

Breaking through the walls

The strategy of the
National Library
of Scotland



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Chairman's Foreword by Professor Michael Anderson

The National Library of Scotland is one of Europe's leading research libraries, with world class collections, services and expertise. Our remarkable and comprehensive collections have been built up through donation, purchase and above all, the privilege of 'legal deposit', over more than 300 years. From our origins in the Library of the Faculty of Advocates (founded in 1689), the National Library has come to play a unique and central role at the cultural heart of Scotland.

Historically, the Library's collections and services have been available to people who cannot access the information they need elsewhere. In the rapidly evolving environment of modern Scotland, however, we recognise and intend to meet new challenges. The Library plans to increase opportunities for both new and existing users by:

- extending, encouraging and promoting access to the Library's collections, services and expertise
- developing and maintaining expertise in communications technology
- seeking and developing partnerships and collaboration with information and cultural organisations
- maximising our contribution to key Scottish Executive priorities including lifelong learning, enterprise and social justice

Other opportunities arise as a direct result of the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003, which will give the National Library of Scotland the right to claim electronic publications as well as those in print. This crucial development places the Library at the forefront of the nationwide strategy to collect, preserve and provide access to the wealth of electronic material which might otherwise be lost to future generations.

As we look forward to this exciting future, we plan to build on the Library's key strengths and its worldwide reputation for excellence in supporting research and scholarship. The Library is proud of its record of achievement, both past and present, and we will ensure that the strengths of the Library today serve as a foundation for the successful Library of the future.

Introduction by Martyn Wade, National Librarian

This strategy will guide the development of the National Library of Scotland over the next five years. At the heart of the strategy lies excellence in both our collections and access. The value of the collections lies in our expertise as well as in the material itself, and we will continue to develop the scholarship of our staff. We will also develop the role of our staff in widening access, promoting understanding of the collections and supporting the rights of the public to information and knowledge.

Underpinning our work on collections and access are policies which address the way we will carry out our tasks and the physical and organisational infrastructure we need. The focus is on working in partnership with people outside the Library, on consulting users and would-be users, and responding to their views.

The strategy highlights 18 policies, along with a number of associated key actions. Many of the initiatives can be met from within existing funding but we recognise that in some cases the speed of progress will depend on attracting additional resources. Proposals to attract these resources will be developed during the life of the strategy.

The strategy will be implemented and progress will be monitored and evaluated through the Library's annual Corporate Plans.

Public consultation on a draft strategy took place between December 2003 and February 2004 so that the public and interested bodies could learn about our long-term plans, have the opportunity to make comments and become involved in the Library's development. We were encouraged by the wide support and interest shown in the draft strategy. The Board of Trustees considered the comments and feedback received, and made a number of amendments to the draft strategy as a result. The strategy was formally adopted in March 2004.

Vision and Mission

In June 2003, the Library set out a new vision and mission. This is a short, simple statement of our overall purpose but it encapsulates our aspirations and has helped us to design a strategy which will ensure that we deliver on our commitments:

‘The National Library of Scotland will enrich lives and communities, encouraging and promoting lifelong learning, research and scholarship, and universal access to information by comprehensively collecting and making available the recorded knowledge of Scotland, and promoting access to the ideas and cultures of the world.’

Together with the core values and principal functions, the vision and mission is intended to ensure that everyone connected with the Library – users, staff, trustees and partner organisations – has a clear picture of the Library’s unique role.

Core Values

We have also agreed a number of core values which define how the Library and its staff will work to implement the vision and mission:

- Service
- Excellence
- Learning
- Commitment

Principal Functions

We have identified five principal functions which will enable us to achieve our vision and mission:

- to create, preserve and ensure access to a comprehensive collection of the recorded knowledge, culture and history of Scotland, for the benefit of the people of Scotland and the rest of the world
- to promote access to the recorded knowledge, culture and history of the world, particularly for the people of Scotland
- to preserve, promote, and ensure access to the National Library of Scotland’s major historical and heritage collections, and to add to them where appropriate
- to encourage and support research and scholarship
- To provide appropriate support and leadership for the library and information sector in Scotland

Collections

Our collections are central to everything we do. Of world-class importance, they span the centuries: from medieval manuscripts and Scotland's earliest printed books to the latest electronic academic and research journals. The collections also have remarkable breadth, from science to folk music, maps to football programmes, and literary correspondence to theatre posters.

