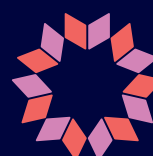




Annual Review

2025–26



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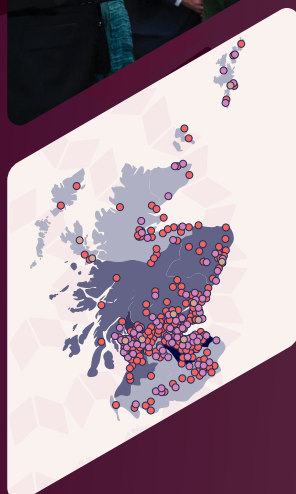


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Connection at the heart of centenary celebrations



We were thrilled with the response from local communities... people travelled from far and wide.”

When a big birthday is coming up, we tend to wonder whether we should celebrate it at all. If we put on a party, will people turn up? Do people care enough? These were the questions we were asking as we were planning a programme of activities to mark our 100th birthday in 2025. As we reflected on what it means for Scotland to have founded and built a National Library over the past 100 years, it became clear that a National Library does not stand alone. It is a connected part of an interwoven tapestry, and those connections are a critical part of what sustains it. It seemed obvious that we should take the chance to celebrate all things library – all parts of the connected community that we are part of in Scotland. And we did manage to throw a brilliant party on the day of our actual birthday, with thanks to Dennis the Menace.

It turned out our pre-big birthday jitters were just that; we were blown away by the support we received throughout the year. Our amazing centenary champions, Val McDermid and Damian Barr, helped us spread the word in style. Our ‘Love Libraries’ campaign was celebrated in every region of Scotland, and we got so much out of working with our partners in the libraries sector that we intend to build upon this crucial advocacy partnership in the years to come. Our centenary exhibition, ‘Dear Library’, received touching and heartfelt messages from library fans and librarians from all around the world. Evidently, the challenges libraries are facing in Scotland are not unique.

Our ‘OUTWITH: National Library around Scotland’ programme of special loans and events took place in Aberdeen, Perth and Shetland. We were thrilled with the response from local communities and people travelled from far and wide.

We had a feeling that there was something about Mary and our instincts proved correct – the surge in visitors to Perth for the display of the last letter of Mary, Queen of Scots far surpassed our expectations. The complementary display, in honour of both Robert Burns and one of Scotland’s most renowned contemporary writers, former Makar Liz Lochhead, thrilled visitors to AK Bell Library. Such was the

response to activities outside of the Central Belt that we are committed to continuing our ‘OUTWITH’ programme in the coming years. We go into more detail about these activities in the pages ahead, as well as details of all the work we do every year to ensure the collections are preserved for future generations and available for people today. We continued acquiring new items for the national collections, the highlights of which are featured in this publication.

We also have a new website – making it easier for people to access the collections or discover more about Scotland’s history and heritage through a range of features.

‘The Next Chapter’, the Library’s strategy for 2026–2030, which was co-produced with partners across Scotland, lays out three key priorities: Responsible Stewardship, Connection and Sustainability. You will notice that this review is shaped around those themes. Some of you helped us in the development of this strategy and many of you helped fund our centenary programme and more. I know I say this every year, but we cannot thank our partners, donors and supporters enough – without you and those who have gone before you, much of what we achieved in the past year, and indeed that past 100 years, would never have happened. 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁳󠁣󠁴󠁿

Amina Shah

National Librarian and Chief Executive

Responsible Stewardship

Acquisitions

John Duns Scotus

An important medieval work has been added to the national collections: John Duns Scotus's 'Quaestiones in primum librum Sententiarum Petri Lombardi'.

First published in 1472 by one of Italy's first printing houses, this book represents the first known instance of a Scottish author appearing in print anywhere in the world.

John Duns Scotus's work had a major influence on the development of Christian thought during the latter medieval period and beyond, and he is generally considered to be among



the most important philosophical and theological voices of the time.

The acquisition of this item will help us demonstrate the spread of Scottish intellectual thought across Europe.

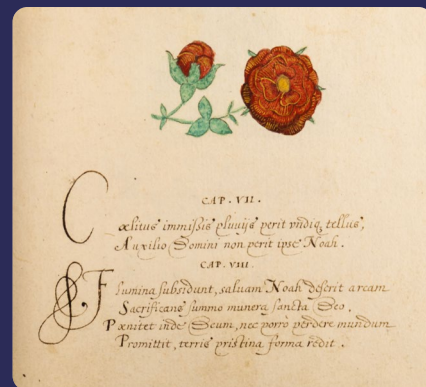
This purchase was made possible thanks to financial support from the Library's Acquisitions Circle.

Esther Inglis manuscript

We acquired one of the last surviving calligraphy manuscripts of Esther Inglis (c.1570–1624) remaining in private hands.

The manuscript is a fine example of those she produced in colour between 1605 and 1607 and displays a variety of handwriting styles, including text written in a minute script less than one millimetre high.

This acquisition was made possible through financial support from the Library's Acquisitions Circle, Pamela Jackson Fund, the Friends of the Nations' Libraries, John R. Murray Fund and a major grant from Art Fund, including a contribution from the Wolfson Foundation.



'Scottish Football Reminiscences and Sketches'

This is a rare copy of the first published history of Scottish football, published in Glasgow by John Menzies & Co in 1890.

There are 11 articles on various aspects of the game, including 'Famous Association players – past and present', 'Pioneers of Association football in Scotland', 'How clubs were started long ago' and 'The patrons, spectators and popular players'.

The author, journalist David Drummond Bone (1841–1911), was editor of the 'North British Daily Mail', in which some of these articles first appeared. He lived in Partick, Glasgow, and among his six sons and two daughters were James Bone, editor of the 'Guardian', the artist Sir Muirhead Bone and Sir David William Bone, master mariner, to whom this copy belonged.

Audubon donation

Scotch whisky company Gordon & MacPhail, together with Mr. Pote Narittakum Lee, Chairman of iGroup (and owner of Gordon & MacPhail's distribution partner in Thailand), collaborated to donate a rare 21st-century edition of John James Audubon's 'Birds of America' to our collections.

This marked a double milestone – our centenary and the 130th anniversary of Gordon & MacPhail.



Bus map timetables

We were delighted to receive a donation of almost 200 bus maps and transport ephemera from John Davies, author of 'The Rise and Demise of the Bus Map'.

These kinds of publications are tricky to collect, so this was a great opportunity to fill gaps.

Transport timetables and maps of routes are rich sources of information and help us to understand how local services have changed over time. They can also be useful for things such as creative writing, where the details of journeys long forgotten can be brought back to life.



'The day-book of John Stuart Blackie', 2nd edition

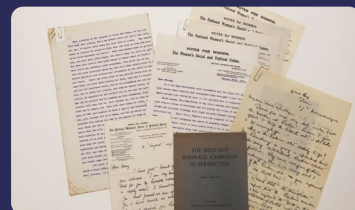
John Stuart Blackie (1809–1895) was a classical scholar, serving as Professor of Humanity at the University of Aberdeen from 1839 to 1852, then as Professor of Greek at the University of Edinburgh from 1852 until 1882.

The day-book – published by Grant Richards in London in 1902 – is a collection of his thoughts on life, character and literature. This copy was bound by Cedric Chivers of Bath in his signature 'vellucent' style after an intricate and delicate design attributed to Dorothy Carleton Smyth.

