

Preserving
Memories

 National Library of Scotland
Leabharlann Nàiseanta na h-Alba

23 – 24
ANNUAL REVIEW





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By Amina Shah,
National Librarian and Chief Executive

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Welcome

2023–24 was not without its challenges and uncertainties. However, I'm proud to say that once again we punched above our weight in making a positive impact on communities right across Scotland.

A major focus for us this year was on championing Scotland's languages. We continue our Scots Scribe writer's residency in partnership with Creative Scotland, and this year we appointed a true local legend in the promotion of the Scots language, Susi Briggs. Susi hit the ground running by hosting one of our flagship events of the year, the book launch for Len Pennie's 'poyums'. She has since carried out a tremendous programme of outreach and engagement activities throughout Dumfries and Galloway, where she is based.

We were also privileged to partner with the Gàidhlig community in our programming and events this year. The centrepiece was major exhibition 'Sgeul | Story: Folktales from the Scottish Highlands', which focused on the work and collections of a most interesting 19th century figure: comparative mythologist, polyglot and artist John Campbell of Islay. The exhibition highlighted Gaelic folktales that might have been lost if it weren't for his efforts to save these stories from extinction as the oral storytelling traditions dwindled.

The exhibition and its supplementary programme could not have been made possible without key partners including Sabhal Mòr Ostaig – with whom we recently signed a collaborative Memorandum of Understanding – and City of Edinburgh Council's Capital Gaelic initiative, which allowed us to work with pupils from Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce. Thanks to Bòrd na Gàidhlig, we were also delighted to appoint the Library's inaugural Gàidhlig Storymaker, and this position was awarded to Kirsty MacDonald.

Our focus on Gàidhlig and folktales served as an inspiration to musicians. Last September we held a series of musical performances at our George IV Bridge building. This included a performance of composer Ned Bigham's take on the Ossianic Ballads by the Edinburgh Quartet and South Uist singer Màiri Macmillan. Renowned fiddler Aidan O'Rourke (pictured on the cover of this publication) curated an evening of performances. What a joy it was to hear the reading rooms come to life through the evocative fiddle music from both Aidan and Sarah-Jane Summers.

This past year was a time for celebration for our digitisation and acquisitions teams as they exceeded targets. In 2015 we announced our intention to have a third of our holdings in digital format by 2025 and we have now surpassed that goal. It was a huge undertaking by colleagues throughout the Library to make this happen.

Some of my favourite pages in the annual review are about the acquisitions we made over the course of the year. Highlights include the first edition of 'The Broons'



annual, which pleased many people when we announced it on Boxing Day. We also secured the archive of Damian Barr, whose play 'Maggie & Me' captivated audiences throughout Scotland this summer, and the complete archive of Agnes Owens, who was described as "the most unfairly neglected of all Scottish writers" by her contemporary, Alasdair Gray.

Gray's work was elevated to international acclaim once again over the past year with the release of Yorgos Lanthimos's critically acclaimed 'Poor Things', based on Gray's novel. As the home of the Alasdair Gray archive, we hold not only all drafts of the novel, but also early drafts of a film script written by Gray, as well as stunning illustrations by Alasdair himself. Gray's archive is one of those being itemised and catalogued thanks to the funds raised by last year's annual appeal, alongside those of George Mackay Brown, James Kelman, Agnes Owens and more. You can read detail of some of the treasures we have found so far inside.

I've barely skimmed the surface of our achievements this year, so you'll have to delve through these pages to find more. As ever, there's no way we could have achieved all of the above without the support of our partners, and especially our donors and supporters, and anyone who donated to our annual appeal. Every penny counts, and it helps us to deliver even more for the people of Scotland.

Finally, we turn 100 next year, so keep your eyes peeled for opportunities to engage with our special programme of events and activities throughout our centenary year. We can't wait to share it with you.

Amina Shah
National Librarian and Chief Executive



Safeguarding Collections

Acquisitions



'The Broons', Dundee, 1939

We acquired the very first 'The Broons' annual after at least a decade of searching for this elusive book. A copy finally showed up on a bookseller's website in the autumn of 2023.

"Scotland's happy family that makes every family happy" has been a Christmas favourite in households since they were launched more than eight decades ago, back in 1939.

Our copy of the first annual is the only one in a Scottish public collection and it is believed to be one of only 14 copies to have survived.

We also have the first copies of the 'Oor Wullie', 'The Dandy' and 'The Beano' annuals, all also published by Dundee's DC Thomson.

With thanks to the Magnus & Janet Soutar Trust for the donation which made this acquisition possible.

Scottish album of watercolours of the life and work of Robert Burns, 1914

This volume of 35 artworks features scenes including Alloway's haunted Kirk, which inspired Burns (1759–1796) to compose 'Tam o' Shanter', and the Brigs of Ayr, which the Bard used for his poem of the same name describing an argument between the two bridges.

The album is closely connected to the Glenriddell manuscripts, the single biggest collection of Burns' manuscripts and among our most significant collections.

The Glenriddell manuscripts were a gift to the people of Scotland from American industrialist John Gribbel. As a thank you, this album of Burns watercolours by Scottish artists was commissioned and presented to him. The Gribbel family has now donated the album to the Library.

We are delighted to add this album to our collections ahead of our centenary year, especially as the Glenriddell manuscripts came to us when we were established in 1925.



Indenture for the Camden Estate, Trinidad, 1807–1819

This parchment details Scottish involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and describes the ownership rights of the plantation and the enslaved workers.

The indenture facilitated the transfer of ownership of the estate and enslaved workers to John Stewart and Alexander Fraser in the early 19th century.

Lists of enslaved workers include their names, ages, sex, stature, ethnicity, family relations on the plantation and the work they carried out. Many of them have been given Scottish names.

There are also lists of "runaways", which serve as an important source for recovering silenced voices.

We are grateful to both the Soutar Trust and Friends of the National Libraries, who provided funds that assisted with this acquisition.

Taste ephemera

Taste was a club night that ran every Sunday in Edinburgh from the mid-90s and proudly promoted a policy of inclusivity, with a large number of patrons from the LGBT community.

Established by Bob Orr (co-founder of Scotland's first gay bookshop, Lavender Menace), Taste featured DJs Fisher and Price playing house music and attracted a faithful following to venues across the city.

We received a donation of ephemera that relates to Taste

and a number of club nights in Edinburgh and elsewhere in Scotland. This is a valuable addition to our collection of 1990s nightclub ephemera, especially dance culture.





Dulac copy of ‘Treasure Island’, 1927

Robert Louis Stevenson’s ‘Treasure Island’ is one of the most-read works in Scottish literature and the pirate tale is one of the author’s most translated and published novels.

While we have many editions of the book in our collections, we had been missing this limited edition

version illustrated by Edmund Dulac (1882–1953), which is an exquisite rendering of the story bound in vellum and with handmade paper.

Signed by Dulac, this copy is numbered 49 of 50 and is the only copy in a public institution in the UK other than the British Library.



Robert Louis Stevenson diary fragment, 1872

This rare, four-page manuscript covers the period between 9 May and 5 July 1872, when Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) was 21 and living in Edinburgh, while studying law.

The extract features mention of “good friend of mine” Ms Fairfoul, details a day spent by the writer with his father and describes his inebriated state after a dinner with a colleague. The excerpt offers humorous insight into Stevenson’s life as a young man and it is rare that Stevenson manuscripts of more than one page become available.

Thank you to the Soutar Trust for generously supporting the purchase of the diary fragment.



John Wood’s ‘Town atlas of Northumberland and Durham’, 1820–1827

Edinburgh-based mapmaker John Wood (c. 1789–1847) created the first detailed plans for many British towns in the early 1800s.

The ‘Town atlas of Northumberland and Durham’ is unusual, with original, individual maps gathered by collector Frank Graham and reproduced in a limited-edition facsimile atlas in 1991.

The detailed, clearly drawn plans capture many towns just before the arrival of railways changed their shape and demography.