But there is more to our collections than stored information. Our role is to encourage the study, understanding and use of the collections, and the knowledge, expertise and skills of our staff are fundamental to this role.

The National Library of Scotland is the only library in Scotland to benefit from the privilege of legal deposit. The Library receives around a quarter of a million items each year in this way, with law publications being transferred to the Library of the Faculty of Advocates. We also receive considerable gifts of material, some outright and some on deposit, and we buy material which meets our collection criteria.

1.1

We will develop and consult our stakeholders on an integrated strategy for the selection, acquisition, preservation and retention of material.

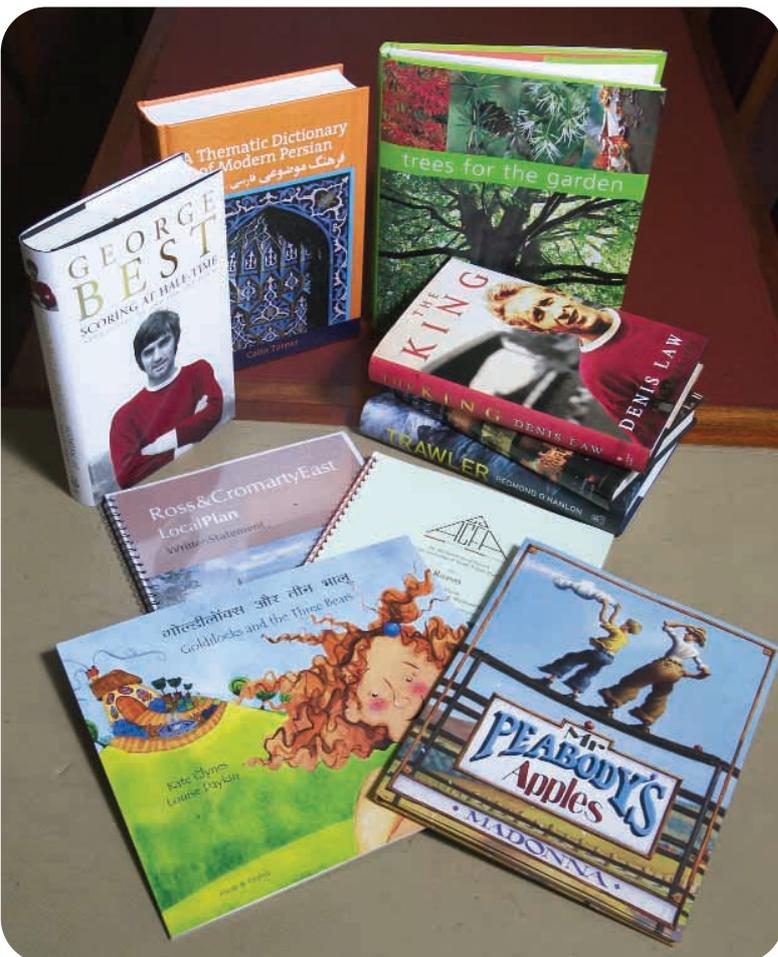
We will

- continue to develop the Library as the major publicly accessible research library in Scotland by collecting Scottish material comprehensively and promoting access to the knowledge, culture and history of the world
- explore new ways of acquiring material, particularly through the creation of new relationships and partnerships. We will collect in all formats - manuscript, print and electronic
- update our various collecting policies into an integrated policy document which will be available for public consultation on our website and elsewhere

The recorded knowledge, culture and history of Scotland

As Scotland's national library, we have a unique responsibility to be comprehensive in our collecting of Scottish materials. We will seek out material in new as well as traditional formats, and form partnership agreements with other libraries to ensure that we add to the wide range of publications in the national collection, whilst encouraging the development of a distributed national lending collection.