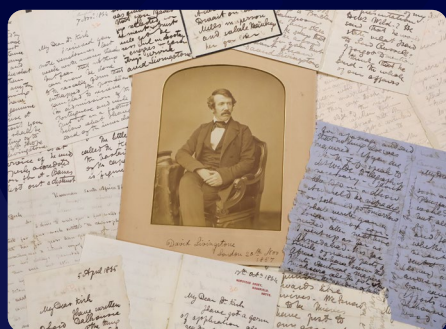
Smyth (1880–1933) was an artist, costumiere, book-binder and doyen of the Glasgow School of Art and the Arts and Crafts movement in Scotland. Smyth is a key figure of the Golden Age of Illustration.

Archive of Mary Phillips, the 'Scottish Suffragette'

Mary Phillips (1880–1969) was one of the most prominent Scottish women involved in the militant suffrage campaign. Her letters and speeches document her role as an organiser for the Women's Social and Political Union across Scotland and England, as well as her relationship with Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst.



Two lots from an auction of items from her collection have been acquired and can be made fully accessible for research thanks to financial support from the National Library of Scotland's Acquisitions Circle.



Letters of David Livingstone

Letters written by David Livingstone (1813–1873), along with three photographic portraits of the explorer, have been added to the national collections. The acquisition includes eight letters to Sir John Kirk (1832–1922), the botanist on Livingstone's Zambezi expedition of 1858 to 1864, and complements our existing archives of Livingstone and Kirk.

The letters were part of a private collection, so this will enable public access for the first time. Additionally, they will be made accessible digitally through Livingstone Online.

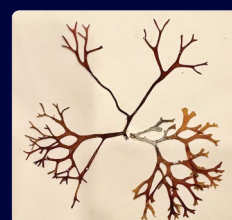
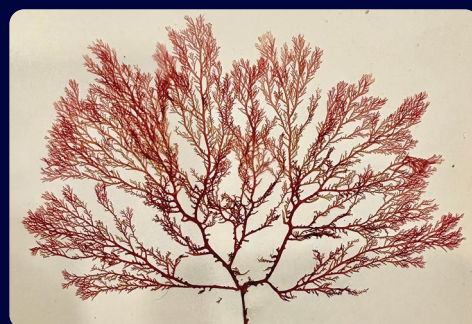
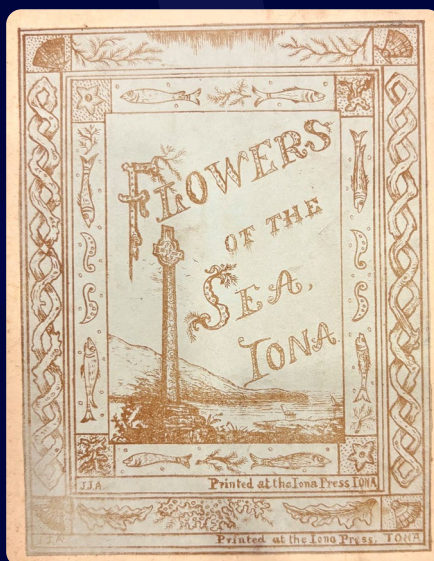
This acquisition was made possible through financial support from the Ronald W. Clark Fund.

'Flowers of the Sea'

This album of six pressed seaweed specimens from the island of Iona was printed in 1891 by the short-lived Iona Press, for sale to tourists during the short summer season.

The press was founded in 1887 by William Muir, the retired manager of the Torr Mor granite quarry, and John McCormick, the elder son of the quarry foreman. Perhaps appropriately for a press run by former quarrymen, its works were produced almost exclusively in lithograph.

The folkloric aspects of the island seem to have extended to its press; upon its closure in 1902, it was rumoured that the lithography stones were taken to the north of the island and buried.



Cricket Scotland archive

This archive includes a variety of documentation relating to the history of the Scottish Cricket Union and Cricket Scotland, from 1908 to the present day. Items include minute books, scorebooks, publications and programmes from men's, women's and junior cricket.

The archive provides a complete overview of the sport in Scotland

during the past 117 years. This includes research files compiled by historians Sandy Thorburn and Neil Leitch, with information relating to the formation of clubs across Scotland, office bearers, internationalists to 1980, information relating to the first recorded cricket match in Scotland in 1785 and a large volume of statistics relating to the Scotland team and players.

Estate agents' brochures

This donation of around 2,000 print copies of Scottish farm and estate sale particulars covers the period from around 1990 to 2010. The collection had been put together by Andy Wightman, author of 'Who Owns Scotland', as part of his research process.

The sale brochures will support research into local history, mapping, land use, forestation and architecture. They are likely to be rich sources of photographs of buildings and estates at these specific periods of time, so they document change. The information is also potentially of use to inform community bids for land ownership.

Railway and campaign posters

These posters depict Scotland and Scottish culture from the early 20th century.

We added to the collection railway posters featuring Glamis Castle, a kilted bagpiper promoting the Royal Tournament and a piper and Highland dancers illustrating why people should travel by rail to Highland Games.

We have an impressive collection of posters and we are always pleased to strengthen this when we can. This was a particularly good haul, obtained at auction for a bargain price of less than £2,000 for four.

Posters are both information sources and artworks, providing opportunities for inspiration and research as well as memorialising Scotland's social history. Read more about our posters on [page 15](#).

Conservation

The Plumb photograph album

Repair work to a photograph album created by Isabella Plumb (1861–1944) proved to be a rewarding challenge for our expert conservators.

Plumb, born and raised in Norfolk, became a missionary with the Church of Scotland, working in Poona and Sialkot. She was an enthusiastic traveller, public speaker and collector of photographs.

Her album, dated September 1897, contains 32 silver gelatine photographs of Sialkot, Gujrat, Dalhousie and Kashmir. It was in poor condition when we received it, not only due to the poor quality of the materials but also likely owing to the extreme heat, light and humidity in India.

The volume was made up of pages of thin board, attached onto guards of a similar board by strips of cloth, bound in half-leather with cloth sides, with gold tooling.

Even the most careful handling caused the thin board to break off. The cloth strips had completely broken down, with the pages becoming detached from the binding. The front and back boards were detached and the leather spine was split in half. Remarkably the photographs had escaped any damage and remained intact.

We surface cleaned the binding and pages using a soft brush, as well as gentle use of a chemical sponge. Where there were missing parts, we carefully split the board in half using a scalpel, with a piece of 100 per cent cotton paper – cut slightly larger than the missing area – adhered into the split using wheat starch pastes and lightly pressed.

When dried, we cut toned pieces of thin museum board to the exact size of the missing area and adhered them to either side of the paper core. Finally, we covered the board with a thin, toned Japanese tissue using a watered-down paste, which acted



to strengthen the board. We reattached the pages to new guards using cloth strips and rounded the completed book block and applied the original end band.

Japanese paper adhered with wheat starch paste was used to line the spine, which we strengthened with kraft paper. We repaired the damaged corners in matching black leather, rebaked the book in the same material and readhered the original spine.

Finally, we made a bespoke box to house the volume and rejuvenated the photographs with a clean.

‘British Butterflies’ by James Duncan, vol. 10 of the ‘Naturalist’s Library’ series, with illustrations

A 19th-century manuscript copy of James Duncan’s ‘British Butterflies’ (c. 1840) was donated to the Library in 2023. The volume is of notable historical and artistic value, containing 49 hand-illustrated pages executed in watercolour, ink, pencil and pastel, protected by contemporary interleaving tissues. The manuscript also contains a rare, exsiccated (dried out) butterfly specimen between its pages.

