

Festivals, then and now

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Since the Edinburgh Festival is now in full swing all around us, it seems appropriate to write about two items in our 'Fun and Games' case, representing 'Festivals - then and now'. Separated by 375 years and placed side by side for the first time in the exhibition, they tell as much about the changing function of print as about the changing nature of festivals over that time.

The first, *The Entertainment of the High and Mighty Monarch Charles ... into his Auncient and Royall City of Edinburgh, the Fifteenth of June, 1633* (Edinburgh, 1633), is from the time when print, as the only form of mass media, provided a way of recording important ceremonies and public events. This one describes the civic entertainments for Charles I's visit to Edinburgh in 1633, when arches were erected around the city, and elaborately-dressed allegorical figures made ornamental speeches in praise of the King. For instance, one important character at an arch near the NLS George IV building was 'a woman with an olive-coloured maske, long black Locks waving over her backe, her attire was of divers coloured feathers, which shew her to be an American, and to represent New Scotland'.

The format of this book is something between a playscript and a report, containing details about what actually happened as well as the ideal text of what should have happened. It would be possible to reconstruct the whole ceremony from this text. You can find out much more about these kinds of records at the British Library's [Renaissance Festival Books](#) website.

Our second book, with its bright orange cover bearing the words 'It's just noise', could not be more different - the 2006 programme from Scotland's [Triptych festival](#).

From 2001 to 2008, Triptych festival brought artists as diverse as Aphex Twin and Aberfeldy to Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Festival programmes today are ephemeral items, designed to be used and discarded, with other media from the official website to mobile phone camera footage existing beside them to preserve the memory of the event and its music. Would a video have given us a completely different impression of the King's entry into Edinburgh in 1633? Will Triptych programmes still be valuable memorabilia in 375 years' time?