Books received through legal deposit, November 2003



1.2

We aim to collect contemporary Scottish published material comprehensively.

We will

- aim to collect all material published in Scotland, using our legal deposit rights wherever possible
- actively collect material about Scotland and Scots published outside Scotland
- actively collect material by authors born, working or writing in Scotland
- aim to ensure that our collections reflect all of Scotland's languages, including Gaelic, Scots and minority ethnic languages
- ensure the development, encouragement and monitoring of a national strategy for the collection of local Scottish materials, by leading the formation of a working group in co-operation with the Scottish Library and Information Council

The recorded knowledge, culture and history of the world

The Library is a global resource for research. We aim to be a national centre of excellence for the subject areas we collect, and will continue to build our research collections with the needs of both academic and informal researchers in mind.



A selection of purchased overseas books

1.3

We will continue to build a research collection that focuses on the long-term needs of researchers in Scotland and, through collaboration, we will enhance access to the knowledge, culture and history of the world.

We will

- continue to collect widely UK and Irish material through legal deposit and purchase, and seek to improve our management of these valuable collections
- continue to collect specialist material published overseas, in response to the long-term needs of researchers
- identify gaps in current national collecting policies, and establish ways in which these can be filled by the Library on its own or in co-operation with partners

Building the historic and heritage collections

The Library has a wealth of heritage collections, including many unique and irreplaceable treasures. These items – some of iconic importance to Scotland and the Scots – deserve to be better known and more widely appreciated. We will work to ensure we provide the widest possible access to the Library's treasures, including by digitisation and through exhibitions and displays.

1.4

We will continue to build the Library's historic and heritage collections, reflecting our established strengths.

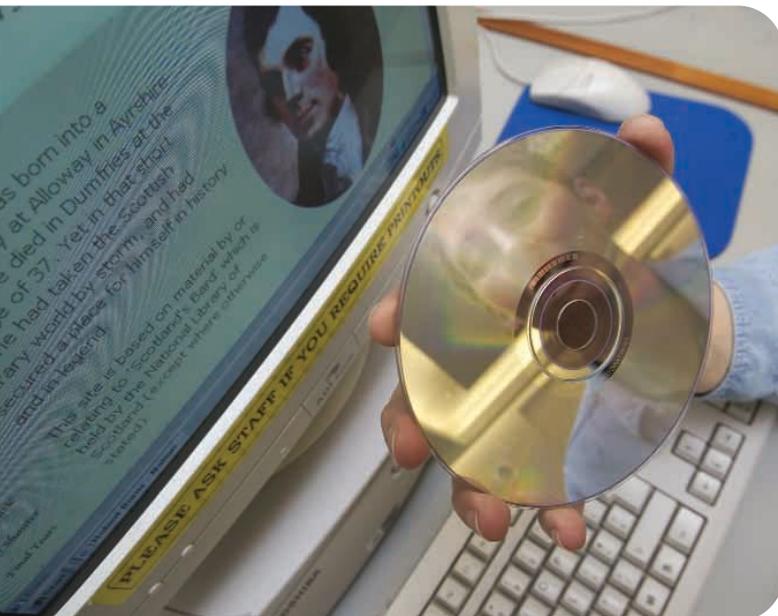
We will

- place a priority on collecting Scottish material
- consult and co-operate with a wide range of institutions in building our national heritage collections



Building the electronic collections

To discharge our responsibility to collect Scotland's published output and to maintain our role as a leading research library, we must collect not only printed words, pictures and maps but also electronic publications. Many scientific and academic journals are now published solely in electronic format, and we need to plan how we will select and archive some of the millions of web pages published each year. We will continue to collaborate with the other legal deposit libraries over the implementation of the new Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003.



1.5

We will place a high priority on extending our collection of electronic resources through digitisation and collaboration with other legal deposit and research libraries.

We will

- adopt a collaborative approach to the collection and preservation of electronic materials, taking particular responsibility for the selection of Scottish publications and web pages
- work with partners to influence and ensure the effective implementation of the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 and its associated Regulations
- add to our electronic collections through digitisation, particularly in collaboration with other organisations

Preserving the collections

As a legal deposit and reference library we hold only a single copy of most items. This places a particular responsibility on the Library to keep the collections in the best possible condition.

