Discover the work and legacy of one of the world's greatest ever wildlife artists, John James Audubon.

See for yourself why Audubon's *Birds of America* is one of the world's most valuable books.

Monday - Friday 10am to 5pm
(8pm during Edinburgh Festival)
Saturday 10am to 5pm
Sunday 2pm to 5pm

Birds of a feather
Audubon's Adventures in Edinburgh
4 July - 15 October 2006

Free Exhibition
National Library of Scotland
George IV Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1EW
Switchboard: 0131 623 3700
Events Line: 0131 623 3845
www.nls.uk
Foreword

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the second issue of Discover NLS. The articles in this issue demonstrate the immense variety of our collections, and describe the exciting challenges we face in continuing to acquire an even greater variety of material in the digital age. In a tribute article Eric Dickson describes the relationship between one of the best known modern writers, the late Dame Muriel Spark, and her native Edinburgh. The Library owns her vast personal archive, which developed after her decision in the 1940s to keep all kinds of documentary evidence relating to her career. It is interesting to speculate whether, if taking the same decision in 2006, she would have been contemplating the production of a web-log. In our professional practice article, Gill Hamilton and Eric Jurtzenka describe this new publishing phenomenon and its implications for the preservation of contemporary thought. The theme of digital preservation is continued in Simon Bains’ interview with N adjla Semple, Executive Secretary of the Digital Preservation Coalition, which explores the issues surrounding the acquisition and preservation of electronic resources.

Contributors in this Issue

Ruth Boreham is Assistant John Murray Archive Curator. She joined the manuscripts division of the Library in 2004 as an evening invigilator before starting work on the Archive. Previously to working at the Library Ruth worked in a number of research roles, most recently as a freelance researcher for various television programmes and authors.

Eric Dickson works in the Legal Deposit team, where he claims Scottish and British materials, including works by Dame Muriel Spark, for NLS collections. Since 2003 he has been Secretary of the Muriel Spark Society and has written numerous articles and reviews of Spark’s works.

Gill Hamilton is Systems Librarian in the Digital Library team. She works to ensure the smooth running and development of several of the Library’s key information systems. Her professional interests include systems integration, data manipulation and transformation and representing the UK on the IFLA IT section. In her spare time, Gill enjoys cycling and tending vegetables on her allotment.

Dr Graham Hogg is a Senior Curator in the Rare Book Collections Division, where he has worked for the last 13 years. He currently has responsibility for special projects within the division and was the lead curator for this summer’s exhibition on John James Audubon. He describes himself as an armchair ornithologist of the kind despised by Audubon, rather than an active birdwatcher.

The John Murray Archive, which arrived in the Library in March, is one of the most significant collections we have ever acquired, and will provide scope for exploration for years to come. In this issue Ruth Boreham introduces us to some of the many women she has encountered in the Archive. The theme of discovery is continued in Kevin Halliwell’s description of the Library’s Sanskrit collections, recently brought to light in support of a major international conference. In our main article, Graham Hogg describes the impact John James Audubon had on Edinburgh when he first visited the city in 1826, and the major role which members of Edinburgh society played in the production of his magnificent Birds of America. Audubon’s adventures in Edinburgh are the theme of our colourful and fascinating summer exhibition, Birds of a Feather, which runs until October.

Dr Graham Hogg explains how Enlightenment Edinburgh made the staple text of American ornithology possible.

N adjla Semple and Simon Bains explain digital preservation.

Dr Kevin Halliwell unveils some Sanskrit treasures.

Dr Graham Hogg with a volume of Birds of America, on display at the Library’s current exhibition Birds of a feather.
Traquair's artwork manuscript goes online

A seminal illuminated manuscript for the Arts and Crafts movement, now available online, replete with a commentary from art historian Elizabeth Cumming. Phoebe Anna Traquair made her exquisite manuscript of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' in Edinburgh between 1892 and 1897 for her brother, William Richardson Moss, a Lancashire cotton manufacturer.

The launch of the TDR represents the next significant phase of the Library's vision to build a national digital library of Scotland that extends the same level of professional care to collecting, preserving and providing digital material as it does printed matter. The repository will store, preserve and provide access to a wide variety of digital resources, including NLS digitised collections, legal deposit publications in digital form and other material of cultural significance to Scotland.

Commenting on the news, ICT Manager, David Dinham said, 'We are very pleased that the Scottish Executive has provided funding for this important project. NLS will be implementing innovative, cutting-edge technology and working with partners around the world to develop a system focused on the needs of users. It will certainly be an exciting challenge for everyone involved.'

Equally welcome was the announcement by the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Patricia Ferguson MSP (at the launch of the Library's summer exhibition, Birds of a Feather) that up to £450,000 would be made available to complete extensive renovations to the Library's flagship building on George IV Bridge. The funds will be used to develop the front hall area of the building, a project which was halted due to the need for ambitious plans to transform this area into a fully-functioning visitor centre by autumn 2007.

This work will be carried out in tandem with the Library's plans to create engaging, interactive facilities and spaces for the interpretation of the John Murray Archive, which arrived earlier this year.

Traquair's talents included embroidery and enamel-work, leather book-cover tooling and mural decoration as well as manuscript illumination. She was heavily influenced by the 'Book of Kells' and 14th-century European art, but also drew inspiration from William Blake and the Pre-Raphaelites.

The passionate sonnets themselves were written in secret by the poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and tell of the two-year courtship leading up to her marriage to Robert Browning in 1846. Although first published in 1850 they are still much loved today. To view the manuscript online visit www.nls.uk/traquair

America's printed history acquired

A definitive resource for researching 17th and 18th century America has been acquired. Early American Imprints 1639-1800, comprises some 39,000 digital titles of early American publishing across its 2.3 million digital pages. Virtually every work of early American publishing is represented, with the exception of newspapers. Based on the renowned American Bibliography by Charles Evans, Early American Imprints covers books, broadsides, laws, maps, songs, speeches and much more.

The resource should interest researchers of early Colonial North America and the early American Republic, while researchers of Scottish emigration and influence in North America will benefit from thousands of entries relating to Scotland and the Scots.

For more details on how to access Early American Imprints and register for remote access, please visit www.nls.uk/catalogues/online/eraeal.html

Research tool for Scottish newspaper sleuths

A guide to the indexes of Scottish newspapers is now available online. The guide lists details of 180 indexed titles, dating from the Dumfries Mercury of 1721, with details of where the papers can be found. Printed, electronic and online indexes are all included and it is searchable by title of newspaper and keyword.

