National Library of Scotland

Research Strategy

Purpose and mission statement: To ensure staff research is encouraged, recorded and made publicly available for the benefit of the wider community.

Introduction

1. As Scotland's largest scholarly library NLS is a centre of excellence in many areas. We actively encourage research using the collections we care for, and we recognise that the users of the Library carry out research on all subjects and at the whole range of research levels – from the least experienced to internationally recognised experts in specific fields. Increasingly we recognise too that research can be carried out using items from our collections in an online environment, sometimes without visiting the Library. The results of this research by the Library's users are wide-ranging and well-recognised, and include books, journal articles, television and radio programmes, conference proceedings and lectures as well as contributions to teaching and learning in universities, colleges, schools and community groups.

2. It is unsurprising that such a research-led organisation, staffed by individuals with a high level of interest and expertise in their own specialist areas, creates high-quality research outputs itself and has the potential to create even more. While many of these result from the work of curators who look after the Library's collections, it is important to note that the Library is also a natural home to a range of expertise in other fields related to its mission, including the preservation and conservation of collections, Library building needs such as storage and fire protection, exhibitions, digitisation and digital storage, as well as professional archives and library management activities such as cataloguing.

3. The Library is aware that there is much research of high quality already being undertaken by colleagues and the purpose of this strategy document is to establish guidelines to ensure that staff-created research is encouraged, recorded and wherever possible published and made available to the wider community. It is also important to be aware of the impact of the knowledge transfer of this expertise.

Definition of research

4. The scope of the research referred to in this strategy comprises research carried out as a direct result of the individual's being employed by NLS and/or relating directly to the content of the Library's collections or to its professional activities. It is further expected that the collections-based research will be related to the Library's collecting strengths or to research areas that are unique to the Library's collections.

5. Research creates new knowledge about a subject. It is expected that research produced by staff will cover a wide range of expertise, from relatively small-scale to internationally significant. All peer-reviewed research published by Library staff would of course be included in the definition. In addition we consider it important to include new knowledge created by staff in the course of their work; this might include, for example, detailed work on a lengthy catalogue record with associated work on provenance, or the creation of descriptive matter for websites or exhibition

catalogues. While all outputs ought to be logged and made publicly available as widely as possible, it should be noted that they might be referred to selectively when required, for example when submitting applications to funding bodies.

Encouragement of staff research

6. The Library encourages its staff to carry out research and to ensure that the creation of knowledge is registered as such and properly included in forward job plans and performance reviews. All line managers are expected to ensure that staff are given sufficient time to record the results of work which they have carried out and which creates new knowledge about the field in which they are working.

7. While we do not at present have the resources to support a scheme of research leave, staff are encouraged to apply for external funding or for appropriate NLS Trust funding for this purpose providing that the result is cost neutral for the Library. Where appropriate, line managers are asked to consider sympathetically requests for additional support, where this can be provided within resources and without compromising the Library's service to its customers. This discretionary support might be in the form of additional time allowed for research or additional training in research methods.

Recording staff research

8. Staff are expected to log all research outputs created in Library time, or otherwise related to the employee's status as a member of NLS staff, in the 'Record of NLS research outputs' database in the All Staff Share folder on the shared drive. It is recognised that staff may carry out in their own time research that may or may not be related to the Library and its collections. General guiding principles as to whether this work should be logged in the central database are described in the definition of research in 4 above.

9. Research outputs may include publications, lectures, exhibition catalogues, databases and a range of other activities. Staff are encouraged to share the results of their research with other staff, for example in workshops, seminars or all-staff meetings.

Publishing or otherwise making available the results of staff research

10. The copyright in any work produced by an individual as a member of National Library of Scotland staff rests with the Library, not with the individual, but the Library will be prepared to waive ownership in favour of the author, in most cases. In no case should an individual enter into any copyright negotiations with an external publisher.

11. The Library is committed to the concept of Open Access and wherever possible staff are encouraged to publish in journals which support this concept, and especially to endeavour to allow the results of their research to be made freely available via the Library's website.

12. Staff, particularly in the area of Collections and Research, are expected to make their research interests and other related activities publicly available on the library's public website.

Recording related activities

13. It is important that other research-related activities are centrally recorded. These would include, for example, supervision of postgraduate students working on jointly funded AHRC projects. We will develop the abilities of our staff to supervise team-based research, and increase the number of staff engaged in this activity.

14. Staff are encouraged to allow talks, lectures, workshops and similar public events relating to the Library's collections or professional activities to be recorded and made publicly available, for example by transcript or filming, on the Library's website.

Partnership working

15. Staff are strongly encouraged to contribute to the development of partnerships which encourage research-related activities. Successful examples of such activities include digitisation projects jointly supported by the Library and external trusts, and PhD studentships jointly supported by the Library and universities.

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