Widening access to our collections could place fragile and valuable items at risk, and so we must strike the right balance between preservation and access to original materials whilst ensuring that users can find the information they require.

1.6

We will conserve, preserve and make secure the Library's collections whilst ensuring the widest possible access to them.

We will

- ensure that our buildings provide the best possible environment for the preservation of the national collections
- establish mechanisms for the preservation of digital materials
- where appropriate, promote the use of copies rather than fragile original materials
- provide the capacity to conserve a wide range of fragile or damaged materials



Access

The Library is committed to maintaining and expanding the quality and depth of support we offer to lifelong learning, research and scholarship. We will continue to improve our services for academic and high level researchers.

However, although our collections, services and expertise have a relevance to all walks of life in Scotland today, informal feedback and customer research have shown that many individuals and organisations do not see the Library as a natural source for their information needs. We will extend awareness of the relevance and importance of the National Library to modern Scotland, and provide a welcoming, accessible and inclusive service for everyone who can benefit from using our collections and services.

As part of this commitment, the Library will consult on how it can best contribute to social inclusion, for example by ensuring that our collections and expertise are readily available as a resource for people and agencies working in community learning and similar fields. The Library will consult widely on how it should do this. In particular, we will contact agencies involved in regeneration at both national and local level, (including Social Inclusion and Community Planning Partnerships) to explore possibilities in this area.

2.1

We will work to ensure that everyone who could benefit from the Library's unique collections, services and expertise can do so, by identifying and removing actual and perceived barriers to use.

We will

- implement a comprehensive marketing and publicity strategy to improve awareness of the Library and its collections, services and expertise, and the contribution that they can make to the learning and cultural life of Scotland
- develop a comprehensive range of services so that everyone who can benefit from using the Library can do so in ways they find useful and meaningful
- work with groups who are not well represented amongst the Library's current users to ensure that the Library's collections, services and expertise are as accessible as possible
- review the rules and regulations of the Library so that they are consistent and easily understood by current and potential users
- review the design and layout of our buildings to make them as welcoming and accessible as possible
- develop innovative partnerships to make it easier for lifelong learning organisations to incorporate the Library's resources into their programmes

Helping people to find what they want

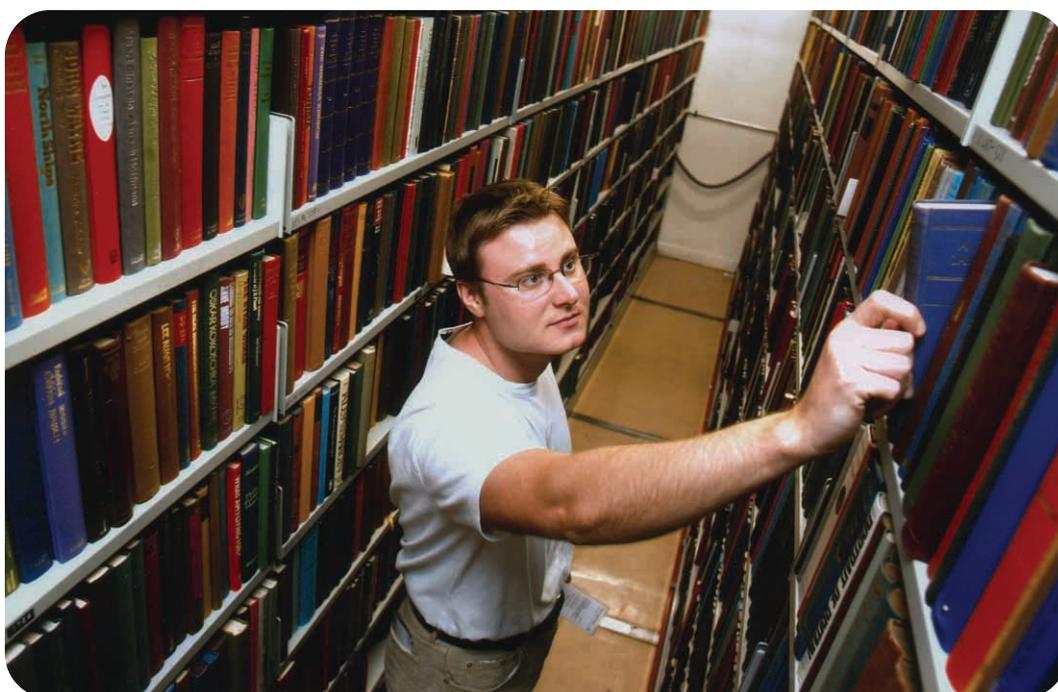
A comprehensive, online catalogue is essential. Despite good progress in recent years, we still need to convert our remaining manual catalogues to create electronic records that can be searched remotely as well as from within the Library. This will continue to receive priority.

