

THE Piper



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NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

An image from the
The Celtic Psalter
(Ms 56)

**'My Library,
Was dukedom
large enough;'**

Prospero, *The Tempest*

On a dreich, wet day in December the Friends met for a well-attended lunchtime meeting at St Cecilia's Hall to hear the novelist Philippa Gregory talk on 'Using Libraries to research novels.' She quickly dispersed the outside gloom with an enthusiastic and personal account of her own journey from her Edinburgh PhD in eighteenth-century literature to becoming a popular and respected novelist well known for her Tudor novels, especially *The Boleyn Girl* (made into a sumptuous film). Like many novelists she found much inspiration by accident, as she pursued pathways away from her original remit that revealed intriguing facts and questions.





Below. The exhibition cases in situ showing the selection of Masterpieces with the magnificent anatomical figure of a horse (écorché). From the circle of Giovanni da Bologna (Jean de Boulogne) known as Giambologna (1529–1608). The Flemish-born artist was one of the greatest sculptors of the sixteenth century and second only in reputation in Italy to Michelangelo. This forms the centrepiece of the Torrie Collection: (Fine Art Collection: EU643).

Right. Lady Caplan and Professor David Fergusson, Acting Head of College of Humanities and Social Sciences, open the Masterpieces exhibition.



Her first trilogy, *Wiseacre*, was supported by her research on the 18th century. Then followed *The Wise Woman*, set in the Reformation, and *Respectable Trade*, about the Bristol slave trade and which was made into a four part series for the BBC. Two novels about a gardening family in the heart of the Civil War followed as well as several contemporary novels. Then she became interested in the Tudors and produced six novels about this period. It became obvious that meticulous discovery underpins all her work and she refuted critics who said she had invented history. It was, she

responded, all gathered evidence carefully gleaned from long, sometimes tedious research in Libraries. As a novelist she stressed that was how you construct and animate the jigsaw of fact to make it engaging and real to the reader. She did this by focussing on a personality that intrigued her, sometimes one who was in the wings of history rather than centre stage. Or sometimes a new light directed on a seemingly well-known figure. Research supported this even if it did not explain the mysteries of human motivation and action. That was the novelist's task.

It was a fascinating and delightful talk that showed the working process of a writer from the initial spark to the finished artefact. Libraries, she said, are the essential tool of the historical novelist, without them characters' lives become fantasies not possibilities – and it is possibilities that intrigue her.

We went out into the rain believing that even sunshine might be possible.

**Lady Caplan, President,
Friends of Edinburgh University
Library**



The Bohemian Protest
(a petition to the Pope,
protesting against the
execution of Jan Hus, a
leading religious thinker
and reformer), Prague,
1415, vellum (Special
Collections: JZ 438)

Focus On ... Conservation

What is conservation?

Conservation aims to stabilise the condition of, and limit any further damage and deterioration to, an object whilst working ethically to provide the best treatment possible. This can be divided into two interrelated categories: interventive and preventive conservation. Interventive conservation involves treatment to address the chemical and physical effects of damage that has already occurred, cleaning and tear repair for example. Preventive conservation includes the provision of proper storage for collection items and comprehensive monitoring and control of the environment to reduce the risk of





Left. The Bohemian Protest, detail of wax seal (Special Collections: JZ 438)

Below. The new conservation studio in the Centre for Research Collections

Bottom. Toning the paper repair to the centre of Robert Barker's 'Panorama of Edinburgh from Calton Hill' (1792); Fine Art Collection EU0492.



future damage; addressing housing, light, temperature, relative humidity, atmospheric pollutants and pests. Conservation essentially seeks to ensure long-term preservation and, in the case of the University Library collections, also to enable continued safe access for research and teaching be it in the Centre for Research Collections (CRC) reading or seminar rooms, or in the new ground floor Exhibition Room.

The impact of the Main Library Redevelopment Project (MLRP)

The MLRP has brought about significant improvements in relation to the Library's conservation activity and our ability as custodians to provide best practice care to the

collections. We now have excellent storage rooms that are able to meet British Standard 5454:2000 (recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival material) and high quality reading and seminar rooms for access. We have also been able to incorporate more sophisticated environmental

monitoring into our collections care programme. With the valued support of the Friends we now have new display cases in the Exhibition Room that not only look fabulous but help to provide suitable conditions for the display of University collections.