We prioritised the volume for urgent conservation intervention due to severe physical and biological degradation. The binding cover was absent and the original sewing structure had fragmented, leaving the individual gatherings and delicate hand-drawn folia completely unattached and at immediate risk of loss.

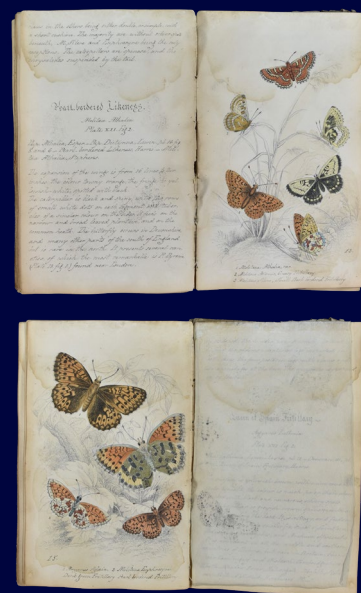
Environmental damage was equally severe – the text block suffered from historical water ingress and subsequent mould infestation. This caused paper softening, mechanical weakening and prominent staining.

We started treatment with thorough analytical testing before a controlled cold water screen washing process, paired with localised alcohol treatments to address areas affected by mould. We subsequently resized the paper with a gelatine solution



to restore its original strength and structural handling properties, followed by repairs using archival Japanese tissue and wheat starch paste.

To restore the volume’s functionality, we rewove the manuscript then housed it in an adhesive-free, semi-limp paper case designed to protect the text block while respecting historical archival binding models. To ensure long-term



preservation, we safely isolated the butterfly specimen and mounted it on unbuffered board within an acid-free glassine enclosure.

The fully restored volume and its accompanying material are now securely housed together in a custom archival phase box. The manuscript is now fully stabilised, structurally sound and safe for consultation.

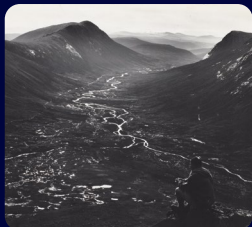
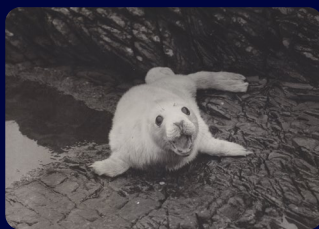


‘Hidden’ treasures discovered by students

For the second year in a row, we hosted three students from the MSc History of Art Work Placement Programme, University of Edinburgh, to help with surveying and rehousing the Series 7 collection.

Curators Dr Sarah Mackay and Suzanna Beaupré worked with the students to examine the contents of more than 50 boxes of miscellaneous publications, flagging items for conservation, cataloguing and urgent rehousing when necessary.

Among the items brought to light were a poster chart containing information about the illness of HRH Albert Edwards, the Prince of Wales (1841–1910), some 1960s fashion fabric books and a very large chart celebrating the history and virtues of the potato.



Tom Weir photographs rehousing project

The archive of broadcaster, climber and environmentalist Tom Weir includes thousands of photographs documenting his career and pursuits. In 2016, we began a project to rehouse these photographs to make sure they were preserved in the best conditions possible.

This work was completed at the end of 2025. The rehousing not only ensures their long-term preservation but makes these photographs safer to handle by researchers in the reading room.

The Scrabble Book

This 1839 book belonged to Katherine Jane 'Janie' Ellice, a Scottish diarist and artist. Its poor condition meant a long and complex repair process.

The item is a guarded scrapbook bound in half-leather with marble sides. When it arrived in the conservation studio, its boards and leather spine were detached, the boards had damaged corners and losses to the marble paper sides. Parts of the leather and marble paper had become detached but, remarkably, most had not been lost. We used brown gum tape to repair much of the volume inside and out.

The book block was guarded and made up of a thin poor-quality paper, not suitable for housing the multiple graphite and ink drawings, watercolour artwork and prints which had been crudely adhered into the volume.

These had caused great strain to the paper and created multiple creases, tears, dog-ears and losses to the paper. The sewing had broken down at the front

and back of the volume and pages had been hacked out. Some of the removed artwork from the volume is now housed in the Canadian National Library.

We started treatment by dry cleaning the volume with soft brushes and

chemical sponges. We removed the gum tape using laponite poultices. Where possible, we humidified loose pages, in a humidification chamber, otherwise we undertook local humidification.

We repaired the paper using wheat starch paste, spider tissue and Japanese paper. This was a long, slow process due to the amount of damage and the difficulty accessing the damage.

We then sewed the loose sections into the volume – attaching them to the original sewing. Loose artworks were guarded back into the volume.

We repaired the boards and damaged corners. The original leather corners were lifted and reconstructed. New corners of matching green leather were attached before we adhered the original corners on top. We rebaked the volume in the same matching leather, with the original leather sides and spine adhered on top.

A custom phase box was made to house the complete volume, which can now be accessed at our reading rooms with careful handling.



John Murray Archive

The John Murray Archive is a key source for literary and book history, and one of the Library's most important collections. The John Murray publishing house's authors included Jane Austen, Lord Byron, David Livingstone, Charles Darwin, Patrick Leigh Fermor, Freya Stark and Dervla Murphy.

A multi-year project of repairs and cataloguing began in April 2024 and focuses on the 20th-century part of this important collection. A generous grant from the John R.

Murray Charitable Trust allowed us to employ an Assistant Curator, Conservator and Conservation Technician.

The first part of the project was completed in spring 2026, with the papers of John Murray VI and his authors made accessible through the Special Collections Reading Room.

The next stage of the project is focusing on the more than 5,000 book files which document the publication of Murray's 20th-century titles.

Bartholomew maps

Jiayu Hu spent six months with us and made a huge impact in the Bartholomew Reference Collection. She conserved 338 maps and handled the repair of two large atlases, improving the protection and accessibility of these fragile items. This project was supported by Stichting Teuntje Anna (TA Fund) and Mr Bruce Field.

Digitisation

Nearly 1,000 moving images added online

We added nearly 1,000 newly digitised moving images to our online catalogue, with about a third now available to view remotely by those unable to visit our buildings in Glasgow or Edinburgh.

From a drama about Mary, Queen of Scots made by Gaumont in 1911 (pictured below) to contemporary work made during the Covid-19 lockdowns, there is always something surprising to explore across place, time and genre.

We continue to add work from the larger Grampian Television and MG Alba Gaelic broadcast collections, plus directly from Creative Scotland, ranging from feature film and animation to cookery programmes.



Mega maps' scanning struggle solved

We have developed a way to capture collections items which are bound into guarded volumes.

Due to the hinged nature of these flexible bindings, it is a struggle to keep the paper flat enough for imaging.

But through internal collaboration between teams, we devised a method with support and padding that allows for the safe scanning of large (A0) volumes of guarded maps for the first time.

This particular series of more than 3,000 maps includes some of our earliest Ordnance Survey maps and these are now available on our website.