This project has been developed by NLS in collaboration with the Scottish library community who have contributed details of their local holdings. The guide should be an essential tool for anyone researching or interested in newspapers over the ages. View it online at www.nls.uk/newspapers

Neglected writer's papers gathered for Scotland

The papers of the writer Robin Jenkins, one of Scotland's most significant novelists of the post-war era have arrived at NLS. Robin Jenkins (1912–2005) was a prolific writer who published 29 novels in his lifetime. The papers include drafts of some of his best-known works, such as The Cone-Gatherers (1955), which was based on his experiences as a forestry worker during the Second World War. Among the papers are a number of unpublished novels, which sadly gathered dust in his desk drawer at a time when sales worker during the Second World War. Among the papers are a number of unpublished novels, which sadly gathered dust in his desk drawer at a time when sales

...
Flights of the imagination

Rare Books Curator Dr Graham Hogg recounts how John James Audubon, one of history’s great wildlife artists, found inspiration and encouragement among Enlightenment Edinburgh’s high-flyers.

On 25 October 1826 a stranger of striking appearance arrived in Edinburgh. With piercing brown eyes, shoulder-length curling hair, handsome aquiline features, unusual clothing and a thick French accent, John James Audubon certainly stood out from the crowd. Despite suffering from a heavy cold and having undergone a gruelling two-day coach journey from Manchester, the American visitor was excited to get his first glimpse of the ‘splendid city’ by gaslight.

Audubon’s favourable first impressions of Edinburgh were confirmed in the daylight. The city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on the city was in its Golden Age, with impressive new civic buildings like the Royal Institution on

Edinburgh proved to have a greater impact on him than he could possibly have imagined. Within a few days he was writing to his son Victor that the city was, “The most beautiful, picturesque, and romantic city probably in the world, I am delighted with every portion of it.” However, he was not so delighted with the lack of attention he was receiving from the ‘great and good’ of Edinburgh, many of whom had not responded to the letters of introduction he had brought. Audubon was a man of many moods, who could quickly sink into depression if he felt ignored. Only a day after praising the city to his son he was ready to pack his bags and head for London. Salvation appeared in the form of the artist and engraver William Home Lizars, who was persuaded to go and look at Audubon’s paintings. Audubon’s journal records the reaction of Lizars as he slowly opened his portfolio and showed him a painting:

‘Mr Lizars, quite surprised, exclaimed, “My God, I never saw anything like this before!”

Lizars was so astonished by the quality of Audubon’s work that he immediately agreed to tell all his acquaintances in Edinburgh society about these amazing life-size depictions of American birds. Lizars was as good as his word. The following day Audubon received a visit from Professor Robert Jameson, curator of the University’s natural history museum, whose collections later formed the basis of the Royal M useum of Scotland. Thanks to Jameson’s praise of his talents, Audubon was accepted into scientific circles and was later invited to give natural history papers to the Wernerian Natural History Society and the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Audubon would become a member of both bodies, no mean achievement for someone who had received little formal education. Others would follow in Jameson’s footsteps over the next few years: important men like naturalist William Jardine and David Brewster, the eminent optical scientist, remembered chiefly as the inventor of the kaleidoscope. Audubon had made his breakthrough into Edinburgh society.
In November 1826 Lizars decided to start producing copies of Audubon’s paintings. He would engrave the outline of the paintings on copper plates which would then be printed off and hand-coloured by a team of colourists. This was a huge undertaking, as Audubon was determined that Birds of America would be done to the highest possible standard with no compromise on cost. To accommodate the life-size depictions of the bigger birds, the largest commercially available size of paper, double elephant folio (100 x 75 cm), was used. Over the next few months Audubon’s plans for completing Birds of America took shape. The plates would be issued in batches of five to subscribers, each priced at two guineas. He would have to find sufficient subscribers to finance the production costs - not an easy task, as the overall cost of his book would be beyond the means of all but the very rich. Moreover, it would take several years for the plates to be completed, in which time many subscribers would lose interest or die and new ones would have to be found. Audubon still had time to lead a busy social life. His journal for the year 1826 has survived for posterity, and his entries provide a vivid account of Edinburgh society. He found himself being regularly invited to dinner parties, where his exotic appearance and background made him the centre of attention and tickled his considerable vanity. He did not, however, want people to find out too much about his illegitimate birth in the Caribbean, so he played the part of the ‘American woodman’, as he styled himself, to perfection. He was able to regale his eager audiences with tales of his many adventures in the untamed American frontier states. By December of 1826 Audubon could write to his wife, ‘My situation in Edinburgh borders almost on the miraculous’. He had been able to display his paintings in the recently-opened Royal Institution building in Edinburgh, attracting further interest in his work and extra funds. He went on to comment that, ‘I cannot yet say whether I will ultimately succeed but at present all bears a better prospect than I ever expected to see.’

He was prospering ‘under the eyes of the most discriminating people in the world - I mean Edinburgh - if my book takes here it cannot fail anywhere.’
Poet Pauline Prior Pitt reflects on winning the Callum Macdonald Memorial Award, and on the creative process that encouraged a published poet to produce and publish the hand-made, small-run pamphlet, North Uist Sea Poems, which earned her the prize.

The cadence of the waves

‘Waves behaving themselves as usual just rolling in, doing their thing but the pebbles scattered high and low show they have been up to something.’

I live on the island of North Uist and between October 2004 and January 2005 visited the shore near my house, which inspired me to record the sea’s changing activity in a series of daily verses. The poems are dated small impressions. On 11 January a violent storm devastated the island and instead of a gentle slope of dunes, my usual way down to the shore had become a twenty-foot drop. This seemed an appropriate time to pause and bind the poems together.

Because of the effect the storm had on people’s lives, I wanted something more than just another book and so decided to produce a piece of artwork. It is small, square, and hand stitched in sand coloured threads with one blue thread. Each page has fine lines at the bottom, like the fine lines left in the sand as the sea goes out. At the time I had no idea that I was creating a pamphlet.

Then in May 2005, a book review in the Herald alerted me to the Scottish Pamphlet Poetry website. Tessa Ransford’s article about pamphlets being a more feminine way of publishing appealed to me. I wrote to her and included a copy of the sea poems. Tessa was most gracious in her reply and suggested that I might like to sell my pamphlet via www.scottish-pamphlet-poetry.com.

In December I went to the Pamphlet Poetry Party at NLS in Edinburgh. Attending this event made me realise just how many people are involved in publishing high quality pamphlets. I felt pleased to be part of this flourishing scene. Although my first four poetry collections are in book form, there is something very special about pamphlets. They are more gentle, soft covered slim volumes for slipping into pockets. They are immediate. You can just gather a small collection together, make all your own decisions and have all the fun. It is a very creative way of publishing.