Last, but by no means least, a new conservation studio has been created on the fifth floor and it forms part of the Centre for Research Collections. This space is able to accommodate up to five conservators and has been fully equipped with the necessary materials and equipment for object treatment and to ensure staff health and safety. The studio is divided into two rooms in order that dry and





Below. A volume of general case notes (1898–1904) from the Deaconess Hospital, Edinburgh, showing condition before treatment (left) and after treatment (right) (Lothian Health Services Archive: LHB12/42/4)



aqueous conservation treatments can be undertaken separately. It also has computer and digital photography facilities to support the documentation that accompanies all conservation work undertaken. The wonderful view out to the Pentlands is the icing on the cake!

Conservation in the Edinburgh University Main Library context

The variety and extent of the collections held in the Main Library, coupled with the pressures of available budget and staff time, have meant that we at the CRC primarily focus on preventive conservation measures. The main examples of this are environmental monitoring and control and collection re-housing, the latter is often included as a component part in the essential work to catalogue material held. Extensive condition surveying of the collections is also undertaken in order to identify high priorities for interventive treatment.

Objects that undergo interventive treatment are also considered priorities in terms of

their historical importance and the level of demand for access, and project funding is brought in wherever possible to support and extend this work.

The recent treatment of the Bohemian Protest serves as a case study illustrating conservation best practice in the Library context. The document was carefully cleaned, sympathetically repaired, and placed in a bespoke box for long-term storage. This box can also be adapted for safe transit should the item be loaned and a lift-out tray ensures handling to facilitate display is reduced. This is an excellent example of the successful application of the main principles of conservation: working to the highest standards possible in order to stabilise condition, the appropriate and controlled use of materials and techniques, and the creation of treatment solutions to ensure that a balance between long-term preservation and the need for access is maintained without detriment to the collection item.

For further information about

conservation in Edinburgh University Main Library, please contact Ruth Honeybone (ruth.honeybone@ed.ac.uk).

If you are interested in finding out more about conservation in general, please see the Institute of Conservation website: www.icon.org.uk.

**Ruth Honeybone,
Paper Conservator,
Lothian Health Services Archive,
Centre for Research Collections**



Ruth Honeybone has worked for Lothian Health Services Archive since she qualified as a paper conservator in 2002, initially on a Wellcome Trust funded project treating two collections of twentieth-century folder-based patient case notes, and then as the conservator for the Archive as a whole. Ruth obtained professional accreditation from the Institute of Conservation in 2009.



University of Edinburgh Main Library Redevelopment

We are now half way through the redevelopment of the Main Library, with the opening of the first floor at 8.30 on January 28th. By 10.00 it was full of industrious students – it was as if the space had always been there. Work on the 40 year old 'A' listed Sir Basil Spence building started in 2006 and is due to complete in 2012. Four of the eight floors have now been completely transformed.

The University Court met in the Library soon after the first floor was completed; and heard, with satisfaction about the progress of the redevelopment. The overall project is on time and within budget.

On Wednesday 24th February, the Library was visited by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, Chancellor of the University. Despite no advance warning, the students responded to the distinguished guest by lining the balconies and applauding him. He spoke to many

students about their course of study and the use of the Library.

One of the most impressive facts about the redevelopment is the popularity with students. Between the first semester in 2008 and the first semester in 2009, usage increased by approximately 50%; and we expect to see further increased usage with the completion of the first floor. The evident enthusiasm of the students for the new spaces which have been created is pleasing.

The first floor is primarily study space – there is a large Quiet Study area to the north of the building overlooking George Square. To the south, overlooking the Meadows, there are more of the popular group study pods, where the students prepare group projects; and the uCreate area with specialist computing equipment such as scanners and large format printers. There are also facilities for disabled students.

The floor also has a Meeting Suite, with four meeting rooms, three training rooms fully fitted out with computers for student training, and a videoconference room. The rooms are stunning – overlooking the Meadows with very fine views. It may be that these are the best meeting rooms in Edinburgh. As they are available to use by all members of the University, this should encourage even more people to visit the Library.

A further feature on the first floor is the new Mezzanine area – this has been created by the architects over the entrance as a browsing area, adjacent to the displays of current journals and new books. It overlooks the Forum to one side and George Square to the other.

The next stages of the redevelopment are the 2nd and 3rd floors. These will be 'book floors', where the primary collection of books will be located. We have had to move all the



Above. Sheila Cannell with the Chancellor and students in the Hub area.

Left. The Chancellor talks to students at one of the new study pods.



books off the second floor while we work on this; and the logistics of this section of the project are not to be underestimated, as we have to move every book at least twice.

Despite the occasional thump from the floor above, we are

maintaining services at all times. The University Court were particularly impressed by this aspect of the redevelopment.

On a final note we have had very positive feedback from users with this tweet on twitter representative

of the comments received:

'The 1st floor of the library is my new favourite thing. I love it. So so so so much! Thanks UniofEdinburgh.'