2.2

We will expand our online catalogues to enable users to find easily the resources they need.

We will

- continue to implement new software, particularly for electronic resources, providing better online access to items in all formats
- prioritise our cataloguing programme to maximise the number of records accessible online
- maintain our contribution to national and international bibliographic records



We are keen to improve the visitor experience for users of our buildings. In order to meet growing demand and the needs of different users in the longer term, we plan to create a range of study and research areas at both George IV Bridge and Causewayside.

The first stage will be to redesign the entrance areas to make them more welcoming and accessible. In the longer term, we propose to re-develop the main entrance area of our George IV Bridge building as a visitor centre: a major public space with permanent exhibition areas hosting a changing programme of exhibitions, events and displays to help people explore and enjoy the Library's collections. A full range of visitor facilities will include a café and shop.

We will also develop a broader educational and cultural programme to help people learn about our collections and services, with year-round exhibitions and events. We will adopt a more integrated approach to handling enquiries and assisting users to interpret the collections.

2.3

We will provide appropriate high quality facilities for research, scholarship and study to meet current and potential demand.

We will

- continue to improve existing study and research spaces at the Library
- develop proposals for new informal and quiet study areas at George IV Bridge and Causewayside

2.4

We will encourage greater access to and understanding of the collections through a wider programme of exhibitions, interpretative displays, events and educational activities.

We will

- expand the Library's exhibitions into a year-round programme, supported by complementary cultural and educational activities and events
- develop Baden Powell House (in Victoria Terrace, Edinburgh) as an educational and outreach centre for lifelong learning
- develop plans for a major public exhibition and visitor centre at the Library

We will develop our existing website into a Virtual NLS, revolutionising the way people can access and understand our collections, and providing a gateway to collections held by other organisations. The selection of materials for our digitisation programmes will be informed by market research, by collaboration with partners, and by preservation needs.

The digitisation process requires us not only to make high-quality electronic images, but also to develop new ways to help users find and interpret them. We will explore customer-friendly new technology, such as searchable text and geo-referencing, to assist users.

We also want to ensure that as many people as possible can use our purchased electronic resources, and we are working collaboratively to ensure that we can provide the widest possible access, within publishers' licensing constraints.



2.5

We will develop the existing website into a Virtual National Library of Scotland which will maximise remote and onsite access to the collections, provide interpretative and supporting material, and reduce handling of delicate items.

We will

- digitise important items from our collections, to make them easily accessible and to provide surrogates of fragile materials
- complement our exhibitions and displays with 'virtual' exhibitions accessible to people unable to visit the Library
- maximise access to our purchased electronic resources for remote users, through agreeing licensing arrangements with publishers
- work with other library sectors to explore the potential for Scotland-wide licensing for major online resources
- work with other service providers and partners to ensure the Library supports and enhances the landscape of electronic library resources in Scotland.

Improving remote access

Many people find it inconvenient or impossible to use our buildings in Edinburgh, so we must provide high quality remote access, especially for users in other parts of Scotland.

Networks of partner libraries have the potential to improve access to Library collections, expertise and services. In particular, we will explore how the People's Network (which makes computers available to all through every public library) can make Virtual NLS available as a key resource to public library users.



