Psalters and Bindings

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This week we welcome to Edinburgh our colleagues in the **CILIP Rare Books and Special Collections Group** for the Group's Annual Conference. Most of the events are held at the **Royal College of Surgeons** Library, but we at NLS have been hosting a workshop on Scottish bindings.

Because we were focusing in our exhibition mostly on the effects of the printed word, not on the book as a physical object, we haven't really showcased the unique traditions of Scottish bindings, but we did include one example of a book with its decorative binding, *The Whole Booke of Psalmes, in Prose and Meeter*, (Edinburgh, 1617). Like most early printed books, this would likely have been sold not as a fully bound volume as books are sold today, but as a set of the loose sheets of the book, which the new owner could have bound in any style that they chose. In our collections, we have books bound in silver, in embroidered bindings, and in many different styles of decorated leather. Books like the Bible and the Psalms, in convenient pocket-size formats so that they could be easily transported between home and kirk, were often given ornate bindings such as the one we have on display, to show their owners' taste and status.

You can find out more about Scottish bookbindings on our **introductory webpage** and see many examples of the distinctive Scottish **wheel** and **herringbone** styles on our **Digital Library** webfeature **Scottish Decorative Bookbinding**.