

CONNECTING KNOWLEDGE

NLS Strategy 2011 - 14



Introduction

Over the past decade, the National Library of Scotland (NLS) has moved to a more central role in Scottish life. Our profile has risen both within Scotland and beyond, aided by major developments such as the acquisition of the John Murray Archive in 2006 and the opening of the Visitor Centre at George IV Bridge in 2009. We intend to ensure that the influence and relevance of NLS continue to grow.

This strategy covers the four years to the end of 2014, a period which is expected to see considerable reductions in public spending. This document signals the priorities which will determine how we use the resources that we have. While we will continue to make the case vigorously for public funding for NLS and to demonstrate the importance of the Library to Scotland, we must realistically expect that we will have to manage with less government funding, for both capital and revenue. We will increase our efforts to gain funding from other sources.

Over the same period, the digital revolution will continue, as the production and use of knowledge shifts from print and paper to electronic formats and media. This shift has profound effects on the role of libraries, not least national libraries. Among the challenges and opportunities presented to NLS during the life of this strategy are:

- collecting electronic publications through legal deposit;
- ensuring that digital collections are preserved for the long term;
- increasing the resources that customers can use online where and when it suits them - in the home, school or business workplace;
- making collections visible, findable and joined-up;
- striking the best balance between investing in digital and in physical services.



Professor Michael Anderson
Chairman of the Board of Trustees



Martyn Wade
National Librarian and Chief Executive

Our purpose and our values

As preparation for this strategy, we carried out a study to review the role of NLS and other national libraries twenty years into the future.* While the context that we work within may change rapidly, the main purpose of the Library does not change radically from year to year - we collect information, knowledge and creative outputs; we preserve these collections for future use; and we make them accessible to people in order to stimulate research and creativity. There is therefore considerable continuity with recent NLS strategy; this publication does not signal a major change in our purpose which we describe as:

The National Library of Scotland exists to advance universal access to knowledge about Scotland and in Scotland.

* <http://www.nls.uk/about/policy/docs/future-national-libraries.pdf>

Values

The Library will achieve this through adopting and demonstrating the following values:

- Service
- Learning
- Innovation
- Commitment
- Excellence

Key Themes

We describe our key strategic functions in terms of 'content' and 'connectivity':

Content - what we provide access to

'Content' means items we collect and own, as we have always done; but increasingly we will also facilitate access to material that we don't own - for example digitised images and licensed electronic subscriptions.

Connectivity - how we provide access

'Connectivity' means how our users find and use content. Access will be through a range of channels - on-site in reading rooms, educational events and exhibitions, and remotely online.

These key functions are underpinned by two key enablers: 'organisational effectiveness' and 'collaboration':

Organisational Effectiveness

In order to meet the substantive challenges represented by content and connectivity, we must have access to the finance, skills and infrastructure that we need. We must provide effective leadership and improve key business processes.

Collaboration

We cannot meet our key challenges - whether developing content, connecting with users or improving organisational effectiveness - on our own. Collaboration is therefore a key theme running through all our work and we will always look for opportunities to work with others.

Setting priorities

We will focus on activities which best deliver our priorities set out in this strategy, taking into account what others do, so that the unique role of the Library is maximised without duplication of effort. Given the ambition of our change agenda in a climate of restricted funding, we cannot do everything we want to do; we must therefore make clear decisions about where we invest our resources, and which activities we must reduce or cease. We will also look beyond the short term, so that the services and infrastructure which NLS needs in the future are carefully planned.

Impacts and audiences

In addition to adopting a clear sense of our purpose, our values and our priorities, this strategy commits us to demonstrating the wider impact of the Library; the difference that we make. NLS has a key role in supporting education, research, business and innovation, and in enhancing the reputation of Scotland as a country with a rich heritage and a vibrant future. These impacts contribute directly to Scottish Government policy priorities. We will gather evidence on the difference we make in helping to generate new knowledge and creativity.

In order to understand the impact we make, we must maintain at all times a clear view of our various audiences, what they need from us and how we can best meet these needs. Key audiences (and potential audiences) include researchers of all kinds, cultural tourists, businesses, creative industries, libraries and the general public. In each case, our customers may be in Scotland, the rest of the UK or international.