Each sheet is a very large, folded folio with minor outline hand colour on many. Published in small runs and only made available locally, the maps are scarce.

We are grateful to the R.W. Clark Fund and the T.A. Fund for funding this acquisition.

Poems and broadsides by William McGonagall

The Scottish poet of Irish descent is widely regarded as one of the worst English-language poets ever but he was certainly prolific when it came to his verse.

Scorned during his life and often classed as “so bad it’s good”, his work represents many things, not least resilience to criticism.

Our collection of his work in his unique style and voice continues to intrigue, entertain and stand out.

We acquired two broadsides published by McGonagall (1825–1902) and these are uncommon, especially those printed in Dundee in the 1880s.

The first tells of the death of Alexander Heriot Mackonochie SSC (1825–1887), a Church of England mission priest of Scots ancestry whose body was found in a forest near Ballachulish after he got lost while out walking.

The second broadside concerns a battle fought in October 1897 (not November, as the poet claims) in the

Tirah Campaign, resulting in the award of four Victoria Crosses.

We also acquired a sheet featuring two works by McGonagall, ‘Ode to the King’ and ‘Bonnie Montrose’. The latter includes the line: “The Mid Links it is most charming to be seen, And I’m sure it is a very nice bowling green.”



Sporting archives, programmes and papers

The papers of speedway reporter John 'Jock' Watt (pictured right) have been added to our collections and include interviews with stars of the sport, programmes for events, correspondence and photographs from his reporting days in the mid-20th century. The papers are among a number of items relating to sporting heritage that we have acquired over the past year.

The archive of mountaineer and mountain rescue team leader John Hinde (1927–2002) has been donated by his daughter, including diaries, scrapbooks and photo albums. The diaries cover his entire career, from 1941 until 2002. Read more about the archive on page 8.

The archive of Edinburgh Borderers Rugby Football Club has also been acquired. The club was active from 1921 until 2021 and its papers



include minute books, scrapbooks, photos and accounts which show both the history of the club and the social side of membership.

A small volume relating to cricket in the 1830s – early for the sport in Scotland – is now part of our collections. This once belonged to a George Quentin of Glasgow and while one half contains cricket scores, largely featuring Lanarkshire, the other half, curiously, has recipes for food and drink.

The Grange in Edinburgh, founded in 1832 and one of Scotland's oldest and most successful cricket clubs, generously donated items

held with us on deposit since 1995, including photographs.

We also acquired the programme for the second leg of the European Cup semi-final between Celtic and Dukla Praha on 12 April 1964. This game preceded one of the greatest achievements in Scottish sporting history – Celtic beating Inter Milan 2-1 in the European Cup final in Lisbon in 1967, making them the first British team to win the Cup.

Another important addition to our sporting collections is the 1875 'Scottish Football Annual', produced by the Scottish Football Association, which was founded only two years previously. The title page bears the signature "Dav Davidson Junr. 1875", which may be the David Davidson who played for Queen's Park and earned five caps for Scotland between 1878 and 1881.



Equality Network publications

These documents feature topics relating to the lives and rights of the LGBT community.

The publications came to us via legal deposit from the Equality Network, which deposited both print and digital items. Collections such as these help us to better reflect society today and can support co-curated work with audiences in the future.

As a legal deposit library, we are legally entitled to collect a copy of everything published in the UK. This acquisition came in as part of the Library's EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) Collecting Project.

Benny Lynch programmes

We welcomed 17 superb and rare programmes relating to the career of Glaswegian flyweight boxer Benny Lynch (1913–1946), covering the period from 1933 to 1938.

The programmes include a championship final at Glasgow's Kelvin Hall on 21 March 1934, plus major venues such as Wembley. We also acquired ticket stubs, postcards – many of them bearing Lynch's autograph – and other ephemera relating to his career.

Lynch, regarded as one of Glasgow's greatest sporting

heroes, enjoyed a meteoric rise to fame from his humble beginnings in the city's deprived Gorbals area, becoming the first Scotsman to win a world boxing title.

His legacy was tarnished by convictions for domestic violence and assault, with his behaviour fuelled by the alcoholism that played a part in his poor health and early death.



'Ivanhoe' in Japanese, 1886

This is the earliest example in our collections of a translation of Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) into an East-Asian language.

The translator, Ushiyama Kakudō, also known as Ushiyama Ryōsuke, was an early Meiji period novelist. At that time, amid political changes in their country, Japanese authors interested in politics were inspired by foreign novelists. Ushiyama also translated Benjamin Disraeli's novel 'Henrietta Temple' (1837).

UK web archive arrives in Edinburgh

The UK web archive consists of millions of archived websites harvested since 2004. The collection captures the diversity and extent of the social, creative and intellectual output of the modern era.

All six legal deposit libraries in the UK and Ireland contribute to selecting and managing archived content, which complements an annual domain crawl that harvests millions of websites.

The web archive is hosted by the British Library, with two copies maintained and replicated for preservation purposes.

It was agreed in 2022 that a more robust preservation approach was required and we offered to host a copy of the web archive in Edinburgh.

This significant undertaking involved transferring the entire contents of the archive – billions of files and more than one petabyte of data – to five web archive servers which we bought for this purpose, with replication taking many months.

Once replication was complete the hardware was transported to Edinburgh and arrived in July 2023.



Archives of Agnes Owens, Hew Lorimer and Damian Barr

We were thrilled to complete the purchase of the literary archive of Agnes Owens (1926–2014), who was described by her contemporary Alasdair Gray as “the most unfairly neglected of all living Scottish authors”.

The manuscripts complement holdings placed with us by Owens during her lifetime. The archive includes manuscripts to short stories and novellas such as ‘A Working Mother’ and ‘Like Birds in the Wilderness’ – texts now deemed as central in the canon of modern Scottish literature.

We have also become the home of the archive of architectural sculptor Hew Lorimer (1907–1993), who designed the seven allegorical figures on the façade of our building on George IV Bridge in Edinburgh.

The papers include personal correspondence between Lorimer and his textile designer wife, Mary Wylie Lorimer, photos, sketchbooks and drawings. There are also documents outlining Lorimer’s role in civic conservation societies and projects during the 1950s and 1960s.

We are grateful to the Lorimer family and Lorimer Society (incorporating the Hew Lorimer Trust) for generously transferring the Lorimer Archive to the Library as a donation.

We have also acquired the archive of journalist, writer and broadcaster Damian Barr (b. 1976), who is one of Scotland’s most celebrated contemporary authors. His award-winning memoir, ‘Maggie & Me’, follows Barr growing up gay in Thatcher’s Lanarkshire. A play based on his book was staged by the National Theatre of Scotland in 2024. Barr spoke to our ‘Discover’ magazine about the play and his next project.

Learn more about how our Annual Appeal has supported the growth of our archive collections on page 9.



Damian Barr. Photo by James Chapelard, courtesy National Theatre of Scotland



Hew Lorimer



Conservation and digitisation

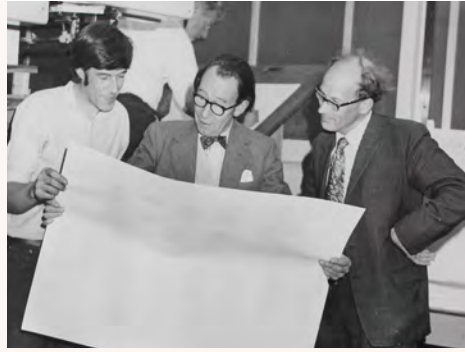
John Murray Archive cataloguing

The house of John Murray published some of the most important and popular works in British literature, from poetry and novels to scientific, religious and political works, travel books, biographies, periodicals and educational titles.

The publisher's authors have included Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, David Livingstone, Jane Austen and Charles Darwin.

Our John Murray Archive offers fascinating insight into both the creation of seminal works and the history of the publishing house – founded in 1768 by Scotsman John McMurray – making it one of our most comprehensive and valuable literary collections.