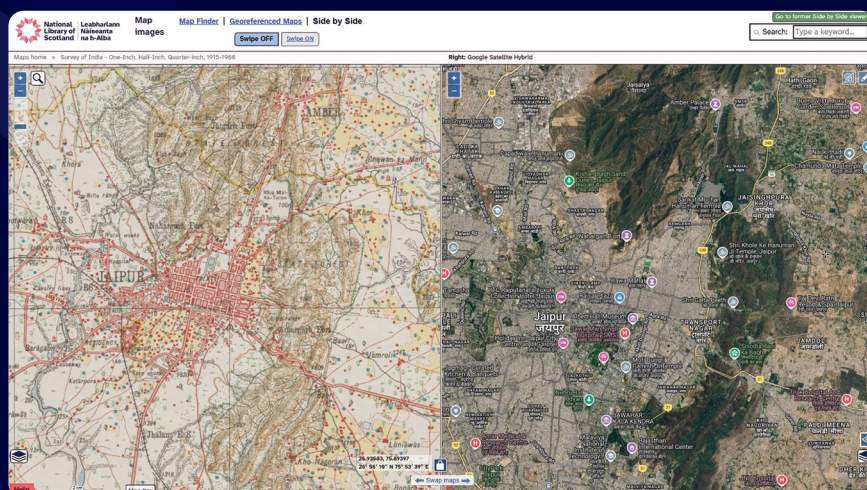
Digitising maps of India

Over the past year, we scanned all our holdings of detailed Survey of India maps. These 5,565 sheets provide detailed coverage of much of India and parts of present-day Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan in the first half of the 20th century.

These were among the most detailed maps produced for many areas and

they show settlements, railways, roads, woodland, cultivated land, rivers and irrigation tanks. We have also georeferenced these maps, making them easy to compare with present-day mapping and satellite imagery.

You can view the Survey of India maps on our website at maps.nls.uk/india/survey-of-india





Jackie Kay.
Photo by Aly Wight

Archives

Jackie Kay's archive catalogued

After successfully acquiring Jackie Kay's archive in 2024, we catalogued and made everything available for consultation in 2025.

The items offer unparalleled insight into the life and work of one of Scotland's former Makars. The archive includes early schoolbooks, manuscripts of celebrated works such as 'The Adoption Papers' and 'Trumpet', correspondence and notebooks filled with the seeds of poems and stories.

It also captures moments of Kay's everyday life, including family photos from



trips to the Isle of Mull and the story of finding her poem laminated on the wall of a chip shop – a moment her father, John Kay, celebrated by dubbing her the "Poet Laminate".

Archives Accreditation

We were pleased to retain our Archives Accreditation, with the assessment panel praising the Library as "well-run" with "exemplary" internal collaboration.

Archive Service Accreditation is run by the National Archives, with the Scottish Council on Archives and National Records of Scotland. Only 13 Scottish archives have earned full accreditation since the scheme launched in 2013.

We were first accredited in 2019 and this second accreditation highlights our commitment to continuing development of our service and the ability to manage changing circumstances successfully.

Digital Ghosts

Dr Andrea Kocsis of the University of Edinburgh – our Digital Research Fellow 2024–25 – and artist Dr Dorsey Kaufmann staged an exhibition featuring artistic responses to metadata compiled by Trevor Thomson, of our Published Collections team, during our web archiving activities.

The 'Digital Ghosts' exhibition was part of the 2025 Being Human Festival and co-funded by the Library, the ESRC Festival of Social Science, the British Academy and the Leverhulme Trust.

Real and virtual pieces reflected the iterative process of web archiving over time, showing that while some websites



Photo by Chris Scott. Artwork by Dorsey Kaufmann

endure, many more drop away. The role of the web archive is to capture websites while they are live and preserve these as an echo, or 'digital ghost'.

The exhibition was held at InSpace in Edinburgh, in November 2025.

Learn more at data.nls.uk/projects/digital-ghosts

Best Practices in Filmstrip Archiving

Curators Alison Metcalfe and Dr Sarah Mackay represented us at the 'Best Practices in Filmstrip Archiving' workshop at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

This was the first of a series of events being held as part of 'Relocating Filmstrips, Remapping Europe', a three-year project funded by an £850,000 grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the German Research Foundation. The project is led by the University of St Andrews and Goethe University.

Filmstrips, widely used for both education and entertainment in the 20th century, occupy an uncertain position in archival collections. They are often misclassified as moving image films, inconsistently catalogued, or overlooked, despite their historical significance and their role as precursors to contemporary formats of audiovisual presentations.

We have a large number of filmstrips, the PowerPoint presentations of their day, in our collections and we are making a significant contribution to this work.



Alison Metcalfe, third from left, and Dr Sarah Mackay, fifth from left, with fellow researchers at the 'Relocating Filmstrips, Remapping Europe' conference in Frankfurt. Photo courtesy of the 'Relocating Filmstrips' team

Success stories

Curators' 'Pen Names' published

The book 'Pen Names' by Dr Kirsty McHugh and Ian Scott (pictured below) was published by Bodleian Library Publishing. Their work is based on research undertaken for our 2022/23 exhibition of the same name.

The introduction gives a brief history of pen names, followed by 40 short chapters featuring a range of authors who published under pseudonyms from the 1820s to the present day.

These include well-known figures such as George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), Currer Bell (Charlotte Brontë) and George Orwell (Eric Blair), plus lesser-known writers who have hidden behind aliases.



Hidden Collections milestone reached

We marked the tenth anniversary of our Hidden Collections programme to describe and provide access to our uncatalogued collections.

Over the course of the year, a further 6,897 items were catalogued, raising the total number of previously uncatalogued collection items made accessible through the programme to 1,335,879.

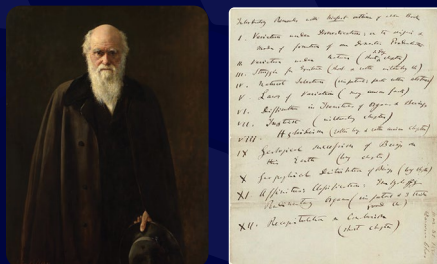
Darwin archive recognised by Unesco

We were delighted to announce – alongside partners across the UK – that our collections relating to the life and work of Charles Darwin were added to the prestigious Unesco International Memory of the World Register in April 2025.

Darwin was one of the world's most influential natural scientists and, as part of our John Murray Archive, we hold correspondence between Darwin and his publisher, John Murray. The correspondence documents the transformation of his research into print.

John Murray Archive Curator, Dr Kirsty McHugh, said undertaking the publication of 'On the Origin of Species' was a pivotal moment for both Darwin and Murray, adding: "Both took huge reputational risks in putting this research before the public but it paid off. Archives like these serve as a reminder to us all how life – and the events that make up our lives and legacies – truly can go one way or the other."

The Unesco International Memory of the World Register includes some of the UK's most treasured heritage, such



as the Domesday Book, the Shakespeare Documents and the personal archive of Sir Winston Churchill.

The Charles Darwin Archive now joins this esteemed list. The Archive is a collaboration between us and Cambridge University Library, the Natural History Museum, the Linnean Society of London, English Heritage's Down House and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.



Photo courtesy of the Linnean Society

This year's intake:

Total intake

122,395

Newspapers

16,152

Print music scores

1,277

Print books

49,951

eBooks

7,251

Print maps

957

Print serial issues

38,229

eJournal issues

6,273

Other

2,305

Connection



Photos by
Neil Hanna

Centenary

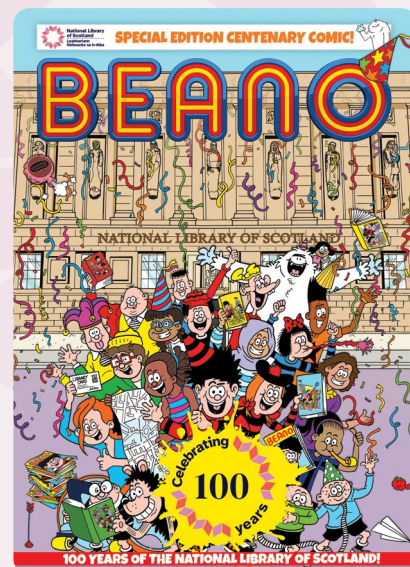
'Beano' Birthday Bash

A highlight of our centenary year was our 'Beano' Birthday Bash on 7 August 2025 – our official birthday, when we were created by an Act of Parliament – with celebrations in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

About 1,000 visitors, including the then Culture Secretary Angus Robertson (pictured below with National Librarian Amina Shah) joined

us to mark the special occasion. By 10am a long queue had formed in the summer rain outside George IV Bridge, with people keen to pick up a special commemorative issue of 'Beano' that featured our main building as its cover star.