Content

What outcomes do we want?

We preserve all our collections for the long term

We collect Scottish publications as completely as we can

We collect non-Scottish material that we know our customers in Scotland will want

Our priorities are to:

- Focus on the most vulnerable material - much of which is digital, film and sound
- Improve legal deposit processes, including developing effective ways to collect electronic publications
- Be more selective in what we acquire, targeting our intake of non-Scottish legal deposit material to meet demand from our customers
- Collaborate with other Legal Deposit Libraries, aiming to ensure that everything is collected by someone
- Buy or subscribe to those paper, print or digital resources that our customers most need

We will also seek to secure resources to:

- Extend our conservation work
- Extend our collecting activity, in accordance with our overall collecting strategy (through legal deposit, purchase and donation)

How we will measure success:

- The condition of our collections
- How far we succeed in collecting Scottish material, and other resources that our customers need
- How much we collect, in accordance with our collection strategy

Connectivity

What outcomes do we want?

People can find and use the content they need

Our customers have expanded remote access to content they need

Customers have on-site access to our collections

The Library, our collections and how they can be used have a high profile

Our priorities will be to:

- Provide an appropriate description promptly for all the new material we receive and reduce cataloguing backlogs
- Provide systems, tools and support which meet our customers' needs effectively

- Provide online access to licensed resources and digitised materials
- Make NLS content available for use and re-use in learning environments, including school, adult and higher education

- Tailor our reading room services to meet both current demands and emerging needs
- Provide access to digital materials collected through legal deposit

- Publicise the Library, its collections and services to key potential customers
- Display and interpret collections through exhibitions, events and educational resources

We will also seek to secure resources to:

- Provide convenient public access to the Scottish Screen Archive collections in Glasgow
- Extend our digitisation programmes
- Extend our interpretive, education and exhibition work throughout Scotland

How we will measure success:

- How quickly we catalogue new items and reduce un-catalogued collections
- The usage of our collections
- How many people use our services, online and in person
- Our reputation and public awareness

Organisational Effectiveness

What outcomes do we want?

The Library is well managed, equipped to achieve its key goals at a time of restricted public funding

We improve internal processes, efficiency and productivity, and cut costs.

We acquire the resources we need

Our accountability and governance are improved

Our priorities will be to:

- Foster a culture of innovation and customer focus
- Continue to make leadership and management more effective throughout the organisation
- Reduce or eliminate non-essential work and make the organisation simpler

- Attract public, philanthropic and project funding and generate income from services where appropriate
- Retain, recruit, train and motivate staff who have the skills we need
- Acquire the infrastructure (both IT and property) that we need to support key aims

- Set clear priorities, standards and targets for both immediate requirements and in anticipation of longer-term developments
- Assist in the preparation of new legislation re-defining the role of the Library and its Board

How we will measure success:

- Delivery of strategic goals monitored through a strategic scorecard
- Amount of money raised and generated
- Access to the skills and infrastructure that we need
- Efficient processes, energy and waste management
- Improved legislative framework

Collaboration

What outcomes do we want?

All Scottish library and archive collections are made more accessible to researchers

Scottish library and information services collaborate effectively

Our work is well co-ordinated with major library, educational and cultural institutions

We communicate with and involve our customers and potential customers, understanding their changing needs and demands

Our services are improved, and costs reduced, by collaborating with other partners.

Our priorities will be to:

- Support a strategic national approach to the collection, digitisation and use of Scottish materials
- Share knowledge with the Scottish library community, focussing particularly on issues where we have specific expertise and remits

- Collaborate with UK and Irish Legal Deposit Libraries in the fields of collection, preservation and access
- Contribute to joint initiatives and services with other national bodies

- Develop interactive online services, enabling users to re-use and contribute to the national collections
- Research our various audiences, identify their specific needs and engage with them in a focussed way

- Deliver efficiencies through pooling administrative and other services

We will also seek to secure resources to:

- Develop and support innovative partnerships which deliver our priorities for 'content' and 'connectivity' through collaboration

How we will measure success:

- Satisfied customers and partners
- Delivery of shared services
- Delivery of collaborative services with other cultural bodies and libraries
- Enhanced public and professional reputation
- International visibility