We began a six-month scoping project to review the collection's



Publisher John 'Jock' Murray VI

cataloguing and conservation status in April 2023. This exercise resulted in the data we needed to support a funding application for a multi-year programme of work and identified important themes and interesting individuals from the papers, helping reveal more untold stories.

A generous grant from the John R. Murray Charitable Trust will allow us to take forward the scoping project's recommendations in 2024.

Papers of John Hinde

The daughter of mountaineer and mountain rescue team leader John Hinde kindly donated both his papers and funds to enable these items to be rehoused and listed, meaning people can now access the files through our catalogue.

Hinde (1927–2002) began climbing at the age of 11 and joined the RAF at 15 as a boy entrant. He later became leader of RAF mountain rescue teams, including spells at Leuchars and Kinloss. He also spent 20 years with Outward Bound at Loch Eil, teaching rock and ice climbing, sailing and canoeing.

His archive includes diaries, photo albums and scrapbooks and his papers can be consulted in our Special Collections Reading Room.



The year in numbers

7,195,271

additions to our collections

68,091

hidden collections catalogued

51,337

items from our collections digitised*

4,913

newspapers digitised

123,244

people attended our exhibitions and events

*of which 26,495 were done by GoogleBooks

Cyber security – working with the British Library

In October 2023, the British Library suffered a significant ransomware cyberattack that compromised most of its online systems.

As we are a legal deposit partner, this had ramifications on access to some digital material for our own members.

Our IT team was quick to respond, isolating systems to ensure our own services were not affected. Since the cyberattack, we have been working in close partnership with British Library colleagues to support their 'Rebuild & Renew' programme, including a project to restore on-site access to non-print legal deposit materials such as the UK Web Archive.

We have used the lessons from the cyberattack passed on from the British Library to improve our cyber security processes and protection.



Letters from the George Mackay Brown archive

Annual Appeal update

We were thrilled by the positive response to our Annual Appeal, which was launched to raise funds to catalogue and curate the archives of Scotland’s modern writers.

This work has focused on three literary archives – those of Alasdair Gray (1934–2019), Booker Prize winner James Kelman (1946–) and George Mackay Brown (1921–1996). Almost all of Gray’s archive is now held at the Library.

We have uncovered a number of ‘discoveries’ during our work with these archives, including:

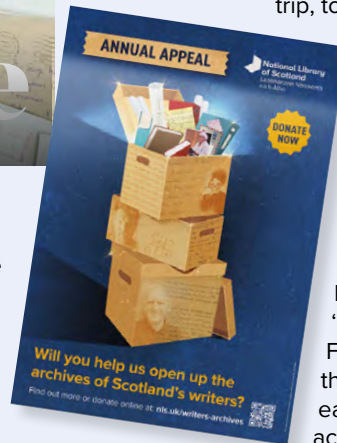
- Gray’s ‘Dante ledgers’: Sketchbooks and ledger books used by Gray to draft his ‘Divine Trilogy’, his translation of Dante’s classic narrative poem. The ledgers are also full of doodles, illustrations, drafts of letters and journal entries, which reflect on politics, art and Gray’s health.
- Scripts and correspondence relating to proposed film adaptations of Gray’s ‘Poor Things’, plus material relating to Yorgos Lanthimos’s Oscar-winning 2023 film adaptation.

- Correspondence to Mackay Brown from friends, fans, fellow writers, publishers, agents, artists and composers. The huge collection spans four decades and offers insight into his life and writing habits as well as highlighting the high regard in which he was held by readers and peers.

- Mackay Brown’s diaries from 1958 to 1996, revealing his inner struggles and anxieties around social commitments. The diary for 1968 describes the writer’s only overseas trip, to Ireland, and

he describes meeting Seamus Heaney and Brendan Kennelly.

- Typescripts and proofs of Mackay Brown’s ‘Loaves and Fishes’ (1959), the collection that earned him critical acclaim.



- Manuscripts for Kelman’s ‘Dirt Road’ (2016), ‘That Was a Shiver’ (2017) and ‘God’s Teeth and Other Phenomena’ (2022), plus his correspondence with literary figures including Liz Lochhead, Tom Leonard, Alasdair Gray and Janice Galloway.

Gift to the nation

Four important letters by philosopher David Hume (1711–1776) have been acquired for the national collections thanks to the generosity of one of our frequent visitors, who left a gift to the Library in his will.

We have the most significant collection of Hume manuscripts in the world and we are the premier destination for those studying his life and work.

Professor Sandy Stewart

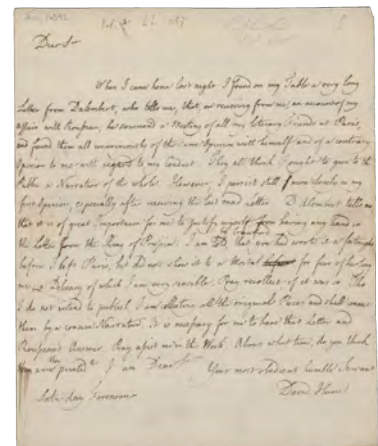


That is why the late Professor Sandy Stewart, a leading historian of 18th and 19th century

philosophy and a Hume specialist, chose to remember us in his will. His gift made possible the acquisition of the Hume letters (one of which is pictured right) along with contributions from the Soutar Trust and Friends of the National Libraries.

Professor Stewart’s friend and colleague, Ruth Barlow, said: “He would have been pleased as punch that the Library has been able to purchase more Hume materials with his bequest.

“Library staff have been wonderfully kind and understanding throughout the process and it has truly helped me to see my friend’s memory immortalised in this way within an institution he loved.”



To learn more about leaving a legacy to us in your will, contact Lucy Clement on development@nls.uk or visit nls.uk/support-nls

Improving Access

One Third Digital target met

We have reached our goal to have a third of our holdings in digital format two years ahead of schedule.

We made a pledge in 2015 to complete the task by 2025 – but our teams hit the target by the middle of 2023, with 33.65 per cent of our collections digitised. As of September 2023, more than

475,000 items from our collections had been digitised since 2017, including medieval manuscripts, maps, the MacKinnon photographic collection, fragile moving image and sound collections, 18th century pamphlets, Scottish broadsides and chapbooks, exam papers, Gaelic works and newspapers.

The project has involved meticulous planning and implementation across a number

of our teams. In parallel, there have been developments in local and shared infrastructures for collecting digital legal deposit content. A storage and preservation network across the national libraries has been established, resulting in almost 12 million e-journal issues and articles and nearly 900,000 e-book titles being collected. About half of our legal deposit content is now in digital format.



Moving Image Archive collections

More than 700 items were added to our Moving Image online catalogue by the end of 2023, with about 90 per cent of these made available through our Collections on Tape project.

Highlights include 'The Flower and the Straw' (1955), made by teachers

and shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival that year, and 'She Town' (2022) about women in Dundee's working lives. 'She Town' won our purchase prize for moving image.

You can watch both films and many more at movingimage.nls.uk

Virtual Reading Rooms

Our Virtual Reading Room service officially launched in 2023, with its own dedicated space on our website.

Our desktop and ceiling visualisers allow people to look at items remotely and this service is available to all Library members by request.

We held 41 Virtual Reading Room sessions, with participants from the UK, Europe, USA and Australia. They mainly looked at manuscripts but also rare books and maps.

The desktop visualiser (pictured) was also used successfully during two events. The first was with the National Archives, when we demonstrated film strips to a conference audience in London. The second was a collaboration with Glasgow's Mitchell Library, to produce an online event discussing and showing relevant material from our Robert Burns collections.



Hidden Collections

Cataloguing work began in January on a donation of late 18th and early 19th century printed music previously held by Edinburgh Public Library.

The collection consists of more than 1,000 titles which have been bound into volumes or held loosely in boxes. More than 250 items have been catalogued so far. Many works were published in Scotland or incorporate Scottish folk tunes.



