacific poets, brought to Scotland the voices of the people, stories and characters of the region, completing the circle of Stevenson's final voyage.

The exhibition ran from 8 November 2024 to 10 May 2025.



Unveiling our brand new look

We refreshed our brand in early 2025 as part of our 100th birthday celebrations.

Our logo, a representation of an open book or laptop, has been reimaged.

The symbol has been duplicated in a circular pattern to represent connection, community and unity. The revamped design reflects our commitment to balancing tradition with innovation and the past with the future.

We have also adopted a typeface developed by the Braille institute that is designed to improve legibility and have expanded our colour palette, to symbolise openness and inclusion.



National Library of Scotland
Leabharlann Nàiseanta na h-Alba

Stepping into the Void

Behind a hidden door deep within the lower floors of our George IV Bridge building lies a forgotten street where you can see what Edinburgh looked like centuries ago.

The passage – nicknamed the Void by Library staff – hit the headlines in December after we opened up the lost street to BBC News.

Previously known as Libberton's Wynd, the space largely vanished upon the construction of George IV Bridge in the 1830s. But part of it remains, between the bridge and our walls, accessed through our hidden door.

We uncovered the Void (pictured below) in the 1990s after breaking down a hatch on a wall behind filing cabinets.

Lights have since been fitted, along with another door at the Cowgate end of the Void. Water tanks for our sprinkler system are now housed in some of the chambers.

Several maps and accounts of the Old Town in our collections helped paint a picture of life in the Wynd, which was home to one of Edinburgh's best-known taverns, The Mermaid, later Johnnie Dowie's Tavern. Regular visitors included poet Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns.

Executions were also held at a gallows at the top of the Wynd.



Celebrating Gaelic voices

We held a range of Gaelic-themed events over the past year, including a special series to mark Seachdain na Gàidhlig (World Gaelic Week) at the end of February.

These included a creative writing workshop on queer Gaelic voices with Robbie MacLeòid and a screening of 1970s and '80s Gaelic videotapes.

Pupils from Edinburgh's Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce also performed a play about the Highland Clearances.

Developing the Organisation

Climate action

We actively promote sustainability and more environmentally friendly practices. This includes the development and rollout of our 'Carbon Literacy for Libraries Shareable Course', which is the first training of its kind.

The course, approved by the Carbon Literacy Project, was funded by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS). It aims to give library professionals a comprehensive introduction to the issue and empower them to reduce the carbon footprint of their libraries.

The first three Carbon Literacy for Libraries training sessions took place in September and October in partnership with CILIPS, and 31 librarians were trained.

The Bodleian, the British Library and Buckinghamshire Libraries have now signed agreements with the Carbon Literacy Trust to deliver this course to their staff and have been sent the course materials.

Our Green Champions Julie Bon and Laragh Quinney were also interviewed about the Carbon Literacy for Libraries Shareable Course on the CILIPS podcast for Green Libraries Week.

For Green Libraries Week and Climate Week Scotland in September and October,



we curated a display that showcased climate change and activism, created in collaboration with local volunteers.

Our Green Team also organised a Sustainability Fair and a busy nature crafts event for families.

Last but by no means least, we are delighted to say Laragh Quinney (pictured) was awarded Scotland's Library and Information Professional of the Year by CILIPS for her work throughout 2024–25.

Staff networks

Our LGBTQ+ staff network helped select material highlighting histories of gay activism that was on display in our 'Treasures' exhibition until March.

The items chosen were also viewed during our LGBTQ+ storytelling workshop, 'Transgressions', held at George IV Bridge in June 2024 for Pride Month.

The event was in partnership with OurStory Scotland, the national LGBTQ+ archiving charity.

Meanwhile, our Disability network assisted in the curation of our April 2024 Open Shelves display, 'Empowerment through Arts and Crafts'. The items chosen reflected how marginalised people have found ways to express themselves.

Cutting-edge addition

A new Kasemake box-cutting machine at the Preservation Services Unit at Sighthill is aiding storage and display solutions.

The machine can be used with different materials, supports material and financial sustainability, is easy to use and has enhanced safety features.

Caring Scotland

Our 'Caring Scotland' oral history project launched in 2024, in partnership with the National Theatre of Scotland and advocacy group Who Cares? Scotland.

The stories of at least 100 care experienced people will be told and heard, with all retained in a new oral history archive at the Library plus a touring, interactive installation and photography exhibition in 2027.

The three-year initiative will involve workshops, interviews, research and development. The aim is to raise the



profile and celebrate the achievements of the care experienced community.

The artistic lead on the project is playwright Nicola McCartney (pictured), who spent 16 years as a foster carer.

Acquisitions Circle

The first successful approach to our new Acquisitions Circle was made in April 2024, resulting in us being able to meet a shortfall of £3,750 to purchase Advocate Gilbert Burnet's 18th-century thesis for the nation.

The circle launched in February 2024 and comprises a group of financial donors and enthusiasts who are willing to be called upon periodically and at short notice to help us secure items of cultural or historic importance for the national collections.