We featured on broadcast news, including BBC One's UK-wide 'News at Six', while press coverage totalled 190 articles.



Advocates talk and tours

Sunday 26 October 2025 marked 100 years since the first Board meeting of the National Library of Scotland.

We celebrated this anniversary with a day of special tours, in collaboration with the Faculty of Advocates. Visitors

explored archives documenting our creation and the transfer of the Advocates' gifted holdings, then stepped through the 'secret' door into the Advocates Library for an exclusive guided tour of Scotland's premier law library.

Edinburgh International Book Festival workshops

Our birthday celebrations included four events in collaboration with Edinburgh International Book Festival in August 2025. These workshops involved getting up close to the archives of Jackie Kay and Muriel Spark, with insight from curators and experts.



Treasured collections items go on tour

As part of our centenary programme, 'OUTWITH: National Library around Scotland' shared our collections, expertise and stories beyond the Central Belt, creating meaningful partnerships in Aberdeen, Perth and Shetland.

Designed as a pilot for future national outreach, the collaborative programme combined landmark loans and exhibitions, public events, community engagement and a new National Library Live event series, hosted by public libraries and bringing the Library directly into local communities.

The loans and exhibition programme included the display of 17th-century music book 'Songs and Fancies' at Aberdeen Art Gallery and the first major exhibition of the last letter of Mary, Queen of Scots for more than two decades. It went on show at Perth Museum, along with a display exploring Mary's cultural legacy through Robert Burns and Liz Lochhead archive material at nearby AK Bell Library. Finally, an exhibition exploring Hugh MacDiarmid and Valda Grieve's years in Whalsay took place at Shetland Museum and Archives.

Together, these exhibitions were supported by 33 public events, school visits, workshops, talks and community activities developed with local partners.

The programme's reach exceeded expectations, engaging more than 54,000 people. Exhibition attendance was particularly strong in Perth and Shetland, while National Library Live activities introduced new audiences to the Library's collections, services

and expertise through talks, games and drop-in activities.

'OUTWITH' attracted extensive media coverage, including international outlets. Stories about the last letter of Mary, Queen of Scots and the wider programme helped bring our collections and partnerships to audiences far beyond the exhibition venues themselves.

The initiative also demonstrated the value of collaborative working. Supported by almost £130,000 in external fundraising, including our most successful public appeal to date, 'OUTWITH' strengthened relationships with cultural organisations and libraries across the country, increased opportunities for future loans and partnerships and provided a model for future audience-focused national outreach to provide greater access to our collections and services.

1. Poet and former Makar Liz Lochhead views the last letter of Mary, Queen of Scots at Perth Museum. Photo by Julie Howden
2. 'Songs and Fancies' on show at Aberdeen Art Gallery. Photo courtesy of Aberdeen City Council – Archives, Gallery & Museum
3. A visitor explores the exhibition relating to Hugh MacDiarmid and Valda Grieve at Shetland Museum. Photo by Alexa Fitzgibbon
4. A visitor examines Mary's last letter in Perth. Photo by Julie Howden



'OUTWITH' visitors said:

"I really appreciate the OUTWITH project's aim to increase engagement and access to these materials and archives."

"It was great to see this happening in my local library."

"So historic a document – to see it here in Perth is a privilege."

Love Libraries

Our Love Libraries campaign launched on Valentine's Day 2025, with activity continuing throughout the year.

This included a 'Libraries that Shaped Us' event on 12 November at Kelvin Hall, featuring writers Damian Barr and Louise Welsh alongside National Librarian Amina Shah, in collaboration with the Scottish Arts and Humanities Alliance and the Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries.

We also commissioned campaign material, including posters, that were distributed to school libraries across Scotland as part of our school libraries project funded by the Scottish Library and Information Council.

The campaign branding and toolkit were widely praised by libraries as attractive, eye-catching, and easy to integrate into existing library activity.



Our evaluation also found:

- The collective voice strengthened advocacy at a national level and a willingness to continue working together using a similar model
- **Every local authority was reached** – and at least half took an active role in the campaign
- The National Library of Scotland is now considered a more integral part of the country's library sector – prior to Love Libraries it was considered more relevant to research libraries.

Event visitors said:

“Came away feeling inspired with lots of love for libraries, which was the aim of the event!”

‘Dear Library’ exhibition

The flagship exhibition of our centenary programme, ‘Dear Library’, celebrated the enduring value of libraries through stories, creativity and participation.

Shaped by more than 500 public contributions, the exhibition brought together renowned writers, artists, library partners and community voices in a vibrant, interactive space.

We welcomed almost 70,000 people over 10 months, generated extensive engagement through events and partnerships and attracted many first-time visitors.

Audiences described it as personal, inspiring and deeply relevant to their lives and were encouraged to share their own stories, with the exhibition a powerful reflection of libraries as welcoming, inclusive and essential community spaces.

A partnership with Edinburgh City of Literature led to ‘Dear Library Story Sessions’, a series of free, drop-in, story-based events showcasing the work of local authors. This ran during the Edinburgh Fringe and Book Festival in August 2025 for adults and during school holidays in April 2026 for families.

Exhibition visitors said:

“It was probably the most relevant exhibition to my life and my interests I’ve ever been to.”

“Libraries are vital buildings for building communities, bringing people together and sharing and building knowledge.”

Photos by Neil Hanna and Alison Gibson

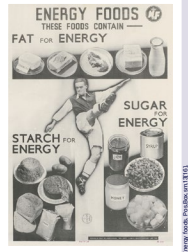
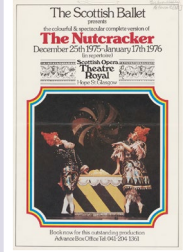
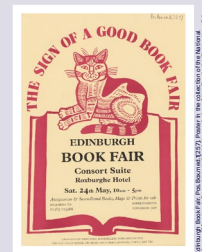
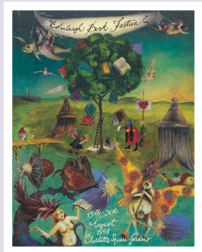


Collaboration

Student project promotes our posters collection

Curator Dr Sarah Mackay hosted four students from the University of Edinburgh's MScR Collections and Curating Practices course to respond to the challenge, 'how can the Library engage more people with our poster collections?'.

The students took part in workshops with Library staff and external visitors from Edinburgh College, developing a leaflet (pictured above) to promote the collection (examples pictured below). They also produced content for our website. The students did a great job in helping us share our poster collections more widely and we've already seen an increase in requests to work with these items since the placements ended in April.



School librarians were a class act

From 21-25 July, we welcomed four school librarians to the Library as part of a knowledge-exchange programme funded by the Scottish Library and Information Council.

We received 32 applications for the residency opportunity and the four selected candidates travelled from Glasgow, Harris and Elgin for the week-long placement. They met with various staff across the Library, including conservators, librarians, curators and colleagues at Kelvin Hall in Glasgow.