It’s not difficult to express what winning the 2006 Callum Macdonald Memorial Award means to me. It is a great honour. I’m thrilled. I’m very pleased for my poetry to be so highly regarded. Winning has made me feel slightly different about myself.

Pauline Prior Pitt has written five collections of poetry published by Spike Press. Visit www.pauline-prior-pitt.com to find out more.

To apply for 2007 or find out more, visit www.nls.uk/news/awards/index.html#callum

Poet Pauline Prior Pitt reflects on winning the Callum Macdonald Memorial Award, and on the creative process that encouraged a published poet to produce and publish the hand-made, small-run pamphlet, North Uist Sea Poems, which earned her the prize.

Competitions

I want to make that book mine!

Thanks to our kindly colleagues at the Royal Commission on the Ancient Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), we’re delighted to offer readers copies of Dr Miles K Oglethorpe’s book, Scottish Collieries: An Inventory Of The Scottish Coal Industry In The Nationalised Era.

Copies will go to the first three people who can answer this question: Which Scottish colliery employed the largest number of miners at any one time since World War Two?

Calling all tomorrow’s Audubons...

We’re also delighted to offer readers three copies of John Chalmers’ Audubon in Edinburgh and his Scottish Associates, courtesy of NMS Publishing.

Copies will be winging their way to the three people who send us the best short cartoon, (no more than four panels) inspired by the exhibition.

By way of an extra incentive, the best overall entry will also be printed in the next issue of Discover NLS.

Answers and entries to: Competitions Discover NLS Marketing Services National Library of Scotland George IV Bridge Edinburgh EH1 1EW

Or by e-mail to: discover@nls.uk (please put competition in the subject field)
Total recall: beating the Betamax syndrome

Within a decade of electronics giant Sony launching their ill-fated Betamax video format in 1975 it was rendered obsolete by JVC’s rival home-video technology VHS, itself becoming rapidly eclipsed by DVD today. Alongside the increasing growth of more and more formats for recording our cultural memory comes the risk of losing those formats – and with it all their contents.

Digital Library Manager Simon Bains speaks to Najia Semple, Executive Secretary of the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC), about the pressing need to safeguard digital collections and avoid falling foul of the ‘Betamax syndrome’.

SB: What does digital preservation mean?
NS: Digital preservation is simply the practice of ensuring our digital information can be retrieved and accessed in perpetuity, regardless of the pace of technological change. The rush to ‘go digital’ is such that huge amounts of data are being accumulated with not much thought given as to its longevity, long-term management or even day-to-day management. There are significant challenges associated with ensuring access to and preservation of these materials for the future. Electronic resources, regardless of whether they are created from paper-based material initially through digitisation or are ‘born digital’ (websites, databases etc.) are threatened by technological obsolescence and physical deterioration.

SB: Can you give me some examples?
NS: There are a few high profile examples that illustrate the problem perfectly. One of them is the 1975/76 Viking moon-landing data: the data NASA lost was expensive and vital. Another is the Newham Archive, an archaeological data archive that was transferred onto floppy disks. The data on these disks was accumulated with not much thought given as to how it would be read in the future. The digital archive was eventually recovered at a great cost but it proves that data is worthless if it makes no sense. At a personal level, anyone could be affected as we increasingly rely on digital technologies, such as digital cameras.

‘Anyone today can view the world’s earliest photographic albums from over 150 years ago, but there’s a very real danger that the next generation will not be able to look at our own digital photos, just 20 years from now.’

SB: What exactly is the Digital Preservation Coalition, and how and why did it begin?
NS: It started back in 2001, with 10 library, archive and publishing organisations who decided that there needed to be a concerted effort to ramp-up digital preservation, to raise awareness of the problems and come up with some solutions. Since then it has grown to accommodate thirty members and is certainly the only organisation of its kind in the UK. I should also stress that the DPC is a public organisation without commercial interests.

SB: Why do we need the DPC? Doesn’t everyone back up their data?
NS: Organisations may back up their disks up but that’s not going to guarantee readability in the future. Digital preservation is an ongoing activity that needs to start very early on when creating digital data. It’s important that awareness is raised throughout organisations, at all levels, that digital data is very fragile.

SB: Are we entering a ‘digital dark age’ or do you think the future looks more positive?
NS: I think that it’s important to stress that this is a really new field. There is a lot of scaremongering going on. If there is an imminent problem, someone will probably come up with something to prevent data being lost. Whether or not it’s as methodical and academic as we want it to be remains to be seen. I’m not pessimistic and I think much of the data we create isn’t worth keeping anyway. But we don’t know what historians in the future will want to research. At this stage we are in a dark age of sorts, because we can’t really predict where the solution lies.

SB: What should libraries and archives be doing?
NS: Libraries and archives really need to analyse the kind of information that they are taking in and apply some of the traditional practices and patterns used for paper collections and not be frightened of the fact that it is digital. National libraries have a problem because sometimes they have no say over what they receive, but those building digital libraries could specify which format to accept material in. There isn’t a ‘one-size-fits-all’ solution, so organisations shouldn’t just wait for someone else to do it. Preservation should be built in as a part of the whole collection process.

SB: Given how complicated much of this sounds, is it going to be very expensive?
NS: The important thing to bear in mind is that it is more cost-effective to manage digital materials from the start, preferably at the creation of the resource. Good preservation planning and investment at the beginning can save costly data recovery exercises later on. This is especially important for a national library such as NLS that acquires unique collections that cannot afford to be lost.

SB: How does the DPC help?
NS: As a central resource, we facilitate and disseminate information, listing available projects for example. We organise specialist forum meeting days for professionals involved with digital preservation from a growing range of sectors to meet and discuss the issues. The DPC supports the digital preservation training programme, a week-long course covering all aspects of digital preservation – one of a handful of comprehensive courses in the UK. We sponsor an award every two years to acknowledge development in the field. We also have a step-by-step digital preservation handbook on the website.

Discover more

To learn more about the work of the Digital Preservation Coalition or how to become a member, visit www.dpconline.org

References

1 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betamax
3 The Edinburgh Calotype Club, held at NLS and available online at: www.nls.uk/pencils/digit/index.html
4 www.uic.ac.uk/dptp/
September

Thursday 14 September 7pm
The RSPB in Scotland
A whistle-stop tour of the origins and work of Europe’s largest conservation charity in Scotland; the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

W Wednesday 13 September 6.30pm
The Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN
Audubon’s Scottish Links
John Chalmers, author of Audubon in Edinburgh and his Scottish Associates, recounts the Scottish experiences of the great American woodsman and wildlife artist.