Collections on Tape goal success

More than 5,850 video tapes had been digitised by June of 2023 – ahead of target for our Collections on Tape project to preserve our audio visual magnetic tape collections.

This included more than 500 items from our acquisitions backlog plus

items from our General Collections and Archives and Manuscript collections.

The project had also digitised 470 sound carriers by June.

The purchase of two additional TASCAM recording machines has helped to grow our capacity.



**Read all about it!
Newspapers go digital**

Work on the newspapers of our partner libraries is now wrapping up. A subset of titles from Culture Perth & Kinross, the Mitchell Library, Western Isles and Aberdeen have been conserved.

Conservation work on our own holdings remains in progress, alongside assessments that will improve our wider knowledge of the collection.

Advocacy efforts to promote the conservation work have gone global, with the work by conservator Claire Hutchison (pictured) now published as a paper under the International Federation of Libraries Associations and Institutions. This paper is helping showcase the digitisation project and act as a benchmark for other national projects.

Over the past year, 4,913 newspapers were digitised. View our newspapers at digital.nls.uk/scotlands-news/archive and learn more about their conservation by viewing ‘Saving local newspapers for the nation’ at youtube.com/user/nlofscotland



Maps digitisation

More than a quarter of a million maps now online

There are now 270,000 maps freely accessible on our website after we exceeded our target to digitise 15,000 single-sheet maps last year – more than 16,000 had been added by June 2023.

These include geological maps of England and Wales, complementing

those of Scotland. We also created combined geological maps of Britain pages with a single graphic index.

Other maps added online include two series which show land use and agricultural potential at one-inch to the mile scale for England and Wales.

Locating Scotland’s historic woodlands

A landmark project has created a comprehensive digital record of historic Scottish woodlands.

We partnered with Zulu Ecosystems – a nature regeneration platform – to pinpoint the woods’ locations and make the OS First Series Woodland viewer available on our website.

Machine learning was used to create a digital layer to extract the woodland from our Ordnance Survey 1st edition

maps, which date back to the 1840s. This data was also compared with present-day satellite imagery.

Identifying historic woodland is vital for understanding the scale of its decline from factors such as overgrazing, deforestation and climate change.

Zulu Ecosystems developed and donated the digital layer to contribute towards the conservation and protection of ancient woodland.

Maps of Ireland

We started to make digitised maps of Ireland available online, starting with the Ordnance Survey Six-Inch maps.

These were the most comprehensive, topographic mapping covering all of Ireland and Northern Ireland from the 1820s to the 1960s. This was the first large-scale survey of an entire

country and a key moment in the history of Irish place names, as the original work included standardising English orthographic forms of places, some of which might have only been known in Irish.

View the maps at maps.nls.uk/os/6inch-ireland/index.html

‘What’s On’ revamp

We launched the new ‘What’s On’ section of our website in December, which showcases our extensive programme of in-person and online events, exhibitions and workshops across our sites.

The clear listings – all highlighted by a prominent image – take people to each event’s own page for further information.

People can also use the filter function to find events of interest to them and can sign up for our email newsletter to receive information about upcoming events direct to their inbox.

Fast Pass success

We launched our Fast Pass to offer visitors one-day access to study spaces without the need for a library card.

People can enter the General Reading Room and Discovery Room and view general reference books and online resources without the need to show proof of address and personal ID.

The Fast Pass is proving popular with visitors from Scotland and abroad, with more than 100 issued during the first four weeks of a trial period.

Those who used one cited reasons such as wanting a look at our reading rooms or short-term study space.



Supporting Learning, Research and Discovery

Fitba Research Club: Andrew Watson's Legacies

Our 'Fitba Research Club: Andrew Watson's Legacies' project was inspired by the story of Andrew Watson, Scotland's – and the world's – first Black international football captain.

Co-curated with author, poet and academic Malik Al Nasir, the project brought together a team of community curators –

all between the ages of 18 and 25 from under-represented and minority communities across Glasgow – to celebrate the rich history of sporting achievement by Black people and people of colour in Scotland.

Working with our curators, specialist facilitators and other experts through 11 workshops and events from July 2023 to January 2024, the team explored Watson's life and career.

Engaging with collections in the Library and beyond, the community curators also researched other largely forgotten footballing histories from the 1870s on, co-producing a forthcoming online resource.



Archive of Tomorrow

We led on this groundbreaking and collaborative research project, which collected and preserved online information and misinformation about health and the Covid pandemic.

Archive of Tomorrow – which ran from February 2022 until November 2023 – aimed to help address one of the most pressing research issues of modern times: how can the story of changing online health information be captured and understood?

The project, funded by the Wellcome Trust, also explored access, ethical and rights issues connected to online health information. More than 3,400 websites were archived and preserved in the 'Talking about Health' collection of the UK Web Archive. Learn more at data.nls.uk/data/metadata-collections

Supporting school and college students

We've been working to deliver more services to Advanced Higher and college students.

We offer in-person and online sessions to support their studies and we've had students visit from Edinburgh, Perth, the Borders and Angus.

We also developed an 'Open Shelves' area to give students instant access to relevant items from our collections.

Student feedback has been incredibly positive. One student said: "The staff and everyone at the Library were lovely; it was a pleasure talking to our

guides. The resources we were told about seem really helpful and I look forward to using them to write my Advanced Higher dissertation. Thank you to NLS for everything."

Other feedback has praised the sessions as "brilliant and interactive" and "an invaluable opportunity". Teachers thanked our "warm and friendly" staff for ensuring sessions are as "accessible" as possible.

One of our Reference Services assistants said: "It's a great way for us to introduce the Library and its collections to a younger audience."

Showcasing our research

Our first 'Research Review' was published, highlighting our research projects and collaborations from 2022–23. Research is a key element of our 2025 strategy, 'Reaching People', and we are a core part of Scotland's research infrastructure through our collection, preservation and provision of access to millions of resources. You can read the full report online at nls.uk



This year's intake:

Total intake
1,210,688

Serial issues
43,001

eJournal articles
969,573

Newspapers
14,427

eBooks
64,175

Maps
625

Books
45,267

Other
73,600

Celebrating LGBT JOY

Our boardroom was transformed into legendary nightclub JOY to celebrate LGBT History Month in February 2024.



JOY was once Scotland's largest LGBT club night

and ran for more than 25 years after launching in Edinburgh in 1993.

Members of our team served as DJs, with the house music being played sparking discussions about the role of the gay scene in Edinburgh in the 1990s and the fading club scene.

Most of the people who attended were former JOY patrons and the hour-long event was fully booked. We were able to showcase our LGBT collecting strengths and interests, with possible JOY ephemera donations to follow.

We also marked at LGBT History Month at Kelvin Hall, with an event with LGBT Youth Scotland and Community Archives and Heritage Group Scotland. This also featured the launch of '(Un)seen, (Un)heard',



a three-year Heritage Lottery-funded project to capture and preserve the stories of LGBTQ+ young people in Scotland. This will become a new archive at the Library.

Projects at George IV Bridge in late 2023 supported '(Un)seen, (Un)heard', with LGBT groups from Edinburgh, Glasgow and Selkirk joining us, plus intergenerational volunteers from Lavender Menace.

Over the past year we have been welcoming LGBT Youth Scotland groups for tours and workshops, plus staff have been hosting workshops at community centres.

Meanwhile, we celebrated Edinburgh Pride Day in June 2023 by showing films from our Moving Image and Sound collections and members of our staff LGBT+ Network hosted a stall at West Lothian Pride in July. Such outreach work emphasises that we are a welcoming space for everyone.

'Our Heritage, Our Stories'

We are a key partner in the 'Our Heritage, Our Stories' strand of the 'Towards a National Collection' project, along with the University of Glasgow.