During the week the librarians (pictured below) worked with the Learning Team to co-develop resources that would be distributed to school libraries in the new academic year.



Our French connections

We were delighted to host the Consul General of France and the Franco-Scottish Society as part of their week-long celebrations of the Auld Alliance in October 2025.

We are the home of the Franco-Scottish Society's archive. As they were 130 last year (30 years older than us), we treated them to a display of collections items relating to their own history, as well as items relating to Scotland's 730-year old relationship with France through the Alliance.

Honour for Almut

Our Music Curator, Almut Boehme, was delighted to receive in May 2025 an Honorary Fellowship of IAML (UK & IRL), a professional network of International Music Libraries and Documentation Centres.

After 30 years of contribution to IAML both internationally and in the UK and Ireland, including serving on the UK and Ireland branch executive committee, she has been recognised for her "distinctive contribution to music librarianship and her notable service to the branch".

Congratulations to Almut!

Marking Glasgow 850

As part of the St Mungo Festival 2025, we took the 15th-century Blacader (Blackadder) Prayerbook (Psalter) to Glasgow Cathedral for a special one-day viewing, on 29 September. It was the first time the book had been there since 1508.

We partnered with the Mediaeval Glasgow Trust on the display, which attracted more than 550 visitors in less than five hours. The event was part of Glasgow's 850th birthday celebrations.

Events



Alison Stevenson, left, Nicola McCartney, second right, and the 'Caring Scotland' team. Photo by Kirsty Anderson

'Caring Scotland' sound collection launches at Kelvin Hall

Members of the care experienced community joined us at Kelvin Hall in April for the launch of 'Caring Scotland', a ground-breaking project that the National Theatre of Scotland and Who Cares? Scotland are delivering in partnership with the Library.

This three-year project documents the lives of care experienced people in Scotland through an oral history archive and a photographic exhibition.

'Caring Scotland' is being led by playwright, director and dramaturg Nicola McCartney.

She said: "We look forward to now sharing these stories with the nation in many different and innovative ways. The testimonies we have listened to

of how the care system has impacted on people's lives are a vital and often overlooked part of what Scotland's story was, is now and what we can become."

The oral history archive, 'The Sound Collection', will be housed in perpetuity at the Library for public access.

Alison Stevenson, our Director of Collections, Access and Research, said: "The National Library collects and preserves voices, letters, recordings, footage and diaries covering as many perspectives of Scottish society as possible. We are honoured to be the custodian of the care experienced voices who contributed to this project."

'Caring Scotland' is funded with an award from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Print Curators' Forum group visit

Suzanna Beaupré, Laura Cooijmans-Keizer and Heidi Egginton welcomed 20 members of the UK Print Curators' Forum to the Library in November 2025 to see collections relating to the history of printing and printmaking.

These included examples of early printing, such as a copy of the first travel book ever printed, a mid-15th century block book and a Scottish astronomy compendium featuring 14 moveable volvelles.

Highlights from the archives of modern fine press printmakers Agnes Miller Parker (1895–1980) – including her tools and blocks – Iain Macnab (1890–1967) and Angela Lemaire (1944–2025) were also shown alongside rare examples of Arts & Crafts movement printing.

Family activities at Kelvin Hall

Our team at Kelvin Hall continues to create and offer an array of fun family activities throughout the year.

Such successful efforts even led to a prize – the Glasgow Doors Open Day 2025 **Outstanding Creative Response to Theme Award** (pictured bottom) for our 'Shoebox City' family workshops.

In line with the festival's theme, 'Glasgow: The Visionary City', we invited participants to help us to imagine and build a miniature city of the future. Using a wide range of recycled and art materials – and seemingly limitless imagination – a model city was created, made up of both existing Glasgow landmarks and imaginary structures (pictured below).

The team is thrilled by this accolade and looking forward to continuing to develop the regular craft workshops at Kelvin Hall, along with summer holiday activities aimed at families.



Monstrously good fun with 'Frankenstein'

A pop-up exhibition in November showcased collections items relating to Mary Shelley and 'Frankenstein', to coincide with the Netflix release of Guillermo del Toro's film adaptation of the classic novel.

The material on display included items from Published Collections, Archives and Manuscripts and the Moving Image collections. The star attraction was a letter from Mary Shelley to Sir Walter Scott, in which Shelley corrects Scott for mistakenly assuming that the book was written by her husband, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley.

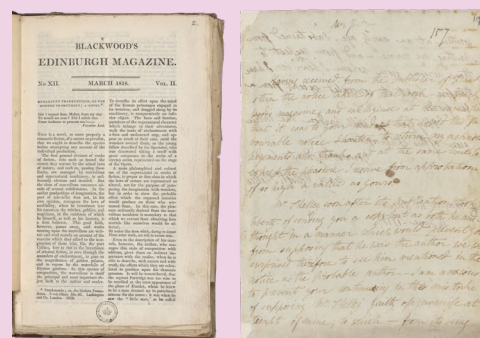
Curators Suzanna Beaupré, Ian Scott, Dr Kirsty McHugh and Liam Paterson answered visitor questions and more than 400 people attended.

Exhibition visitors said:

"To see original letters written by Mary Shelley, particularly the ones to Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron, was really quite a privilege."

"The original letters are interesting – I can't imagine seeing them under any other circumstances"

Clockwise from top left: Walter Scott's review of 'Frankenstein', a letter by Mary Shelley to Scott in 1818 and works by authors inspired by the novel



MAPFEST 2026



Hundreds join us for Map Fest

Our successful Map Fest event was a celebration of all things cartographic.

Almost 500 visitors of all ages popped by to attend talks, view a pop-up exhibition, visit stalls and enjoy crafts and games. The stalls were busy all day and many attendees left proudly displaying a temporary map tattoo.

Some lovely feedback was received from those who attended, including:

"The people on the stalls were so enthusiastic about their area of expertise."

"I'm 'obsessed'[] with maps so was always going to enjoy it."

"Please do it again."

The event, in February 2026, was held in partnership with five organisations with significant collections of maps or aerial photographs.

Scots Scriever

Dundee and Angus Scots Scriever Taylor Dyson (pictured below) organised and featured in public events throughout the year.

These included a monthly Scots language night in Dundee, attendance at the StAnza 2026 festival in St Andrews in March and a talk celebrating working-class women's voices at George IV Bridge in April.

Taylor has also been reworking Bertolt Brecht's 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle' into Scots and carrying out research at the Library for 'Wur Wummin' – a Dundee Scots language show for young people.



Sabhal Mòr Ostaig partnership

To cement our Memorandum of Understanding with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO), Scotland's National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture, we hosted a series of internships and staff placements.

Internships in the Public Programmes team provided practical experience for using Gaelic in a professional setting. Our two interns took part in a community event, helped design our ad in the Mòd programme and our post-graduate intern delivered a public talk on 'Gaelic in the Landscape'.

Between March and July, five staff members also had the opportunity to spend a week at SMO and, in a first for us, staff took items from the collections for 'show and tell' sessions with SMO students (pictured below), primary and secondary pupils and the wider community on Skye.

We welcomed more than 800 attendees to the 15 events we organised either at SMO or in the local area, with visitors commenting very positively on having the opportunity to see collections material in person.