O October

Friday 6 October 7pm
Birds of Scotland: A Photographer’s View
Scottish Wildlife Photographer of the Year Laurie Campbell shares his passion for wildlife and the rich variety of species and habitats that exist in Scotland.

Saturday 14 October 2-4 pm
The Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN
The Big Draw
Follow in the footsteps of Audubon and join in with our Big Draw event for an afternoon of drawing, colouring and other fun activities, ideally suited to families with young children.

Learning point
Spies wanted!
Fresh recruits are required for our spy schools in Edinburgh and Aberdeen, as part of our involvement with the public libraries’ summer reading challenge. The Reading Mission. Children will learn how to send secret coded messages, try memory improvement techniques as practised by real spies and learn about wartime propaganda methods.

In Aberdeen
Tuesday 25 July
Airigh Library, Springfield Road
10.30-11.30am
Cove Library, Lairiston Avenue
2.30-3.30pm

For a full mission briefing report to
www.edinburgh.gov.uk/libraries/events
For more information about the free service on offer to schools, colleges and community groups, contact the Education and Outreach Officer on 0131 623 3841.

December

Thursday 7 December at 1pm
The Play’s the Thing: Early Editions of Shakespeare’s Plays
Rare Books Curator Helen Vincent provides a close encounter with some of the earliest surviving copies of Shakespeare’s plays from NLS holdings, including the First Folio, a copy of which recently sold for £2.8 million at auction.

In the interests of protecting the historic materials on display during these talks, we politely remind visitors that food and drink may only be consumed in the Readers’ Canteen, on the ground floor of the George IV Bridge building.

All events and exhibitions are free and open to everyone. Space at events are often limited. Please phone the Events Line in advance to book a place on 0131 623 3845 or e-mail events@nls.uk.

Opening hours:
Sunday 2-5pm
Monday – Saturday 10am – 5pm

Display

August

Scotland’s Renaissance Man: 500 Years of George Buchanan
See page 14 for details.

September

Visitors’ Books
A selection of visitors’ books from the Library’s Manuscript Collection will be on display in September. While some visitors’ books are simply lists of names and dates, others are full of human interest as travelers seize the opportunity to expand and record their experiences often with humor, imagination and wisdom. Highlights will include the visitors’ book used when the Scott Monument first opened in 1846, the Glenquoich Visitors’ Book from Edward Ellice of Invergarry’s Highland shooting lodge, and the Sligachan Hotel Visitors’ Book from Skye.

O October

Benjamin Franklin
A selection of materials in tribute to Benjamin Franklin, the great US statesman, scientist, philosopher, inventor and widely regarded as ‘the father of electricity’. This display of recent acquisitions and older material by or about Franklin commemorates the tricentenary of his birth in 1706.

Exhibition

Birds of a feather: Audubon’s Adventures in Edinburgh
Until 15 O October
The Library’s summer exhibition explores the role Scotland played in helping one of the world’s most valuable and remarkable books come to fruition and in transforming John James Audubon from a self-styled ‘American woodsman’ into one of the history’s greatest naturalists and wildlife artists.
Scotland's Renaissance Man: 500 Years of George Buchanan

This summer the Library celebrates the quincentenary of one of Scotland's most eminent and controversial - humanist thinkers. Rare Books Curator Helen Vincent outlines the significant contribution George Buchanan made to Scottish history and political thought, and his connection to one of the Library's most important early Keepers.

Renaissance scholar George Buchanan (1506-1582) was born 500 years ago and earned fame across Europe for his writings, which span the range of humanist interests in culture, religion and politics. As a neo-Latin poet, he translated classical dramas and penned plays and poems of his own on secular and religious themes. His best known poetry is a Latin verse translation of the Psalms, written while he was imprisoned by the Inquisition in Portugal, and still read by educated Scots in the 19th century. His political writings include a dialogue on Scottish kingship, De Iure Regni apud Scotos, written to 'purge (Scottish history) of sum Inglis lyis and Scottis vanite', was still a figure. His Latin practice when he was a key player in the deposition of Mary Queen of Scots, he has always been a more controversial figure. His Latin History of Scotland, written to 'purge (Scottish history) of sum Inglis lyis and Scottis vanite', was still provoking violent arguments in Scotland over 100 years after it was written.

In Scotland, where Buchanan put this last idea into practice when he was a key player in the deposition of Mary Queen of Scots, he has always been a more controversial figure. His Latin History of Scotland, written to 'purge (Scottish history) of sum Inglis lyis and Scottis vanite', was still provoking violent arguments in Scotland over 100 years after it was written.

This controversy was fuelled in no small part by the edition of Buchanan's works produced in 1715 by Thomas Ruddiman (1674-1757), Keeper of the Advocates Library from 1730 to 1752 and the foremost Scottish Latin scholar of his day. Ruddiman (whose portrait still adorns one of the Library's main meeting rooms, formerly the office of the National Librarian) praised Buchanan's Latin writings, but abhorred his political ideas. In the age of the Jacobite risings, Buchanan's arguments were as relevant to Scottish politics as they had been in his own lifetime, and a bitter 'pamphlet war' took place between Ruddiman and those who wanted to vindicate Buchanan. Many of NLS' Buchanan-related manuscripts relate to Ruddiman's interest in Buchanan, his edition, and the debates it caused.

NLS marks Buchanan's quincentenary with a display throughout August which reflects both sides of Buchanan's reputation - European esteem and Scottish controversy. We are also pleased to host 'George Buchanan: An Apollo of the North', a talk by leading Buchanan expert, Robert Crawford, Professor of Modern Scottish Literature at the University of St Andrews, on 28 August.

Two other libraries join us in celebrating Buchanan's influence this summer. The Library of St Andrews University, (where Buchanan became principal of St Leonard's College in 1566) will mount an exhibition of Buchanan's works until the end of August. Meanwhile, the Special Collections Department of Glasgow University Library have launched a virtual exhibition on their website at http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/index.html.

New edition of Scotland's first atlas

In 1654 the first ever atlas of Scotland was produced in Amsterdam by the famous Blaeu publishing firm.

The story behind the publication of Volume Five of Theatrum Orbis Terrarum sive Atlas Novus is a fascinating one.

The Atlas is based upon the survey of Scotland, which Timothy Pont made in the last two decades of the 16th century. Yet Pont was long dead by the time this volume of the Blaeu Atlas Novus was produced; had it not been for Sir John Scot of Scotstarvit and Willem and Joan Blaeu in Amsterdam it would never have existed.

NLS owns an original copy, housed in the Map Library at Causewayside, and now a new edition is being published by Birlinn in association with the Library.

This special edition contains facsimiles of all the 49 Scottish maps and an English translation of the original text by IC Cunningham, former Keeper of Manuscripts, Maps and Music at NLS.