Cradle boosts digitisation

One of the factors preventing the complete conservation and digitisation of our newspaper collections is that they were historically tightly bound into large volumes.

Disbinding these to digitise the individual newspapers without damaging them would be a time-intensive task for the conservator. It would be an irreversible action and would also prevent us from issuing the physical volumes to readers.

A cantilever cradle was sourced which can convert our existing large-format scanner (procured last year) into a piece of equipment capable of digitising large-format volumes without the need to disbind them.

In the months since it arrived, we have been able to digitise some early bound OS maps for England and Wales, often showing areas with fewer railways, undeveloped industry and smaller built-up areas. Newspapers will be next up.

We are grateful to Professor Michael Anderson, the PF Charitable Trust and the American Patrons of the National Library and Galleries of Scotland for contributing the funds to purchase this equipment.

Collaboration with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

We were delighted to sign in May 2024 a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with our friends at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture.

We have collaborated with colleagues there for many years and between us we share a wealth of Gaelic language material. The MoU supports ongoing collaborations in the areas of research, access to and stewardship of national collections, knowledge exchange, teaching, public engagement in Scotland's cultural heritage and outreach, plus a commitment to skills development. The signatories to the MoU were Sabhal Mòr Ostaig Principal Dr Gillian Munro and National Librarian Amina Shah (both pictured).



Conservation student placement

Book and paper conservation student Kate Kemp completed a summer placement with us between August and September 2024. Kate worked on projects including the repair and rehousing of a box containing antiquarian pamphlets and material from the John Murray Archive.

ICON internships

Joanna Hulin joined our Collections Care team in 2024 as an ICON (Institute of Conservation) intern. She is focusing on the treatment of maps and plans of Edinburgh from the Bartholomew Archive. Meanwhile, Samantha

PhD student success

Collaborative Doctoral Partnership student Joe Nockels has successfully completed his PhD, following research in the Library. His thesis looked at the impact of handwritten text recognition on libraries and their users.

Schireson joined us in late 2024 as an ICON intern and is helping to preserve historical Scottish newspapers. Samantha's placement was possible thanks to those donating to the 2022 Annual Appeal for Newspapers. Joanna placement was generously funded by Mr and Mrs Field.

Funding our work

Income 2024-25



£22,170,000
Other -
grant in aid



£6,387,000
Donations
and legacies



£818,000
Charitable
activities



£291,000
Other trading
activities



£562,000
Investment
income

Spending 2024-25



£13,994,000
Staff costs



£1,556,000
Other property
costs



£3,793,000
Depreciation



£2,671,000
Other running
costs



£1,669,000
Building
maintenance



£600,000
Collection
purchases

Review of ‘Reaching People’

As part of the development of our new strategy, ‘The Next Chapter’, we have reviewed progress against our 2020–2025 ‘Reaching People’ strategy. Given that the ‘Reaching People’ strategy was begun in the middle of a global pandemic, we are proud of the progress we made. The annual Library Plan (which is directly linked to the strategic objectives) has provided a real focus on delivery and there has been good support across the Library in developing the five key themes.

Safeguarding Collections

There has been sustained improvement in this area. The environmental conditions in which collections are kept have been maintained and we began a major project to improve fire protection in the Causewayside building.

We completed the Collections on Tape project, which has resulted in more than 11,000 ‘at risk’ video and audio tapes being digitised and preserved. In collaboration with partners, we have also preserved and provided access to fragile newspaper collections. There has been a real focus on collecting material from communities that have previously been underrepresented, such as films made by Scotland’s Deaf community.

As a result of the British Library cyber attack, we have had to navigate the loss of access to non-print legal deposit, working closely with colleagues in other legal deposit libraries.

Improving Access

Since the 2020 strategy was launched there has been a significant positive shift in this area. We met the strategic target of having more than one-third of the collections in a digital format earlier than planned and have now reduced the Hidden Collections total by more than 75 per cent. A further one million items have been added to the catalogue and are now accessible to the public. We also now have over 15,000 additional maps available online, and we continue to be a UK leader in this area.

Visitors to our website have increased over the period and we began a major project to redevelop our main website to make it more engaging and easier to navigate. Progress in improving our public spaces has been slower. While we have undertaken some work, the planned redevelopment of our main George IV Bridge building remains an aspiration.

Engaging Audiences

A primary goal of ‘Reaching People’ was to broaden and increase our visitors and users. In 2022 we embarked on a major audience development project to understand those we were reaching and those we were not reaching. We have since embedded this approach into our public programming, marketing, digital content and other activities. Recent audience analysis has shown that we are attracting younger people alongside our core older audience groups and are beginning to reach key family audiences outwith Edinburgh and Glasgow city centres.

This work has also helped boost visits to our exhibitions and events, with more than 157,000 people visiting exhibitions in 2024–25. Last year we experienced our busiest summer since 2017 with general visits to George IV Bridge up 30 per cent on pre-Covid

levels. Through our community walking programme Library staff have been to 11 towns and spent time with 70 community groups, 17 high schools, 11 public libraries, seven colleges, five prisons and four football grounds.