'Towards a National Collection' aims to open up UK heritage to the world by breaking down barriers between different collections and improving access for researchers. For 'Our Heritage, Our Stories', we have

contributed content and cataloguing data from our moving image, sound and manuscript collections, with a focus on community archives, Scots and Gaelic.

We're also working on case studies about how we help community groups manage digital collections.

Learn more at nationalcollection.org.uk/Discovery_Projects

Artificial intelligence symposium

Our first AI and Machine Learning Symposium was held in April 2023, with a full house attending at George IV Bridge and more than 500 participants online.

The keynote speakers were Professor Sir Adrian Smith from the Alan Turing Institute and Chris van

der Kuyl, Co-founder and Chairman of 4J Studios, alongside university librarians, academics and PhD students.

A recording can be viewed on our YouTube channel at youtube.com/@NLofScotland/streams

Women's archives

Material from our archives relating to women – from political reports and suffrage literature to knitting patterns – was examined as part of an outreach workshop with students from the University of Glasgow's MSc in Gender History course.

The items chosen (pictured below) offered a lens onto histories of gender in 19th and 20th-century Scotland and highlighted the depth and variety of our archives relating to women.

One participant said: "It was a wonderful overview to the NLS, with a great mix of practicalities as well as interesting content. I feel not only confident in my ability to access resources but excited to have the chance to do so."



Scottish Youth Parliament hails our 'inspirational' curator

Our curator Sarah Thomson was invited to be the keynote speaker at the 80th sitting of the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) in October 2023.

The SYP Chair thanked her for an "inspirational and fun" talk about her time as an SYP member and how it has helped her career, including her work with us as our Government and Civic Literacy Curator.

Members of the SYP also visited us at George IV Bridge in early 2024 (pictured below) and worked with Sarah to design a display for the Scottish Parliament for the Festival of Politics in August. We also loaned the items for this project.



Engaging Audiences

Audience development programme – a focus on Glasgow

We continue to take an audience-led approach to the design and improvement of our programmes, services and experiences. This is with a view to reaching new and diverse audiences and really making an impact on people across Scotland and beyond by engaging them through the collections.

We are working with the Audience Agency – a not-for-profit dedicated to helping more people access and influence culture – on an intensive two-year programme which has really helped to evolve our thinking.

Library members might remember being invited to share their views and experiences with us back in March and we received thousands of helpful responses on our services now, and what we should be focusing on in the future.

People attending our events and exhibitions may have noticed subtle shifts in our offerings, as we work to be more inclusive and relevant to 21st-century audiences.

Our team at Kelvin Hall has embraced this cultural shift and is working with the Audience Agency to develop a pilot around audience development. This involves identifying who they would like to reach (i.e. people we



An event at Kelvin Hall. Photo by Robin Mitchell

are not reaching but who could benefit from engaging with the Library), designing events and services around these priority audiences, delivering the activity and evaluating its effectiveness.

Evaluation informs the next batch of events and programmes, as well

as helping us to demonstrate our impact on communities. It ensures we constantly strive to do better.

Meanwhile, we are also evaluating our website, web presence and digital offerings to ensure we are leveraging technology as effectively as possible.

Putting our best foot forward

Our Community Walking visits continue to prove popular and productive.

These visits allow us to connect with groups and organisations in towns across Scotland and show how many of our resources are freely available without having to come to one of our buildings. The visits are proving a great way to introduce our collections and services to a wide range of people.

Our seventh Community Walking trip took place in February 2024, in Motherwell, with our team visiting schools, colleges, community groups and Motherwell Football Club.



We also spent an evening at Motherwell Library chatting to members of a young

adult reading group, who told us they would like more opportunities to talk to us about their interests. Motherwell followed Community Walking visits to Dumfries, Perth, Greenock, Galashiels, Kirkcaldy (pictured left) and Paisley. In Galashiels, the TD1 Youth Group gave us a copy of its 'Lockdown Express' publication, compiled by its members. This was one of a number of local publications and ephemera we might never have known about without these visits.

We will continue making these trips, with plans for visits to Stirling, Oban and Kilmarnock in 2024-25 and follow-up visits to Dumfries, Greenock and Kirkcaldy.



Touring displays

Our free displays tour the country every year to help us reach even more people. Venues include local libraries, festivals and regional museums.

'Lifting the Lid' (pictured left), which is about Scotland's relationship with food and drink, travelled to Falkirk and Kirkcaldy, while our 'Going to the Pictures' display, which tells the story of cinema in Scotland, went to Hawick, Galashiels, West Lothian and Argyll.

'You Are Here', a journey through maps, was in Orkney and Ayr, while Stirling welcomed 'Scotland's Photograph Album', which is drawn from the MacKinnon photography collection of more than 14,000 historical photographs, with images dating back to the 1840s. The display transports people back to a period of changing rural communities, growing cities and enduring historic sites.

Each display has 10 eye-catching banners complemented by interactive handling boxes.

Support for climate campaign

We supported the Paperboats '1,000 Climate Hopes' campaign in November 2023, which delivered messages calling for action on climate change to the Scottish Parliament. The event was timed to coincide with the UN COP28 climate summit and featured poetry readings and music.

Participants shared messages of climate hope written on folded origami paper boats (pictured). 'Boat yards' were set

up in our buildings in Glasgow and Edinburgh, allowing visitors to make a boat and share their thoughts. More than 200 boats were created with us.

Paperboats is a Scotland-based collective of writers focused on nature and the environment.

Watch a video of the boats made and collected with us at [youtube.com/@PaperboatsWriters](https://www.youtube.com/@PaperboatsWriters)



Lights, camera, action!

We played a starring role on two major BBC TV series in 2023.

Bafta-winning historian, writer and broadcaster Professor David Olusoga visited us while researching his show 'Union'. He also spoke to our magazine, 'Discover', about the items from our collections he examined. Read the article at nls.uk/discover-stories

Professor David Wilson also visited us to film 'David Wilson's Crime Files'. An episode on counterfeit art included a segment on the literary forgeries of Alexander 'Antique' Smith and we hold a large collection of these. Manuscripts Curator Dr Ralph McLean discussed the methods used to copy Robert Burns' hand with Professor Wilson (pictured).

Watch both series at bbc.co.uk/iplayer



Supporting Scottish Gaelic



Gaelic is a crucial element of our efforts to preserve the national memory. The language is a key part of Scotland's culture and we're proud to be the home of what we believe is the largest collection of Scots Gaelic material in the world.

We have celebrated a number of key events and milestones relating to our Gaelic collections and our commitment to making these works available to all who would like to use, learn and be inspired by them.

Our major exhibition for 2023, 'Sgeul | Story: Folktales from the Scottish Highlands' was our first dual language showcase. It explored the fascinating archive of John Francis Campbell, without whom some Gaelic stories would have been lost forever.

Campbell (1821–1885) spent his childhood on Islay in the care of the family piper, who took him to places someone of Campbell's social status would not normally frequent, such as bothies and community gatherings.

A love of the stories from the Highlands and Islands flourished and stayed with him throughout his life. He became an avid collector and writer of these stories, most of which had previously been preserved and shared by a dwindling oral tradition.



John Francis Campbell

Campbell seems to have collected folktales at every opportunity and kept summaries in English and Gaelic, the latter often involving help from others as he did not trust his proficiency with written Gaelic. He was, however, a talented artist who also drew many sketches of people and the characters in the stories.

Without Campbell, some tales that had enthralled generations of Highland communities might not exist on record today.

We marked the launch of 'Sgeul | Story', which ran between June 2023 and April 2024, with a stunning performance by young band Duan. The band's name is Gaelic for a 'little ditty' or 'song'.

Sharing and preserving Gaelic music and traditional Scottish songs is a passion of the group, who all have parents and grandparents from the Highlands and Islands. The band



Duan

Tha a' Ghàidhlig na pàirt ro-chudromach de ar n-oidhirpean gus a' chuimhne nàiseanta a ghleidheadh. Tha an cànan na prìomh phàirt de chultar na h-Alba agus tha sinn moiteil a bhith mar dhachaigh dhan chruinneachadh – an cruinneachadh as motha san t-saoghal de stuthan Gàidhlig nar beachd.

