

THE

# Piper



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NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



## 'It's beautiful and it's ours!'

Sheila Cannell retires as Director of Library services and Deputy Head of Information Services this summer.

Sheila has been involved in Libraries for thirty-six years during a time of rapid and exciting change.

The advent of the digital age has already radically impacted on the way Libraries operate and are managed and she has been at the forefront of these innovations. She has organised, overseen and guided the extensive and challenging Development of the Main Library over recent years. An iconic Basil Spence building the Library has morphed into a modern, exhilarating, fit-for-purpose space loved and used by many with a new delight. A typical comment from a student writing about the feeling of proud student ownership when the building opened again was: 'It's beautiful and it's ours!'

Recently on a Sunday morning at 7.30.am a 'queue' of 1,600 students waited for entry to the Library

watched by bemused servitors who later described it 'like T in The Park'. The cynical may wish to ascribe this eager mob as a symptom of exam panic but I prefer enthusiasm as a motivator – or perhaps the excellent coffee in the Café! There is a real buzz and creativity about the building yet it still has areas of reflective calm that those who recall the old 'stacks' on the upper floor, as I do, will fondly remember. The 'Library' monolith on the concourse has become a new icon and a symbol to the media for all news items about Universities in Edinburgh and elsewhere.

An alumna of Edinburgh University, Sheila began her career at Heriot Watt, went on to Glasgow University returning to Edinburgh in 1985. She was appointed Director of Library Services in 2003. She has served on countless prestigious Committees involving Research and Digitalisation of Libraries, some at international level, and is a Trustee of

Edinburgh City of Literature.

Since 2002 Sheila has been the Honorary Secretary of the Friends of Edinburgh University Library and has helped secure, along with the other Trustees, many items for Special Collections. She has also found many interesting speakers as well as facilitating our summer visits to other libraries. Many of you will remember the extraordinary New Hailes 'non library', the intriguing Freemasons' Library, the wonderful portfolios containing text at the Gallery of Modern Art and many more curious and surprising collections of books through the City.

Sheila has left a legacy that will always be part of the University.

We wish her much joy in her new emerging life and happiness in her travels to India and beyond.

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



# Unsung Heroes

Uniting archive material and contemporary artworks to celebrate nursing history in living memory

A collection of historic nursing and hospital badges held by Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA, Centre for Research Collections), along with creative responses to them produced by staff and postgraduate students at Edinburgh College of Art (ECA), have formed a fascinating installation in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (RIE) titled 'Unsung Heroes'.

This permanent installation is the product of two years' work by the project partners (LHSA, ECA, Gingko Projects for the RIE and exhibition consultants Amanda Game and Elizabeth Goring), working with noted enamel artist Elizabeth Turrell. Funded by the Heritage Lottery, NHS Lothian and the RIE Volunteers, the project is part historical, part medical and part artistic, with a strong focus on LHSA's enamelled badge collection

which dates from the early twentieth century right up to the 1990s. The badges were the inspiration for staff and postgraduate students from the ECA Jewellery and Silversmithing Department, who produced beautiful new pieces for the display outside Outpatient Department 3. The installation invites the viewer to consider the role of objects and images in shaping identity and creating meaning through time, and is designed to provide positive distraction and gentle stimulation for patients, visitors and staff whilst acting as an orientation point for people leaving the outpatient clinic.

Over the course of the project students were invited to seminars held at the Centre for Research Collections (CRC) where they could view the badges and learn more about them. A wide selection of archive material, including



**Left.** Example of an enamelled badge in the LHSA collection

**Above.** A seminar for ECA students held in the CRC





The exhibition in the CRC display wall

photographs, architectural plans and nursing registers, was also presented to provide some context to nursing in Edinburgh in the twentieth century.

In February 2011, a very successful 'Bring a Badge Day' was held at the RIE where nurses were encouraged to bring along their badges and talk to the ECA students about their careers. Nurses – both current and

retired – were interviewed about their experiences. Volunteers received training in oral history collecting from LHSA staff and these interviews, along with others collected throughout the project, will be transferred to the Archive for long-term preservation. Excerpts from the interviews also form part of the installation and can be heard via smartphone technology.