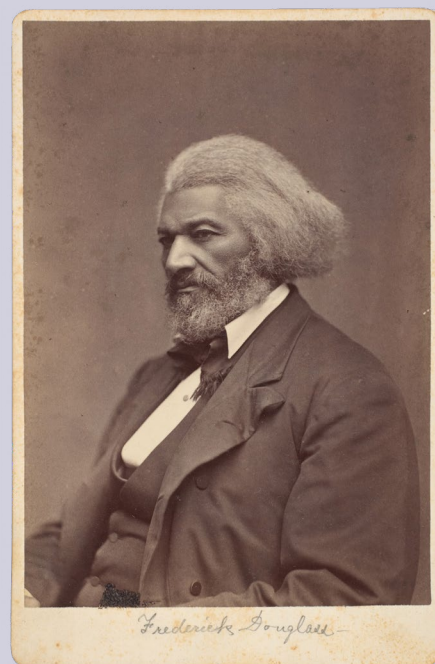
The Frederick Douglass Family: Revolutionary Lives

Celebrating the lives of 19th-century African American liberators Anna Murray and Frederick Douglass was a highlight last year, as part of a collaboration between Professor Celeste-Marie Bernier of the University of Edinburgh and colleagues from across the Library.

A public event was held at our George IV Bridge building with Kenneth B. Morris Jr., great-great-great-grandson of Douglass and Murray, in conversation with Professor Bernier. The event was watched live by 140 viewers from the USA and UK.

To tell the story of the revolutionary lives of the Douglass family, one of our graphic designers, Alison Gibson, designed a booklet, featuring photographs of the Douglass children and text co-authored by our staff and Professor Bernier.

Photo by Shutterstock.com – Rawpixel.com



Royal National Mòd 2025

Dr Sarah Mackay, Suzanna Beaupré and Veronica Bell travelled to Fort William in October to represent the Library at the Royal National Mòd, the largest annual gathering of Gaelic speakers in the world.

People were enthusiastic about our online map and moving image collections, which we were able to demonstrate at our

stall. We also spoke with attendees about our 'OUTWITH' touring programme, which was well-received by visitors from around Scotland.

Finally, we paid a visit to Fort William Public Library, which kindly accepted leaflets about our various eResources. The team there will also distribute these to local public libraries in Lochaber.

BFI Replay

BFI Replay is a free-to-access digital archive available exclusively in public libraries. We now have two broadcast television collections viewable in the BFI's (British Film Institute) online player – Grampian TV compilation tapes and MG Alba Gaelic programmes.

Launch events marking the collaboration were held at Dundee Central Library and Greenock Central Library last summer.

Footage available includes everything from Jethro Tull and the Piper Alpha Inquiry to Margaret Thatcher and Gaelic psalmody. A sample of these vast television collections is now available in 3,610 public libraries across the UK.



From left, BFI's Ian O'Sullivan and Nicky Williams, the Library's Liam Paterson and Ann Cameron, BFI's Sinéad Beverland and film-maker Stella Rooney at Dundee Central Library. Photo by Sheena MacDougall

Royal visit for National Year of Reading

We were delighted to host the Scottish launch of the National Literacy Trust's National Year of Reading in January.

This event at George IV Bridge was attended by the Trust's patron, HM The Queen, alongside authors Val McDermid, Sir Ian Rankin and Jackie Kay and pupils from Clovenstone and Granton primary schools.



Photos by Neil Hanna

Welcoming European colleagues

We were proud to host the Conference of European National Libraries (CENL) in June, with delegates able to enjoy a preview of our 'Dear Library' exhibition before it opened to the public.

CENL has 46 members in 45 countries (we are one of two in the UK) and 34 national libraries were able to attend the annual conference, which took place at the Edinburgh Futures Institute.

The theme was 'Artificial Intelligence meets Cultural Heritage – the Transformative Power of AI for and through National Libraries'. Topics discussed included AI for discovery, metadata and search; AI and the human experience; ethics, bias and AI governance; and AI, innovation and the next generation of libraries.

To help delegates enjoy some Scottish culture, we hosted a walking tour of Edinburgh, a reception at Edinburgh Castle and a dinner in our General Reading Room, followed by a ceilidh in the Boardroom.

We also hosted the Consortium of European Research Libraries in 2025.

'Dear Library' film reel

A 10-minute showreel, edited from film preserved in the moving image collection, for our 'Dear Library' exhibition, was shown at the Scottish Library and Information Council's annual showcase and AGM in October.

The reel aligned with the showcase theme, 'Evidence-led libraries: Inspiring Innovation and Creating Communities'. The footage represented the diversity

of libraries, including mobile libraries, toy libraries and research institutions from Glasgow to Kirkwall.

It also reflected the range of filmmaking in the collection, from community cable television to government-sponsored documentary.

Clockwise from left: A look inside Highland mobile libraries, the vans on the road, filmmaker Charles Gormley and Kirkwall Library



Sustainability

Climate action



Climate Action Plan

Sarah Kline (pictured left) completed a UK Research and Innovation policy internship with us over nine months in 2025.

Working within the Published Collections team, Sarah helped develop our Climate Action Plan for 2025–30, which enables us to respond to threats posed by the climate crisis.

Sarah investigated opportunities for using our collections for outreach and engagement with the climate crisis and wrote a pilot research guide on our climate collections for our website.

She also supported preparation for our exhibition on 'Rain', which opened in June 2026, and completed the Carbon Literacy for Librarians training, prompting a workshop on 'sustainable zine-making'.

She is now completing a doctorate at the University of Edinburgh, researching climate change and cultural heritage.

Green Libraries

As a board member for the Green Libraries campaign, we supported a successful bid to the National Lottery Fund to establish 10 Green Library Hubs in the UK and Ireland.

Maps Reading Room Manager Laragh Quinney – pictured below with her Scotland's Library and Information Professional of the Year 2025 award – helped organise a successful Green Libraries Conference in November 2025 and we achieved 'Good Progress' status in a pilot of the Green Libraries Self Assessment Framework.

We also took part in Sustainability Week Scotland and Green Libraries Week in 2025. Activities included a display in the General Reading Room on 'Remarkable Trees', a climate-zine workshop and a nature-themed family story time.

We continued to support delivery of the Carbon Literacy for Libraries course to library professionals in the UK and Ireland, hosting five training sessions. The course was featured as a case study in the 'Empowering Impact Strategy' by CILIPS (the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland). Feedback from participants has been highly positive.



Year in numbers

133,555

Growth in collections
– increase in physical
and digital collections

7,404,559

Website usage
(Web sessions)

61

Number of research
collaborations

6,897

Hidden Collections
items catalogued

331

Public events

122,577

Exhibition visitors

53,771

Reading Room visits

Keeping our cool

We have almost completed our move from legacy servers and large Storage Area Networks (SANs) to more energy-efficient consolidated systems, reducing power use and easing cooling demand.

This is being supported by our use of external cold-air cooling, which reduces reliance on air-conditioning units. As obsolete infrastructure is decommissioned, further savings are expected, with the full impact to be verified through new energy monitoring.

Our sustainability objectives are affected by the shorter equipment lifespans driven by governmental cyber policies. However, we will carry out further work to automate the out-of-hours shutdown of appropriate systems, using new virtual equipment features.

Strengthening cyber security

With the external threat of a cyberattack increasing, the IT team continues to strengthen our cybersecurity monitoring and defences. This has included maintaining annual cybersecurity accreditation, communicating regularly to improve staff awareness and running Library-wide scenario workshops to test the organisation's response procedures.

Climate literacy AHRC fellowship

Dr Sarah Mackay successfully completed her Arts and Humanities Research Council-Research Libraries UK (AHRC RLUK) Fellowship, 'Communicating the Climate Crisis: Improving Climate Literacy Through the National Library of Scotland's Collections'.