**Sheila Cannell,
Director of Library and Collections**



Be a good friend: pop into the café

The new Library café is a wonderful space which blends in beautifully with the renovated ground floor.

In addition to an area with desks and computers it has a splendid corner lounge overlooking George Square and the Meadows with

comfortable armchairs for a relaxing cup of coffee or tea, or even a soft drink. Private conversations can be held at any of the little alcove tables tucked away in corners.

It is proving very popular during term and, especially at lunchtime

when there is a good menu of soup, sandwiches, and other delights.

After browsing in the Library, or attending a meeting, or even just returning books, a refreshing snack is just the answer to sustain you.

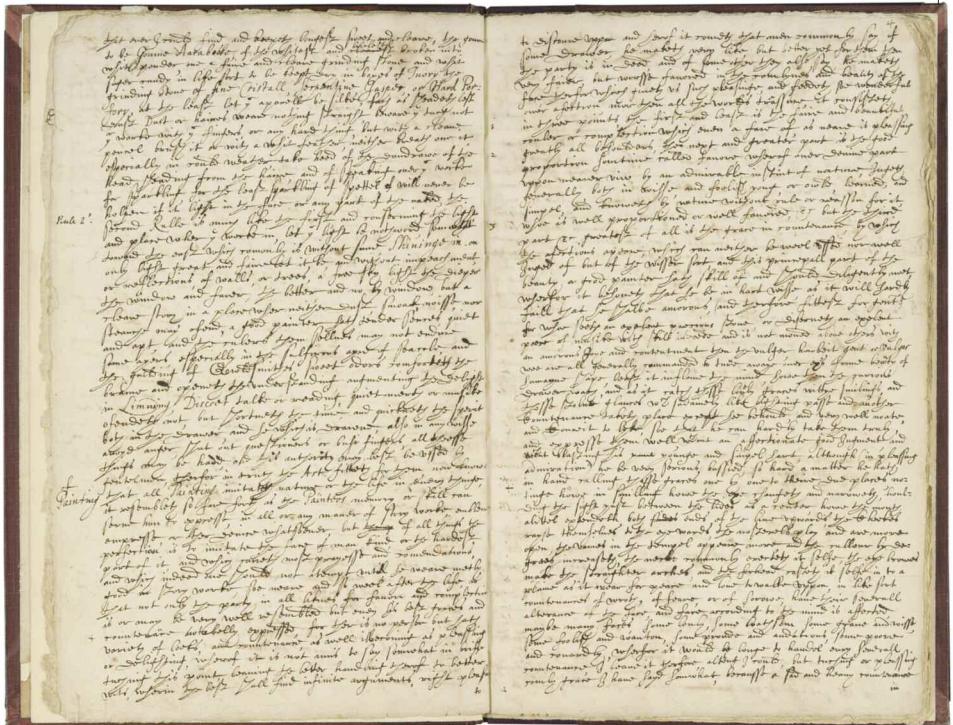




On loan ...

Special Collections recently loaned one of our most important manuscripts to the Yale Center for British Art for a major exhibition. The manuscript is the earliest known copy of 'A treatise concerning the art of limning' by Nicholas Hilliard (1547–1619), one of the first pieces of writing in English about the art of painting and illuminating. Mary Edmond claims in her ODNB article on Hilliard that 'It is one of the most important documents in the history of English art and, unusually, includes insights into the mind and character of the author'. The celebrated miniaturist Hilliard, who worked for both Elizabeth I and for James VI and I, first wrote the text in about 1600 and this copy was produced in 1624. The manuscript was owned by various great collectors, including Horace Walpole and ultimately David Laing, who bequeathed it to Edinburgh University in 1878.

'Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill' was the title of the exhibition at



Yale, which ran from October – December 2009. This manuscript was selected for display as it shows how Walpole carefully collected works illustrative of the history of art. An exhibition loan like this to a

prestigious North American institution is excellent publicity for the collections at Edinburgh University.

**Joseph Marshall,
Rare Books Librarian**



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Event

Monday 7th June 2010, 11am

Friends visit to Freemasons' Library at the The Grand Lodge of Scotland, Freemasons' Hall, 96 George Street Edinburgh, when we will have an opportunity to see the Library, Museum, Hall and Board Room.

You can make a difference:

By becoming a Friend you can help to support the existing collections of Edinburgh University Library and fund new acquisitions. You could even be remembered eternally by leaving a legacy to the Friends.

Come and join us!

For a membership form, telephone 0131 651 1438 or email: laura.macpherson@ed.ac.uk or go to: www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/friends