Tha sinn air grunn phrìomh thachartasan agus chlachan-mìle a chomharrachadh co-cheangailte ris na cruinneachaidhean Gàidhlig againn mar thoradh air dealas gus am bì na stuthan seo fosgailte dhan h-uile duine a bhiodh airson an cleachdadh, ionnsachadh bhuapa agus a bhith air am brosnachadh leotha.

B' e ar taisbeanadh airson 2023, 'Sgeul | Story: Folktales from the Scottish Highlands' a' chiad taisbeanadh dà-chànanach againn. Bha e a' coimhead air tasglann fìor intinneach lain Frangan Caimbeul. Às aonais seo, bhiodh cuid de na sgeulachdan Gàidhlig air an call gu sìorraidh.

Chuir Iain Òg Ìle (1821–1885) seachad òige ann an Ìle fo chùram piobaire an teaghlaich, a thug e gu àiteachan far nach biodh daoine leis an inbhe shòisealta aig leithid Iain Òg Ìle a' dol mar as àbhaist, leithid bothanan agus cruinneachaidhean coimhearsnachd. Thog e ùidh mhòr ann an sgeulachdan Gàidhealach, ùidh a bh' aige fad a bheatha. Bha e na neach-cruinneachaidh agus sgrìobhadair dìcheallach de na sgeulachdan sin. Chaidh a' mhòr-chuid a ghleidheadh agus an co-roinn le traidisean beul-aithris a bha a-nis a' crìonadh.

Tha e coltach gun do chruinnich Iain Òg Ìle sgeulachdan gach cothrom a bh' aige agus gun do chùm e gearr-chunntasan ann am Beurla agus Gàidhlig, gu tric a' faighinn cuideachadh bho dhaoine eile leis a' Ghàidhlig leis nach robh e misneachail mun Ghàidhlig sgrìobhte aige. Bha e na neach-ealain tàlantach, ge-tà, a tharraing iomadh sgeidse de dhaoine agus de na caractaran anns na sgeulachdan cuideachd. Às aonais Iain Òg Ìle, is dòcha nach bhiodh cuid de na sgeulachdan a bha air ghinealaichean de choimhearsnachdan Gàidhealach a bheò-ghlacadh air an clàradh dhuinn idir an-diugh.

Chomharraich sinn foillseachadh 'Sgeul | Story', a ruith eadar an t-Ògmhios 2023 agus an Giblean 2024, le sàr chuirme-ciùl leis a' chòmhlain òg Duan. Tha ainm a' chòmhlain a' ciallachadh òran no rann beag. Tha ùidh mhòr aig buill a' chòmhlain ann a bhith a' co-roinn agus a' gleidheadh ceòl Gàidhlig agus òrain traidiseanta, iad uile le pàrantan agus sean-phàrantan às a' Ghàidhealtachd.

Bha pìos mun chòmhlain san iris againn 'Discover' ann an 2023, a' bruidhinn air mar a chaidh tòrr dhualchainntean Gàidhlig sgìreil a-mach à bhith agus air cho cudromach 's a tha foghlam Gàidhlig.

Bhrosnaich 'Sgeul | Story' cuideachd cuirmean-ciùil a' gabhail a-steach beul-aithris na Gàidhlig agus duanagan Oiseanach (barrachd fiosrachaidh air td 20) agus a bhith a' cruthachadh dreuchd mar Sgeulaiche Gàidhlig, gus an cànan a thoirt air adhart tro sgeulachdan.

Chaidh an dreuchd 12-mìos a thoirt do Churstaidh NicDhòmhnaill aig a bheil còrr is 20 bliadhna de dh'èolas air pròiseactan cultarach cruthachail agus beartas de dh'èolas air cleachdadh stuthan tasglainn is cultarail gus sgeulachdan innse agus gus ùidh luchd-èisteachd a ghlacadh. Fhuair an dreuchd Sgeulaiche Gàidhlig maoinachadh fialaidh bho Bhòrd na Gàidhlig.

Tràth ann an 2024 bha e na thoileachas dhuinn Meòrachan Tuigse a shoidhnigeadh le ar caraidean aig Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, an t-Ionad Nàiseanta airson Cànan is Cultar na Gàidhlig.

Lean sinn oirnn cuideachd le leasachadh ar com-pàirteachasan agus ar dàimhean le sgoiltean is buidhnean Gàidhlig, a' gabhail a-steach Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce ann an Dùn Èideann agus Oifigeir Leasachaidh Capital Gaelic aig Comhairle Baile Dhùn Èideann, Ann Paterson. Chaidh sgoilearan bhon sgoil airson ro-shealladh de 'Sgeul | Story' agus chaidh cuid de sgeulachdan Iain Òg Ìle a leughadh le Ann, a chuir cuideachd ri cruthachadh an taisbeanaidh agus a bhruidhinn aig a bhogadh. Thuirt an Leabharlannaiche Nàiseanta Amina Shah: "Tha sinn airson barrachd a dhèanamh gus Gàidhlig a bhrosnachadh agus tha sin airson a dhèanamh nas fheàrr. Tha sinn fìor thoilichte a bhith a' cluich pàirt ann an ath-bheothachadh na Gàidhlig ann an Alba."

Leugh barrachd mu na taisbeanaidhean againn air taobh-duilleig 18-19.

members also featured in our 'Discover' magazine in 2023, discussing how a lot of regional Gaelic dialects have been lost and the importance of Gaelic education.

'Sgeul | Story' also inspired musical performances of Gaelic folklore and Ossianic ballads (read more on page 20) and the creation of a Gàidhlig Storymaker post, to promote the language through storytelling. The 12-month position was awarded to Kirsty MacDonald who has more than 20 years' experience in creative cultural projects and a wealth of knowledge of using archival and cultural materials to tell stories and engage audiences. The Gàidhlig Storymaker post has been generously funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Early in 2024 we were delighted to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with our friends at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture.

We also continued to develop our partnerships and relationships with Gaelic schools and organisations, including Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce primary school in Edinburgh and City of Edinburgh Council's Capital Gaelic Development



Officer, Ann Paterson. Pupils from the school attended a preview visit to 'Sgeul | Story' and were read some of Campbell's stories by Ann, who also contributed to the development of the exhibition and spoke at its launch.

National Librarian Amina Shah said: "We want to do more to promote Gaelic and do it better. We're excited to play our part in what feels like a resurgence in Gaelic language in Scotland."

Read about more of our exhibitions on pages 18–19.

National treasures

Visitors continue to flock to our free permanent exhibition, ‘Treasures of the National Library of Scotland’, which provides a unique insight into this country’s history, culture and people, and its place in the world.

One of our roles at the Library is to collect and preserve the memory of the Scottish nation on behalf of the people who live here. ‘Treasures’ reflects ideas and innovation, creativity and social change from across the centuries.

A vast array of objects from our collections are displayed – from medieval manuscripts and maps to letters, photographs and cultural ephemera. New items are added twice a year, so there is always something new for visitors to enjoy.

Highlights from the past year include:

‘Tam o’ Shanter’ illustration, 1885

Burns wrote ‘Tam o’ Shanter’ in 1790 to accompany the entry for Alloway Kirk in Francis Grose’s ‘Antiquities of Scotland’, published a year later. What began as a footnote became one of Scotland’s best-loved poems thanks to its dramatic verse and vivid descriptions of witches and warlocks.

This illustration of Tam by John Faed captures the excitement, fear and humour in Burns’ poem.



Hyakumantō Darani, 764–770

Returning to the throne in 764 following a rebellion, the Japanese Empress Shōtoku commissioned one million wooden pagodas, each containing a printed prayer scroll. These Hyakumantō Darani were distributed in groups of 100,000 to 10 temples in Japan, symbolising the Empress’s authority and repentance for the violence of the rebellion.