An introductory essay by Professor Charles Withers of the University of Edinburgh sets the atlas in context and explains much of the background to the publication. Additional content includes letters and texts never previously published.

### Special Offer

Discover NLS readers can take advantage of a special introductory offer. To be added to the subscription list for a numbered copy of the limited edition at only £80, a discount of 20% of the retail price, simply send your details to:

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www.nls.uk discovernls issue 2 2006
Dame Muriel Spark (1918-2006)

As the world mourns the passing of one of Scotland's greatest literary talents, Eric Dickson, Secretary of the Muriel Spark Society, reflects on Dame Muriel's relationship with Edinburgh: the city that spawned her and her best-remembered novel, The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.

Bright Spark, dark city

Duality is something writers have done well in Edinburgh. Since Deacon Brodie's double life, James Hogg's Justified Sinner has wandered the Canongate and Robert Louis Stevenson should have had Dr Jekyll residing not in London but in the New Town, with Mr Hyde prone in the shadows of an Old Town close. The young Scottish dandy, John Gray, later Father Gray, is said to have been the model for Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray.

Muriel Spark added to this mythology with her only Edinburgh-based novel, The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie. Miss Brodie repels as much as she attracts; her colourful clothes, travel and love of art are beguiling to her pupils; indeed Spark called her 'an Edinburgh Festival all in herself'.

The world of Miss Brodie is an Edinburgh myth just as much as the Justified Sinner or Dr Jekyll. Muriel Spark covered all the great subjects and questions of life and literature, in her own unique way. The existence of God, good and evil, how to live, why we suffer – all of it carries a moral punch. She deals with breakdown, corruption, deception and death, but always with the most engaging and compelling style, itself a type of duality. Spark covered all the great subjects and questions of life and literature, in her own unique way. The existence of God, good and evil, how to live, why we suffer – all of it carries a moral punch. She deals with breakdown, corruption, deception and death, but always with the most engaging and compelling style, itself a type of duality.

Spark's precocity first emerged in Edinburgh. When one reads her autobiography, Curriculum Vitae, one can see the future world-class writer beginning to form. Muriel was the poet and dreamer of James Gillespie's School for Girls – 'the school on the links'. She won poetry competitions, and was published and anthologised when still a child. Despite the fame of her novels, Spark would always regard herself foremost as a poet, and it is appropriate that her literary career began at the tender age of twelve in 1929 with a poem. Spark was intrigued and sometimes amused by the gestures and repeated phrases of the visitors to her Bruntsfield home, and she would listen and watch people with more than just childhood fascination.

Perhaps the person who fascinated young Muriel Camberg most was the teacher who taught her between the impressionable years of 11-12, her class mistress, Miss Christina Kay. Miss Kay was a single woman (she probably lost her fiancé in the First World War) who devoted her life to her pupils and to her love of art and travel. She loved Italy and Renaissance art, and enthralled her pupils with stories of her travels and interests. She was also a thoroughly honourable woman, who Spark admitted would never stretch to sending her too.

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Spark read voraciously, as the accounts from booksellers in her Archive here in the National Library of Scotland confirm. In the 1950s, she produced works on Wordsworth, the Brontës, Cardinal Newman and Mary Shelley. She later remarked without any bumptiousness that the rather earnest young women who had attended university could perhaps write a scholarly piece on John Donne, ‘but then so could I’. Later, the universities of Edinburgh, Oxford and Herriot-Watt would all award Spark honorary degrees.

After her return from Africa during the war, Spark lived in London and later New York. In the 1960s, she moved to Rome and later to Tuscany, her final resting place. Yet her connection with Edinburgh would remain constant. In 1992 the Library acquired the beginnings of her massive personal archive, one of the largest and most important literary archives in the world, which NLS has continued to acquire over the years. In an act of generosity, Spark recently gifted the brass plaque that was used to promote her mother’s act of generosity, Spark recently gifted the brass plaque that was used to promote her mother’s.

In 2001, another connection with Edinburgh would be formed. Christine Lloyd founded The Muriel Spark Society in the most appropriate of cities. The Society encourages the appreciation and enjoyment of Spark’s oeuvre through lectures, discussions and meetings. Spark herself gave the Society her blessing and support; she became a life member from the start. Some of Spark’s school friends would become honorary life members too. Despite the very saddest of news this year, the Society will go on with its work. Later this year (9 November) cutting edge novelist and Spark admirer Toby Litt will speak at NLS on the impact of the society.

I was intrigued when I learned that the distinguished feminist publishing house Virago would publish Spark’s novel Symposium (1990) later this year. This is welcome news, but it perhaps would be that Spark had been perhaps worth noting that Spark had been successfully publishing her work for more than two decades. The words of Fleur Talbot, the heroine of Loitering with Intent come to mind: ‘How wonderful to be a woman and an artist in the middle of the twentieth century!’

Wonderful too for Spark and for us, that she remained so at the beginning of the twenty-first century!

The Muriel Spark archive
The Muriel Spark archive is unique among the National Library of Scotland’s collections of papers of Scottish writers. No other author so deliberately and carefully preserved a record of their life. The earliest papers date from the 1940s, when Muriel Spark made a decision to keep all kinds of documentary evidence. The early sparse records of wartime poverty that chart the struggles of an unknown author are joined by scores of diaries, numerous accounts and cheque books, and tens of thousands of letters, growing in number as her fame has risen.

Visit www.nls.uk/murielspark/archive_summary.html for a detailed summary of the major accessions to the archive. For more information on the archive, please e-mail manuscripts@nls.uk or call 031 623 3876.

Discover more
The Muriel Spark Society
The Edinburgh-based Muriel Spark Society organises a varied programme of events, including talks by eminent speakers, and an annual lunch in January or February to commemorate Dame Muriel’s birthday. Visit www.murielsparksociety.org for more information.

Sanskrit, the classical language of India, is not a subject that NLS actively collects (we do collect South Asian material written in English, and foreign language material in many European languages) but since our collections date back to the foundation of the Advocates Library in the late 17th century, we can always expect to unearth some fascinating material.

We have had the right to claim British and Irish publications since 1700, so it was no surprise to find that we had a substantial collection of works on Sanskrit. It was a surprise, however, to discover how many Scottish scholars produced pioneering works on the language.

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Whether missionaries, civil servants or soldiers, many Scots spent time in India, and many had linguistic interests. The first important Western dissertation on Sanskrit learning was produced by the Fife historian Alexander Dow (d.1779) and published in 1768. Glasgow-born John Muir (1810-1882), a prolific Sanskrit scholar, founded the chair of Sanskrit at Edinburgh University. James Robert Ballantyne (1813-1864) published the first complete edition of Adi Parva, the longest part of the Mahabharata, in 1848.