The Library's touring displays travel to many venues all over Scotland

2.6

We will develop services to ensure that remote users, especially those in Scotland, can have access to our collections, services and expertise to the highest possible level.

We will

- improve remote access to the content of the Library's collections, its services and expertise
- pilot the development of partner libraries with public, institutional and academic libraries, to explore how the Library's collections, services and expertise can be accessed locally throughout Scotland
- work with public libraries to identify how the Library can contribute to the range of resources available to the public through the People's Network
- develop Virtual NLS, to expand the range of the Library's collections, services and expertise for access in school, college, university, the workplace and at home
- expand our programme of exhibitions, events and activities in partnership with other library services, and other learning and cultural organisations throughout Scotland

Consultation and relationships with our users and other stakeholders

The Library is a national institution, with a responsibility to meet the information needs of all the people of Scotland, and millions of others with an interest in Scotland and our wider collections. The diversity of those who can benefit from the Library matches the diversity of the material we collect.

We will communicate and consult more actively with people who have an interest in the Library. We will expand our customer research programme to involve stakeholders in planning how the Library grows and develops.



3.1

We will consult with stakeholders and research the needs of current and potential users.

We will

- develop new ways of engaging with the public, both directly and through networks such as schools, community groups, public agencies and the media
- establish a programme of regular research and stakeholder consultation

Partnerships and collaboration

The National Library of Scotland already shares collections and expertise with a number of academic libraries and various cultural and heritage organisations. These links are important, but we must also reach out to other networks where we could help meet the wider need for information, culture and learning in Scotland.

As one of three national libraries in the United Kingdom, the National Library of Scotland will continue to work closely with the National Library of Wales and the British Library, and will support the development of the Research Libraries Network as recommended by the Research Support Libraries Group.

As Scotland's national library, we have a role in providing support and leadership to the library and information sector, particularly in collection development and collaborative access. We will continue to work closely with other organisations who also have a leadership role, such as the Scottish Library and Information Council and the professional association CILIPS. We will continue to play a key role in the Scottish Confederation of University and Research Libraries as well as leading projects such as Newsplan and Resources for Learning in Scotland. We will continue to provide and develop the services we offer directly to other libraries, for example through Inter-Library Services, supporting access to print resources.

In addition, we will expand the range of events where our staff can share the Library's unique expertise with professional colleagues. By contributing to and organising seminars and training events, we can support the services and work of other libraries, sharing and disseminating our expertise.

To ensure that Scottish international research needs are supported, and to promote Scottish culture and history, the Library anticipates increasing participation in European and world networks. We will share the knowledge and benefits of this international focus throughout Scotland.

4.1

We will work closely with all types of libraries, and other learning, cultural and heritage organisations, to support key political and social priorities, including research, enterprise and economic development and access to education, lifelong learning and cultural activities.

We will

- support and influence the development of the Research Libraries Network, as part of providing collaborative support for researchers in Scotland
- continue to develop our contribution to collaborative access and collection development in co-operation with appropriate organisations
- explore the developing role of Inter-Library Services, taking into account the changing needs of other libraries and the impact of new technology
- build on our existing support for library and information services in Scotland by expanding our programme of seminars and training events to share our specialist expertise
- play a more active international role, working with partner organisations abroad, and share the knowledge and benefits gained with library and information services across Scotland

Organisational development

The Library will ensure that it develops its internal organisation so that it is fully equipped to manage the challenges outlined in this strategy document. We have adopted a new senior management structure, designed to provide simplicity, flexibility and clarity of management, and further organisational changes will take place as they are needed. We will also review our internal processes and approaches to performance management.

We will meet standards promoted by the Scottish Executive, including Investors in People, Best Value and sustainable development in a way that is pragmatic, efficient and non-bureaucratic. A Scottish Executive review scheduled for early 2004 will examine the Library's policy, financial and governance arrangements.



5.1

We will be efficient, well-managed and accountable.