The Darani are among the earliest known printed works and the scroll is the oldest printed item in our collections.



Blaeu Atlas of Scotland, 1654

When Joan Blaeu (1596–1673) published the fifth volume of his ‘Atlas novus’, Scotland became one of the best-mapped countries in the world.

The volume includes 49 hand-coloured maps that collectively included more than 20,000 place names, depicting the country in unprecedented detail.

Blaeu’s map of ‘Lothian and Linlithquo’ is the earliest published map of the region, with Edinburgh coloured red in the centre.



Shakespeare’s First Folio, 1623

This first collected edition of plays by William Shakespeare (1564–1616) marked its 400th anniversary in 2023.

Only 18 of his plays appeared in print during his lifetime and some were corrupt or pirated.

The First Folio contains 36 plays, 18 of which were published for the first time – saving classics such as ‘Macbeth’ from probable extinction.



Festival Fringe material

We have a large collection of ephemera relating to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, from programmes and posters to promotional flyers and tickets.

Some now household names can be spotted among the items, promoting shows early in their careers.



Cutting-edge sensors

State-of-the-art environmental monitoring sensors have been rolled out, including for items in the ‘Treasures’ exhibition.

The trial of the LoRaWAN kit, which broadcasts at a lower frequency, allows data to be transmitted further and uses less energy.

The compact sensors sit discreetly beside items and can measure light levels, temperature and relative humidity.

Sensors were used to monitor our Gutenberg Bible in the ‘Treasures’ exhibition space and one was added in the Special Collections Reading Room, among others.

We hope to eventually use them as part of a kit that will travel with collections when they go on loan.

The pilot is in partnership with National Museums Scotland.

Collections in focus

Blood, Sweat and Tears: Scotland's HIV Story

We welcomed more than 52,000 visitors to this display, curated in partnership with Scotland's HIV and hepatitis C charity Waverley Care.

In 1991, in response to the AIDS epidemic, Waverley Care established one of the world's first hospices for those affected, Milestone House, in Edinburgh.

As treatments improved, the remit shifted from palliative to respite care.

This story was told in this exhibition, with the display honouring those who died and survived, people who nursed patients, campaigners and those who raised funds and awareness.

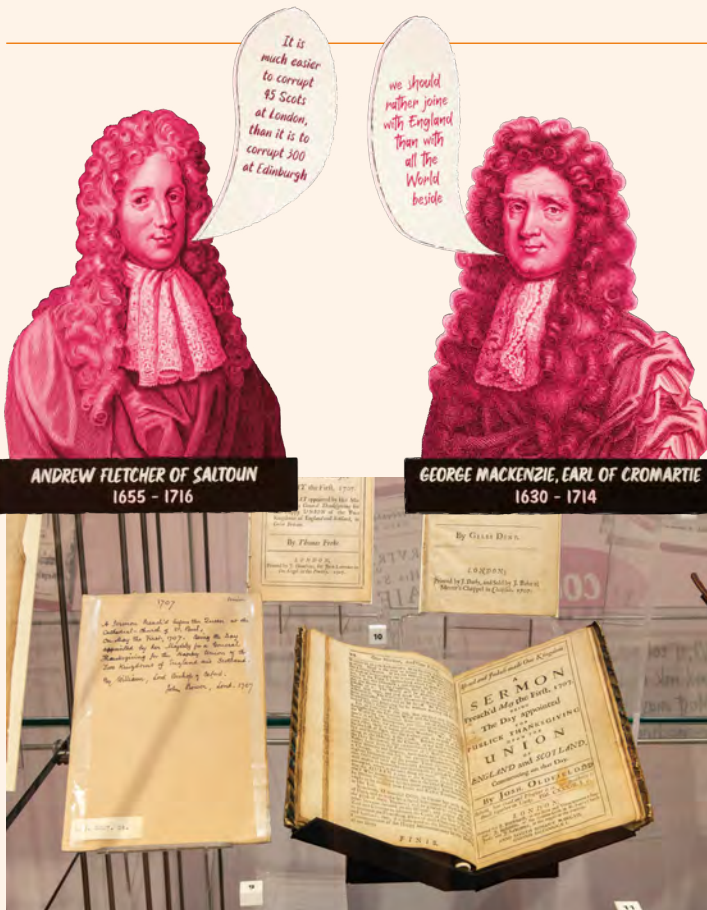
The exhibition showcased how the community took action, with items on display including arts and crafts made by residents of Milestone House, sexual health posters and leaflets, medicine packets and newspaper articles revealing attitudes towards HIV and AIDS. Visitors shared their thoughts and memories on 'leaves' shared on our 'HIV Stories Tree'. More than 1,160 'leaves' were left, written by visitors from across Europe, Argentina, Brazil, China, Canada, Kenya, Korea, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Paraguay, Singapore, Ukraine, Uruguay and the United States.

As part of our supporting programme for 'Blood, Sweat and Tears', the five authors of 'Our Stories Told By Us' spoke at

George IV Bridge as part of their book tour. They were joined by members of the Waverley Care team.

Co-authors Charity Nyirenda, Rebecca Mbewe, Winnie Ssanyu Sseruma, Memory Sachikonye and Angelina Namiba discussed the motivations for the book: to tell the world about African leadership in HIV prevention and treatment, to share their own stories in their own voices and to address stigma.

'Blood, Sweat and Tears: Scotland's HIV Story' ran from 12 May to 2 December 2023.



Encountering Political Texts

This thought-provoking display asked 'what makes a text political?' and shone a spotlight on items such as pamphlets, proclamations and sermons dating from 1640 to 1770.

It was a period of political uncertainty in Scotland and England, including arguments for and against the Union of Parliaments in 1707.

Newsbooks, the forerunner to today's newspapers, were also on show, reporting on events at home and abroad during the English Civil War.

The exhibition highlighted the differences between how political information is shared and consumed today with the past.

Alongside the physical copies of items being displayed were some digital versions, encouraging visitors to think about how the different look and feel created different experiences of political texts.

The exhibition was the result of political texts workshops with Newcastle University and the project was funded by an Arts and Humanities Research Council Research Network Grant.

'Encountering Political Texts' ran from 8 December 2023 until 20 April 2024.



Events

Fiddler on the rooms

Fiddler Aidan O'Rourke filled the reading rooms with music for two performances of Gaelic folklore – called 'Beacon' – inspired by our exhibition 'Sgeul | Story: Folktales from the Scottish Highlands', which shared the magic of stories collected by John Francis Campbell.

O'Rourke examined the display items to curate 'Beacon', teaming up with musicians Allan MacDonald and Sarah-Jane Summers, plus storyteller Eddie Linehan. The fiddler was inspired by a letter to Campbell that tells how a story of his was "like a flash of lightning, everywhere at once, all over, like one of your lights beaming from a certain distance round a particular spot".

O'Rourke loved the idea of Campbell sending out a beam of light that sweeps around, collecting tales, ballads and charms. He said: "I thought we could all take a walk together through the reading rooms. I imagine one of these beams, illuminating glimpses of the various riches that stimulated Campbell."

Stories linked to Ossianic ballads were shared by Linehan – one of the few storytellers practising seanchaithe, or traditional Irish lore-keeping.



poyums wae Len Pennie an Susi Briggs

We were delighted to host the official launch of Len Pennie's 'poyums' to a packed house in February 2024, before she embarked on a tour of events across Scotland and the UK.

Renowned for her Scots 'Word of the Day' series on TikTok and powerful feminist verse, Pennie engaged in a candid conversation with Scots Scriever Susi Briggs at our George IV Bridge building in Edinburgh.

They spoke about her journey from online sensation to the release of

her debut poetry collection 'poyums', which became a bestseller.

They also spoke about the promotion of Scots, surviving domestic abuse and creative ways to hurl online abuse back at detractors through poetry.