Another Scot, Alexander Hamilton, studied in Edinburgh and Paris, where he was taken hostage during the Napoleonic wars. It is knowledge of Sanskrit that Hamilton used to translate the works of the Indian poet Halmendh Rajput. Hamilton ended up publishing a catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts for Paris’ Imperial Library in 1807. Many of these volumes came to the Advocates at an early date and show the breadth of their interests. We also unearthed a rare and early Latin text on Sanskrit by the missionary Fra Paolo da San Bartolomeo, published in Rome in 1790.

The India Papers, a collection of Indian government publications published from about 1850 to 1945, produced a number of surprising items, including detailed descriptions of Sanskrit texts and inscriptions, and lists, catalogues and reports of many official searches for Sanskrit manuscripts. Again Scots featured prominently, for example John Burgess (1832-1916), Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India.
Finding Sanskrit manuscript material required a little more detective work. It is known that a number of ‘Oriental’ (i.e. non-Western) manuscripts had been acquired by the Advocates Library over the years, but very little information about them was ever published or even recorded. Some eight or nine of these oriental manuscripts proved to be Sanskrit. How these manuscripts came to be in the Library is difficult to discover, but it is thought that many were presented by Scots returning from India in the 18th century. Most beautifully written and occasionally illustrated, some in attractive Western bindings, they contain many of the standard Sanskrit epics and commentaries. One is an illustrated astronomical scroll produced for a man born in 1788. Three of the items are ‘palm-leaf manuscripts’, written on specially prepared and shaped strips from palm leaf fronds. And one copy of the Bhagavadgita, in an Indian binding, had a note attached stating: ‘taken at Kuraee Oct 25, 1858, by the M alwa Field Force’.

It had come to the Library from the family of the Chaplain to the 93rd Highland Brigade, who acquired it by force, during military action. Scotland has a long tradition of Sanskrit scholarship, maintained today by institutions such as Edinburgh University, whose School of Asian Studies hosts one of the few Sanskrit collections in the UK. Our public display and talk was organised to complement the 13th World Sanskrit Conference, organised by the University and the International Association of Sanskrit Studies, which took place in July.

Having found and organised this material, we were surprised and delighted to welcome an enthusiastic audience of nearly 200 of the world’s leading Sanskrit scholars. Our collections have already benefited from this renewed enthusiasm for these hitherto little-known items, with the donation of a number of works, including some contemporary Sanskrit poetry.

Catering for these scholars has once again given us occasion to unearth hidden treasures from our collections and to learn more about their amazing range and fascinating history.

Sanskrit

Sanskrit is one of the world’s oldest languages, known to date back to the 5th century BC. Sanskrit means literally ‘the refined language’ and has its roots in ancient Indian religion, literature, philosophy and science. It is considered to be of great importance for the study of religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Sanskrit is still in use today, albeit largely for ceremonial and religious functions. Sanskrit literature continues a rich tradition of poetry and narrative, as well as scientific, technical, philosophical and religious texts.

Discover more

All printed publications, including the India Papers, can be found in the Library’s main online catalogue. These and the Sanskrit manuscripts are described on the Library’s website and in a leaflet about the South Asian Collections.

About Sanskrit

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‘I caught a shark and stopped a mutiny’

John Murray Archive Assistant Curator, Ruth Boreham, explains why, in the golden era of the John Murray publishing firm, a woman’s work was never dull.

Dublin collections on your desktop

The following major digital resources are now available to readers online and off-site

- Early American Imprints containing over 2.3 million digital pages, represents virtually every work of early American publishing from the 17th and 18th centuries.
- The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography details the lives of over 50,000 individuals who shaped the history of the British Isles from the earliest times.
- The Environmental Issues & Policy Index provides citations from over 500 titles in the field of environmental science.
- The International Bibliography and Directory of Periodicals provide extensive coverage of language, linguistics, literature and folklore.
- Early English Books Online provides full-text access to over 100,000 books printed between 1473 and 1700.
- Xrefplus offers over one million entries and 5,000 images from high-quality reference books of some of the world’s leading publishers.

To learn more about registering for remote access to any of these resources, please visit www.nls.uk/catalogues/online/er/index.html or register in person at the Library’s enquiry desk.

* Readers who register for remote access will be able to use these resources from almost anywhere in Scotland with an internet connection: Please contact Paul Cumnea for more information p.cumnea@nls.uk or call 0131 623 4761

Queen Victoria represented the paradigm of womanhood in the 19th century. She was deeply in love with her husband Prince Albert and relied on him both emotionally and practically. She was constantly attached to her family, and bore nine children in their 21 years of marriage. The monarch established the ideal figure of the Victorian mother and wife, and was often called the ‘M other of the Nation’ and the ‘M other of the Empire’. This image of the devoted, home-loving woman was prevalent in the fiction, press and politics of the time, but is this the only experience women had? A look through the papers and letters of the John Murray Archive suggests otherwise. Throughout the 150,000 items are letters from women writing to John Murray as their publisher, or approaching him about a book they have written – not as wives of famous and important men (although they are represented as well) but as important figures in their own right, active in most spheres of influence. Within the Archive we find much evidence in particular of women’s contribution to science, politics, exploration and literature.

Women as scientists

When Mary Somerville died in 1872 at the age of 92, obituaries called her ‘Queen of Science’. Although not credited with any new discoveries, Somerville wrote popular treatises that helped to popularise the growing field of science. A Scottish self-educated woman who also raised a family, she became the breadwinner of her household when her second husband, naval man William Somerville, retired due to ill health. Somerville corresponded with the leading scientific men of the day, such as Charles Babbage, John Herschel, Michael Faraday and David Brewster. She did likewise with her publisher John Murray; sending manuscripts but also letters discussing her personal life, her writings and passing on gossip about mutual acquaintances. In 1857 she writes to Murray: +

...
Women as campaigners

The letters of some of the Archive’s correspondents can often strike an emotional chord. One such example is that of Caroline Norton, author and law reform campaigner. It was largely due to her that the Infants’ Custody Act was introduced in 1839, which gave women some (albeit limited) rights to the access of their young children – until then they had been denied custody. Caroline experienced this herself. When her marriage to MP and barrister George Norton effectively ended in 1835 she was refused access to their house and her children were sent away to Yorkshire. Caroline, already an established poet before marriage, published a pamphlet titled, Observations on the natural claim of the mother to the custody of her infant children; as affected by the common law rights of the father (1837). Three further pamphlets, helped to gain support for the Act, which gave mothers custody of children under the age of seven (unless she had been found guilty of adultery in court) and established the rights of non-custodial parents to access their children. Sadly the Act was of no help to Caroline; it only applied to England and Wales and Norton promptly removed his children to Scotland. The matter was only resolved in 1842 following the death of her youngest son, after which the two remaining sons spent half of the year with their mother in London.