Her work addressed the question, 'how can the Library use our collections to improve climate literacy, particularly

in communities most vulnerable to the effects of the climate crisis?'.

This project involved a sustained period of research into our collections relating to climate change, plus a community outreach and public engagement programme.

The major output of this fellowship is our 2026 special exhibition, 'Rain', an exploration of Scotland's relationship with the weather.



Protecting collections from climate change

Bo Han was awarded his PhD from Heriot-Watt University following research on protecting collections in storage from the impact of fluctuating environmental conditions.

He trained artificial intelligence to understand the micro-climate inside archival boxes in relation to the macro-climate of the space they are in.

Bo demonstrated the buffering benefits of the boxes and the potential to develop an algorithm to control the Building Management System according to the environment inside the boxes, rather than outside, thus reducing the energy required to preserve the collections. We have now committed to increase the proportion of our collections stored in archival boxes.

This PhD was funded by Scottish Universities' Energy Technology Partnership.

Sustainable legal deposit

We worked with Professor Gobinda Chowdhury of the University of Strathclyde on a research project which set out to identify the main factors in the legal deposit process who may be generating a carbon footprint. This was completed in autumn 2025 and a final report produced.

Staff took part in workshops and provided case studies for the project, funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

The report identifies a number of areas for future research, including the need for better data on the carbon footprint of digital collecting and storage.

We look forward to working with Professor Chowdhury and other experts to develop this approach, as part of our efforts to be more sustainable.



Photo by SC Impact
Media Specialists Ltd

New Chair for our Board

Professor Christopher Smith was appointed Chair of the National Library of Scotland in October 2025.

Professor Smith (pictured left) has led national and international scholarship and science diplomacy in Scotland and across the world. He is deeply committed to the value of libraries as a fundamental infrastructure of knowledge and their role as trusted partners in community.

As Executive Chair of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, as International Champion for UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) and a member of the governing bodies of Science Europe and the Global Research Council, Professor Smith brings an international perspective.

Exploring AI

Throughout the year, teams across the Library have explored the risks and opportunities presented by developments in artificial intelligence (AI).

Our AI Statement sets out our approach to the responsible adoption of AI tools and our work in this area is monitored by an AI steering group, with membership drawn from across the organisation.

In the autumn of 2025, Daniel van Strien, Machine Learning Librarian at Hugging Face, was appointed as our first AI Fellow, for six months. Working with multiple teams, Daniel identified a range of challenges where different AI tools could automate existing collections workflows.

Adopting a “test and learn” approach, two pilots have been developed around the creation of collections metadata with local vision language models hosted on a high-powered networked PC.

Sarah Ames, Digital Scholarship Librarian, continued to coordinate a wide range of research projects investigating the use and evaluation of AI technologies, including the annual Digital Research Fellowship. Dr Joe Nockels explored the use of eXplainable AI (XAI) to create accurate transcriptions from the Library’s ‘Spiritualist Newspaper’ dataset.

Funding our work

Income 2025-26



£20,467,000
Other –
grant in aid



£8,359,000
Donations
and legacies



£750,000
Charitable
activities



£489,000
Investment
income



£231,000
Other trading
activities

Spending 2025-26



£14,929,000
Staff costs



£8,008,608
Collection
purchases



£4,260,000
Depreciation



£2,900,000
Building and digital
infrastructure investment



£2,698,000
Other running
costs



£2,062,000
Building maintenance



£1,230,000
Other property costs

Library reach



284

villages, towns and cities across Scotland



236

places in other parts of the UK



13

other countries worldwide



Our 'Discover' magazine reaches 227 different villages, towns and cities across Scotland (1,346 postcodes), 224 areas across the rest of the UK and 15 other countries worldwide.

Reach across Scotland:



'Discover'

227

areas



Donors

67

areas

Reach across the rest of the UK:



'Discover'

224

areas



Donors

28

areas

Reach across the rest of the world:



'Discover'

15

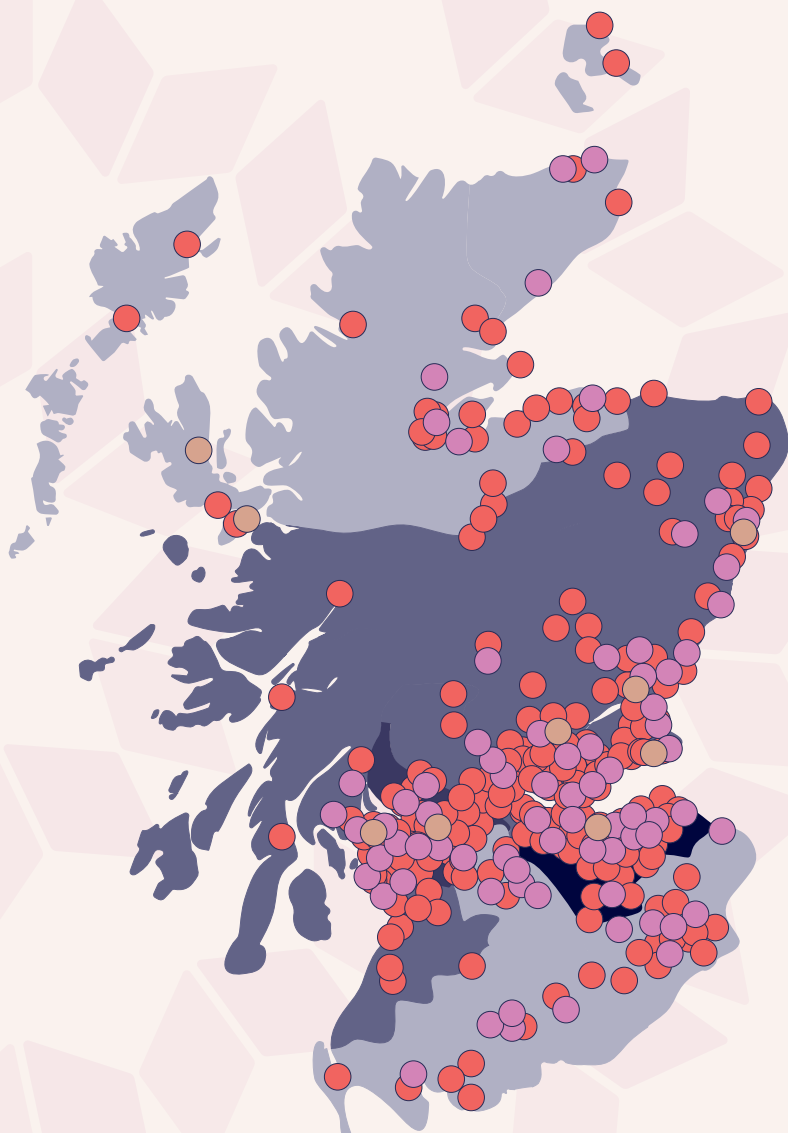
countries



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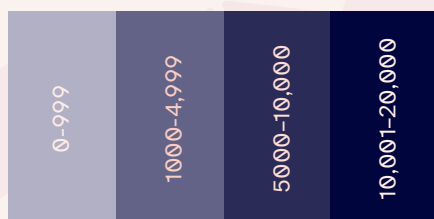
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countries



Discover Donors Events

Registered Library members 2025-26*



*46,000+ members across the UK

Thank you

We are grateful to everyone who donates cash, collections or leaves a legacy to the Library, including all those who choose to give anonymously. Those who have made larger donations to the Library in the past year are listed below. We would also like to thank our majority funder, the Scottish Government, for its continued advocacy and support.

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