Learn more about our exhibitions and events at nls.uk/whats-on/

Heroic Gaelic Ossianic ballads reinterpreted

Composer Ned Bigham filled the Library with music with his reinterpretation of Gaelic heroic lays, or laoidhean.

These formed a central part of Gaelic culture in the later Middle Ages and tell tales of slain heroes, monsters, giants, battles and love.

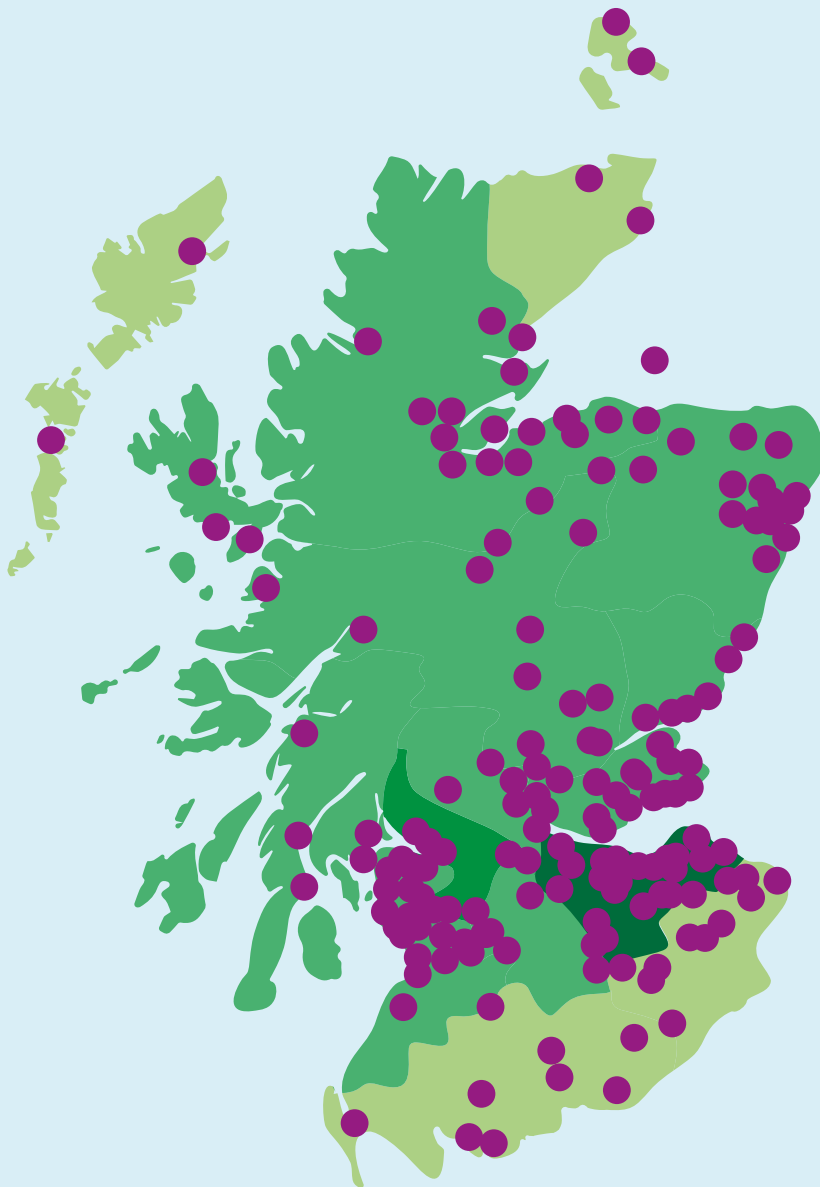
Bigham collaborated with traditional Gaelic singer Màiri Macmillan, from South Uist, and celebrated chamber ensemble the Edinburgh Quartet for the concert, which complemented our exhibition, 'Sgeul | Story: Folktales from the Scottish Highlands'.

The exhibition showcased the work of John Francis Campbell of Islay, who compiled one of the most important collections of laoidheadn texts.

Bigham said: "In reimagining them for a modern audience we have set them to string quartet, which as far as we are aware is a first."

The event was held thanks to the generosity of the Murray family and the American Patrons of the National Library and Galleries of Scotland.

Library's reach



241

villages, towns and cities across Scotland



120

places in other parts of the UK



112

towns and cities in other countries worldwide



'Discover' magazine reaches 238 places in Scotland and 106 areas in the rest of the UK

Reach across Scotland:



Discover

238

areas



Events

27

areas



Donors

92

areas



Other (business/digital)

6

areas

Reach across the rest of the UK:



Discover

106

areas



Events

3

areas



Donors

33

areas



Other (business/digital)

16

areas

Reach across the rest of the world:



Discover

98

towns and cities



Events

1

country



Donors

21

towns and cities



Other (business/digital)

9

cities

Registered Library members 2023–24



Developing the Organisation



Fellowship for National Librarian

We were delighted to see our National Librarian and Chief Executive, Amina Shah, elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2023.

The Fellowship comprises around 1,800 leading experts in the arts, sciences, business and third and public sectors.

The RSE says its Fellows are “the most distinguished in their fields”, with Amina being recognised for her more than 25 years of experience across the library and cultural sector.

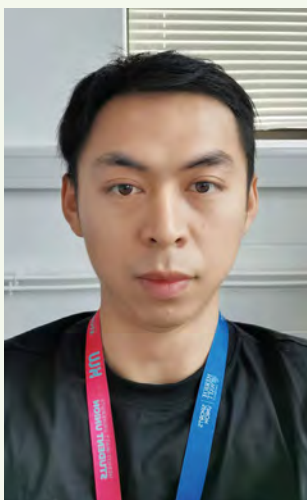
Fellows engage and connect nationally and internationally to share knowledge and tackle the most pressing challenges of the modern world. Engagement and collaboration are both important to Amina, who took part in a number of events in 2023-24.

These included an in-conversation panel in June 2023 as part of the CILIPS WINspiration feminism for libraries series and giving the keynote speech at the WINspiration conference in March 2024.

Amina also held a talk with Q&A at the University of Edinburgh’s Institute for Advanced Studies for International Women’s Day in March 2024 and attended the First Among Equals leadership lunch with Susan Rice in June 2024.

She also chaired a panel in August 2023 as part of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, with the subject under discussion ‘Do we need a new canon?’.

Climate control and our collections



We have been hosting a groundbreaking research project into maintaining safe environments for storing historic collections.

Bo Han (pictured), a PhD student in building and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) system simulation modelling, has been exploring the buffering effect of archival boxes to protect against fluctuating environmental conditions.

Preserving historic items requires significant energy use to maintain the right

temperature and humidity levels. But the climate crisis means the usual approaches are being reassessed. Bo developed a model, based on our environment modelling data, that shows we can ensure safe storage inside a microenvironment (storage box) so we do not need the same level of control in the macroenvironment (storage areas). It means we would be less reliant on air conditioning – saving us energy and money.

This is the first STEM-based PhD we have collaborated on and the findings are proving of great interest to other cultural institutions. The project is in partnership with Heriot-Watt University.



Java nice day!

Our new café at George IV Bridge is proving a hit with our staff and visitors. The coffee shop has ‘bean’ busy providing food and drinks to help people have a brew-tiful day. Meanwhile, our new pop-up shop at Lawnmarket, Edinburgh, has also been enjoying a brisk trade and has allowed us to reach a wider range of customers.

Funding our work

Income 2023-24



Grant in aid
£19,608,000



Donations
and legacies
£1,449,000



Charitable
activities
£674,000



Other trading
activities
£166,000



Investment
income
£393,000

Balance Sheet highlights

Further additions
to collections
£323,000

Library infrastructure
£968,000

value of donated
collections added
in the year
£58,000

General reserves
at year end
£913,000

Spending 2023-24



Staff costs
£13,483,000



Depreciation
£3,718,000



Other running costs
£2,333,000



Building maintenance
£1,437,000



Other property costs
£1,316,000



Collection purchases
£729,000

Thank you

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