The letters to Murray date from this period of campaigning. One talks of an attack which had been made on Caroline in the press: ‘It is so easy to crush a woman, especially one whose reputation has been already slandered, that I do not think his triumph is very great, in having created a prejudice by inventing a gross falsehood attributing to me that which I never wrote, and then abusing me in very foul and gross language as the author.’

She also feels that people who judge her try to ‘invent an imaginary M r Norton something between a barn actress and a Mary Wollstonecraft and to hunt her down with uncussing perseverance.’

The Archive also contains a manuscript copy and proof of A Voice from the Factories: in Serious Verse, where Caroline focused her poetical talents on the plight of working-class children, perhaps in response to her own difficulties.

M any other women deserve a mention.

There is the naturalist and author Sarah Lee (nee Bowdich, nee Wallis) who according to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, ‘caught a shark and helped to put down a mutiny’, en route to joining her husband in Africa. In a letter to Murray in 1829, Sarah Lee outlined a book proposal that would encompass, ‘not only a geographical but an historical description of the whole continent of Africa.’

A substantial task, but one she felt more than capable of: ‘is my proposal beyond a woman’s strength? – no!’

Literature is also represented with letters from or about Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte, M aria Edgeworth, M rs Gaskell and lesser known authors such as Catherine Hutton, who wrote memorably:

‘I had always wished, not daring to hope, that I might be something like M l s Austen; and, having finished her works, I took to my own, to see if I could find any resemblance… I am not like M l s Austen; but I am like myself: there is originality in the work.’

The Byron women are also well represented; for example Caroline Lamb, who coined the phrase ‘mad, bad, and dangerous to know’ about the poet. Also M ary Shelley, who informs Byron of the birth of his illegitimate daughter by her step-sister and her own marriage to Shelley, in one letter which concludes:

‘Another incident has also occurred which will surprise you, perhaps, it is a little piece of epicom in me to mention it but it allows me to sign myself . . . M ary W Shelley’.

And not forgetting the wives, daughters and sisters of the Murray men. There is a wonderful letter reminiscent of J ane Austen from Anne Elliot, the future wife of J ohn Murray II, in response to his offer of marriage:

‘You must be sensible that in an engagement of such moment a much longer acquaintance is necessary . . . so as to know perfectly each other’s temper and disposition, for the qualities required in so close a union must be very different from that of an acquaintance’ – so say that from which I have seen, I have every reason to think myself fortunate in the acquisition of your acquaintance.’

As the J MA becomes fully catalogued, the lives and work of many more fascinating women will be uncovered, allowing us to tell their stories, and show that not all women in the 19th century stayed at home to look after the children.

Discover more

The John Murray Archive is one of the world’s most significant literary and cultural archives from the past 250 years. Manuscripts and letters preserved by London-based John Murray publishers were written by many of the most influential figures from the 18th and 19th centuries. Murray authors included celebrated writers, scientists, politicians, economists and thinkers of the time.

To learn more about the Archive, or to arrange an appointment to consult material within it, please contact manuscripts@nls.uk or call 0131 623 3876.

www.nts.uk

To find out how to support NLS develop the John Murray Archive into an inspiring cultural experience, please contact the the Development Department at development@nls.uk or call 0131 623 3731.
Getting to grips with blogs: the manuscripts of the future?

From Samuel Pepys to Anne Frank, diaries and diarists have played an important role in helping us make sense of the past, for as long as we have had a written narrative tradition. Diaries of all types have been invaluable research tools for centuries, so it is perhaps no surprise that the information revolution in general – and the Internet in particular – heralds an exciting and significant new phase for this type of communication: the blog.

Blogs are simply web-based electronic diaries (web-logs) where you can make regular – or not so regular – entries (or posts). The beauty of blogs however is that, unlike their paper equivalents, they enable the addition of pictures, links to other blogs or web pages and the insertion of video and audio clips. Starting and running a basic blog is simple and no technical expertise is necessary. All that is required is access to an internet-ready computer and a desire or need to communicate. And a blog needn’t cost anything to run, as there are numerous companies offering free blogging services such as Blogger (owned by Google), WordPress and Typepad.

Discover more

Tools
Blogger www.blogger.com
WordPress http://wordpress.com/
Typepad www.typepad.com/

References
Little Red Boat www.littleredboat.co.uk
Comment is free ttp://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/
Gordon’s blog http://webservices/blogs/gordon/
UK Web Archive www.webarchive.org.uk
Woolamaloo Gazette archive
www.webarchive.org.uk/tep/13439.html
Accelerando archive
www.webarchive.org.uk/tep/11483.html

Blogs cover every subject and topic imaginable. They can be personal, perhaps used to express a train of thoughts as in Little Red Boat, or to record family life or a trip abroad. They can be professionally related, corporate or educational such as M u seburgh Grammar School’s award nominated mphO nin e or media-based, like The Guardian newspaper’s Comment is free.

One of the unexpected outcomes of blogging and the blogosphere (the universe of all blogs) is that it has developed into an interesting and dynamic social space. This has come about through the ability for others to comment on blog entries, link from one another, indicate favourite blogs (commonly known as blog rolls) and add topic and subject descriptions to blog entries. This has lead to a collaborative publishing environment where blog readers and authors can interact with each other, commenting, discussing and developing thoughts and ideas. Such free communication is something that is less easy to achieve with traditional publishing methods.

Consequently, in common with other forms of electronic publishing, the practice of collecting and recording blogs for libraries and their users is being explored. Only time will tell of their significance to future researchers, the media and social historians.

As part of the Library’s policy for collecting digital materials published in or about Scotland a collaborative project, the UK Web Archive, has been established. The project will explore the issues surrounding the collection of websites and test how these can be recorded and preserved, so that they continue to be accessible in the future. Several Scottish blogs have been archived by the project, including the satirical newspaper Woolamaloo Gazette and Charles Stross’s Accelerando.

Indeed, NLS has even dipped its toe in the water regarding the internal use of blogs. Gordon’s blog was recently established to enable Gordon Hunt, the Library’s Director of Customer Services, to post entries about Library developments, his views on the profession and feedback on external meetings he attends with peers in the sector. All Library staff can read his blog and comment on his posts. Commenting on his blog, Gordon said, ‘I see it as a useful, informal way of sharing my thoughts with staff, informing them about my activities and, I hope, gathering their opinions and views.’