Supporting learning, research and discovery

Since its inception, the Library has always had a focus on research. As part of the 2020–2025 strategy, we aimed to develop our digital scholarship service and encourage the investigation of collections from different angles. Achievements include further development and the release of new sets on the Data Foundry, the launch of an online repository to provide open access to research publications by Library staff, ongoing supervision of an average of 14 PhD students each year, placement and mentoring support for other post-graduates, and involvement in collaborative research initiatives.

Developing the organisation

Over the period there have been significant achievements in relation to the development of the digital estate, cyber resilience, climate action goals and our EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) ambitions.

We have invested in our IT infrastructure, we’ve begun the move to the cloud and we’ve achieved Cyber Essentials accreditation. This will continue to be a major focus beyond 2025. While progress is becoming harder with CO2 emissions, we have achieved a 74 per cent reduction since we started measuring performance in this area.

There has also been solid progress with our EDI Plan, including the recruitment of specialist project staff to help embed EDI across the organisation, changes to staff recruitment, the production of a new Code of Conduct, and a series of training sessions for managers.



Library Reach



262

villages, towns and cities across Scotland



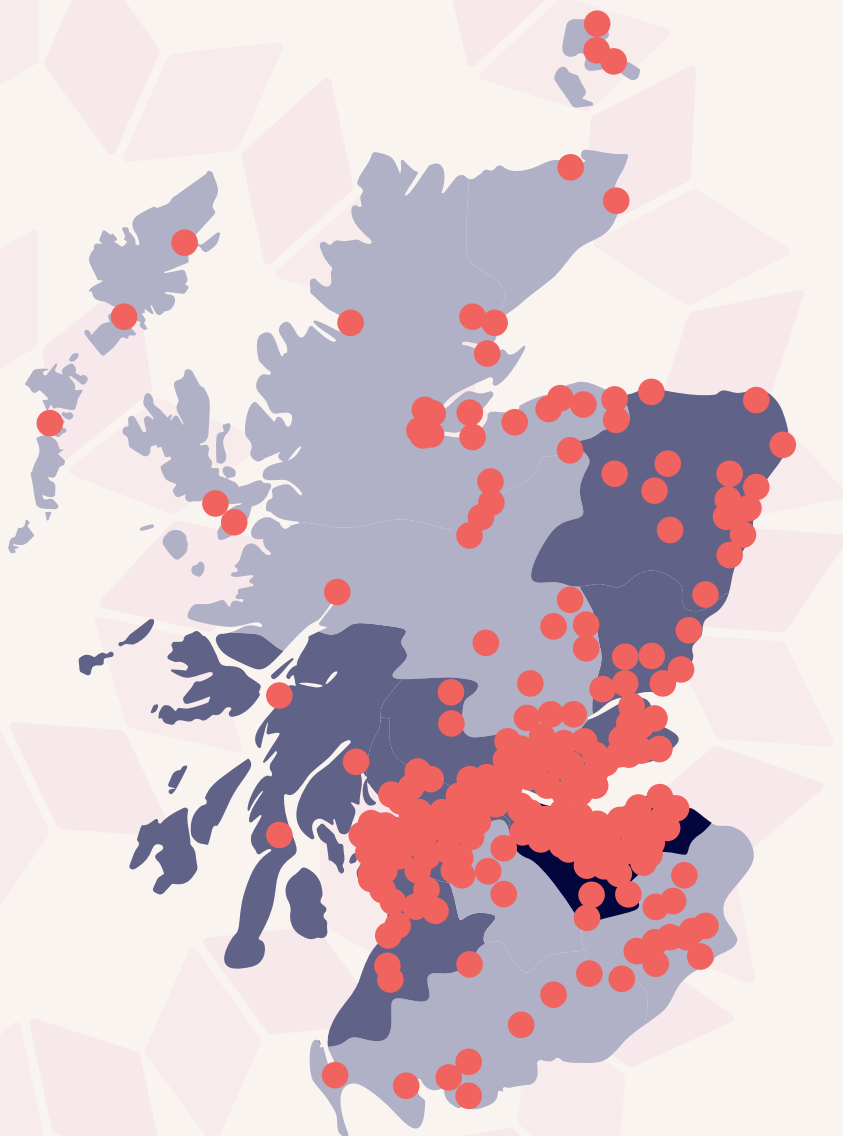
122

places in other parts of the UK



22

towns and cities in other countries worldwide



Our 'Discover' magazine reaches 197 different towns and cities across Scotland (1,228 postcodes) and 182 areas across the rest of the UK

Reach across Scotland:



Discover, events, other

197

areas



Donors

91

areas

Reach across the rest of the UK:



Discover, events, other

182

areas



Donors

40

areas

Reach across the rest of the world:

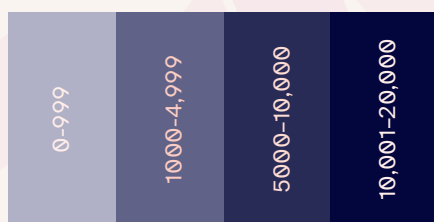


Donors

25

towns and cities

Registered Library members 2024-25



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