We will

- plan reviews of key activities in the Library to ensure that services and internal practices are efficient, consistent and focused on the overall needs of users
- assist the Scottish Executive in reviewing the governance arrangements of the Library as part of the scheduled Policy and Financial Management Review

It is essential that every member of our workforce feels valued and committed, and has the right skills for their responsibilities, both now and in the future. We will increase our commitment to staff training and development.

We will look beyond our traditional funding base, and explore the potential of other programmes that contribute to the strategy. The Library has considerable commercial potential, and we will be more active in generating increased revenue in ways which also raise awareness of our collections, services and expertise.

5.2

We will maintain and enhance the skills, professionalism and expertise of all our staff.

We will

- continue to expand our staff training and development programmes
- continue to develop an open organisational culture, encouraging communication, innovation and a commitment to continuous improvement

5.3

We will identify new funding opportunities, especially to support major developments in our collections and infrastructure.

We will

- explore a broader range of funding opportunities where these can help the Library achieve its strategic aims
- explore and develop the potential for income generation

Infrastructure

The Library needs robust, highly-specialised infrastructure in order to implement this strategy.

We will develop a master plan for our buildings, incorporating proposals to improve facilities for visitors, and develop our Sighthill site as a venue for activities which support library and information services throughout Scotland. This will allow us to extend considerably the storage capacity of our buildings in George IV Bridge and Causewayside.

In addition, we will develop an information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure which supports the development of Virtual NLS and takes account of new technologies and the growing importance of electronic publications.



6.1

We will develop the infrastructure needed to meet the growing demand for our services, and the technological challenges arising from electronic publishing.

- prepare and launch a master plan for developing the Library's buildings, particularly focusing on improving visitor facilities and access to the Library and its collections, based on this strategy and the feedback we receive
- develop an ICT infrastructure that meets the needs of the Library and its users, taking account of the developing Virtual NLS, changing technology and the growing importance of electronic publications



Contact us

If you have any comments on this strategy, or on how the National Library of Scotland should implement it, please write to:

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If you would like a large-print version of this document, please contact us on enquiries@nls.uk or 0131 623 3700.

Summary of policies

Collections

1.1 We will develop and consult our stakeholders on an integrated strategy for the selection, acquisition, preservation and retention of material.

1.2 We aim to collect contemporary Scottish published material comprehensively.

1.3 We will continue to build a research collection that focuses on the long-term needs of researchers in Scotland, and, through collaboration, we will enhance access to the knowledge, culture and history of the world.

1.4 We will continue to build the Library's historical and heritage collections, reflecting our established strengths.

1.5 We will place a high priority on extending our collection of electronic resources through digitisation and collaboration with other legal deposit and research libraries.

1.6 We will conserve, preserve and make secure the Library's collections whilst ensuring the widest possible access to them.

Access

2.1 We will work to ensure that everyone who could benefit from the Library's unique collections, services and expertise can do so, by identifying and removing actual and perceived barriers to use.

2.2 We will expand our online catalogues to enable users to find easily the resources they need.

2.3 We will provide appropriate high quality facilities for research, scholarship and study to meet current and potential demand.

2.4 We will encourage greater access to and understanding of the collections through a wider programme of exhibitions, interpretative displays, events and educational activities.

2.5 We will develop the existing website into a Virtual National Library of Scotland which will maximise remote and onsite access to the collections, provide interpretative and supporting material, and reduce handling of delicate items

2.6 We will develop services to ensure that remote users, especially those in Scotland, can have access to our collections, services and expertise to the highest possible level.

Consultation

3.1 We will consult with stakeholders and research the needs of current and potential users.

Partnership and Collaboration

4.1 We will work closely with all types of libraries, and other learning, cultural and heritage organisations, to support key political and social priorities, including research, enterprise and economic development, and access to education, lifelong learning and cultural activities.

Organisational Development

5.1 The Library will be efficient, well managed and accountable.

5.2 We will maintain and enhance the skills, professionalism and expertise of all our staff.

5.3 We will identify new funding opportunities, especially to support major developments in our collections and infrastructure.

Infrastructure

6.1 We will develop the infrastructure needed to meet the growing demand for our services, and the technological challenges arising from electronic publishing.

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