In the next issue we will explore and de-mystify the wonderful world of wikis.

www.nls.uk discoverNLS issue 2 2006
John Murray’s latest scribe sets to work

Poet Ken Cockburn has been appointed as the first John Murray Archive Writer-in-Residence, in partnership with Edinburgh UNESCO City of World Literature. Ken has been exploring people’s creative response to the Archive through workshops with groups ranging from school children to Scotland’s minority ethnic communities. A poet whose own work has often been shaped by intimate personal experience of the literature of the past, Ken will be revealing how the Archive has inspired new writing in a special session at the Wigtown Book Festival on 24 September.

Wigtown: Scottish Book Town

22 September – 1 October 2006

The Scottish Book Town Festival rolls into Wigtown, our National Book Town. The festival is a 10-day celebration of the written word, which brings a mass migration of bibliophiles every year to this small hamlet, normally home to just 900 people.

This year’s festival features over seventy events, including talks, films, plays and concerts. The line-up of speakers includes Louis de Bernières, Richard Holloway, Willy Russell, Libby Purves, Bob Flowerdew, Jackie Kay, Magnus Magnusson, Stephanie Calman and Allan Little. Music highlights include Aled Jones and The W Harrises, while the festival cinema runs Educating Rita, Shirley Valentine and Akenfield.

Wigtown, in Galloway, is within easy reach of some of Scotland’s finest scenery, gardens, and hotels. Between events, you can explore Scotland’s widest street or browse the town’s cavernous bookshops.

For updates on events or to order your copy of the programme, please phone 01988 40 3222, or visit www.wigtownbookfestival.com.

‘Illustrious’ Sherlock Holmes manuscript arrives

The original manuscript of a Sherlock Holmes story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has been donated to the Library. ‘The Adventure of the Illustrious Client’ was the first story in the final Holmes compilation, The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes, published in 1927.

Bequeathed by Conan Doyle’s late daughter, Dame Jean, the manuscript joins the Library’s collection of Conan Doyle material, comprising around 60 letters and another short story manuscript, The Haunted Grange of Goshenope, which was only published in 2001.

Set in 1902, the ‘Illustrious Client’ has all the classic ingredients: Violet de Merivel, a beautiful, rich, English rose falls for rich, handsome continental rotter, Baron Gruner, who it transpires murdered his first wife, among others. As well as dissuading the damsel from a fatal marriage, Holmes even solves the case thanks to a library: Dr Watson’s visits to the London Library to learn about Chinese porcelain provide a crucial clue.

In the next issue, world-renowned Conan Doyle scholar, Owen Dudley Edwards provides an in-depth analysis of what the manuscript tells us about the great writer’s work.

Recognition for chartership programme

The Library’s chartership programme has been upheld as an example of best practice by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, who have published details of our programme online at www.cilip.org.uk. NLS has 15 staff invested in the programme, since its initiation in 2002, with five people achieving chartered status so far. The programme, coordinated by Foreign Collections Curator Chris Taylor, comprises internal seminars with expert staff, project work and external visits. The candidates are mentored over the course of two years by colleagues. The most recent person to obtain chartered status is Gavin Johnstone (pictured nearest right), Assistant Team Leader in the Library’s Serials Unit.

Advertising in Discover NLS

We hope readers appreciate the investment we have made in our new publication. In order to continually develop Discover NLS, we would be interested to hear from an individual or small Scottish agency capable of generating and managing advertising revenue on a quarterly basis. Applicants should be committed, service-oriented, mature and able to demonstrate an interest in and knowledge of library or cultural issues. To express an interest or learn more, please write to or email the Editor, Julian Stone at jstone@nls.uk in the first instance.
Crispin Bates

when it is read for the first time. 'Old' knowledge can also be new printed or otherwise, and that is the responsibility of the compete – it is no substitute for checking the original source, starting point – with which libraries can never directly

At the same time it is another common and dangerous every book published or manuscript written to be digitised. human knowledge over the centuries. It is impossible for

It is possible that you may be able to offer a catalogue of available on the Internet – typically peer-reviewed and edited journals. However, I was slightly worried by the disparaging

It is possible that you may be able to offer a catalogue of accessible. safeguard the digital information. I find this to be a common delusion of

Google. Finally, I would argue that the library should be the ‘treasure house’ of knowledge, irrespective of format, and that NLS has a responsibility to collect and preserve digital material, just as it collects books, journals, newspapers and maps. We must not rely on Google to safeguard the digital information it makes so accessible.

Simon Bains replies...

Crispin Bates

Sir,

I read with great interest your article ‘The role of libraries in the digital age’. It is true that Libraries can provide an invaluable point of access to subscription-only services available on the Internet - typically peer-reviewed and edited journals. However, I was slightly worried by the disparaging remarks about Google and the suggestion that the library itself - with its comparatively limited resources - may be able to play some significant role in organising online information. I find this to be a common delusion of librarians which simply does not stand up in practice. It is possible that you may be able to offer a catalogue of useful web links in connection with a particular exhibition or theme, but even this will be labour intensive work in need of constant updating. At the same time, I think libraries are in danger of losing sight of their role as a treasure house of human knowledge over the centuries. It is impossible for every book published or manuscript written to be digitised. At the same time it is another common and dangerous delusion to imagine that present-day online and digitised knowledge is better than and supersedes everything that has gone before. The key issue is provenance, as your article goes on to say, and although Google is an invaluable starting point - with which libraries can never directly compete - it is no substitute for checking the original source, printed or otherwise, and that is the responsibility of the individual researcher. ‘Old’ knowledge can also be new when it is read for the first time.

Sir,

I agree entirely that it is not sensible, nor is it possible, to attempt to catalogue the Internet. There were attempts to do so in the early days, but whilst this might continue to be feasible for specialist areas, the resource requirements, as you correctly observe, are high. It was not our intention to suggest this was our role. Rather, that important distinctions can be drawn between libraries and search engines, and that librarians can use information retrieval and evaluation skills to assist their users make most effective use of the Internet. It is important that libraries accept that information enquiries will often start with search engines, and consider how to reach users in these new information spaces. But it is also important that they help users understand that not all knowledge, whether in print or digital form, is accessible via Google. Finally, I would argue that the library should be the ‘treasure house’ of knowledge, irrespective of format, and that NLS has a responsibility to collect and preserve digital material, just as it collects books, journals, newspapers and maps. We must not rely on Google to safeguard the digital information it makes so accessible.

The role of libraries in the digital age

Sir,

I have used the National Library in my teens to get information. I find this to be a common delusion of librarians which simply does not stand up in practice.

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