In the autumn of 2011 the display wall in the CRC housed an interim, temporary display to illustrate the research, design and technical processes behind the new artworks, and to demonstrate the ways in which archive material can be used to make tangible links between the present and the past. This was also an opportunity for those makers whose artwork would not be selected for the final installation to showcase their pieces.

The experience of forging links between LHSA and the artistic

community has been an extremely positive one; it's fantastic to see the collections being used in new and exciting ways. The process has also widened access and promoted our collections to new audiences. The installation in the RIE was launched at the end of March 2012, and a symposium to disseminate the findings of the project and reflect on shared successes will follow later in the year. For more information about the project please see:

[www.lhsa.lib.ed.ac.uk](http://www.lhsa.lib.ed.ac.uk)

<http://lhsa.blogspot.com/>

[www.facebook.com/lhsa.edinburgh](http://www.facebook.com/lhsa.edinburgh)

<http://nursingbadges.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/49439570@No8/sets/72157625849589925/>

**Ruth Honeybone**  
Lothian Health Services Archive  
([ruth.honeybone@ed.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.honeybone@ed.ac.uk))





# Focus On ... Main Library Redevelopment

The redevelopment of the Main Library has been a constant backdrop to my time as Director of Library Services at the University of Edinburgh. Planning commenced with feasibility studies in 2003, and, as I write in late spring 2012, the project is almost complete, with only the work on the Lower Ground Floor to be completed. The Design Team, led by Lewis & Hickey Architects, were appointed in 2005 and construction commenced in 2007. The 5th and 6th

floors, the Centre for Research Collections, was completed in 2008, the Ground Floor in 2009, with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors following along at about 9 month intervals.

The project vision, which was developed in consultation with staff and students, declared that the Main Library would be transformed for the twenty-first century, and be:

- An intellectual hub for the University

- The focus of a wide range of activities in learning and research
- More open than accessible
- A place where users can engage and converse with each other and with information specialists
- Flexible to accommodate changes in the future.

The redevelopment has certainly been successful, and the Library is busier than ever, with the greatest compliments coming from those who say that the Main Library both reflects its past and works for the present and future.

## Collections

The redevelopment has provided an opportunity to work intensively with the collections, and these are now in a better and more logical state. As originally envisaged in 1967, the collections are now more research-oriented as you move up the building, with the Ground Floor providing all the facilities which a first year student needs. The creation of the HUB (High Use Books), on the Ground Floor, has been very successful, now accounting for over half of all loans. As students progress through their career, they progress up the building and learn more of what it has to offer.

All the books in the building have had to be moved at least twice – once out of the floor they were on, and once back. We estimate that during the whole project, we have moved c.150 linear kilometres of books! But this has provided an opportunity to handle each book, and we have been able to reclassify







more books to the Library of Congress sequences, and check the locations of books. The logical sequence of Library of Congress books on the 2nd and 3rd floors makes it easier for users to find the books they need. The sharp-eyed will have noticed that the aisles between the shelves are wider – this makes it possible for disabled users to navigate the shelves more easily.

All this has happened against a background of rapid change in the ways in which books and journals are used, as more and more become available in digital form. For the duration of the project we have had to move some books to the Library Annexe, but we have moved as many as we can back into the Main Library. The books which will remain in the Annexe are much less used, and usually available in digital form.

### Study space

The redevelopment has seen a huge increase in the usage of the Main Library, particularly by students, most of which has been achieved by increasing the occupancy of the space, by ensuring that the desks are



big enough. We have also increased the number of study spaces, from c. 1750 to c.2200 and also the variety of study space, to suit student needs at different times. We are aware that many students will spend hours in the Library, and may move around the spaces to suit their needs at different times—from traditional study desks, to informal seating, to the group study pods, to the Library Café. At exam and essay times, the traditional study desks are most popular. The group study pods have also proved very popular, and support developments in teaching and learning methods in the

University, and prepare students for working with others.

We hear students say to each other that the Library 'is the place to be'. I was a student at the University of Edinburgh just after the Main Library opened, and I spent much of my time in the Library – it is particularly gratifying to have been able to reinstate the Library as a place which students want to use!

### Services

The redevelopment has also created the opportunity to provide new services. Technology now makes it





possible to provide some of the traditional services in self-service mode, eg book loans and returns, allowing the staff at the Helpdesk to concentrate on the great variety of enquiries which now come to them. The Meeting Suite on the first floor has been popular – with the side benefit of ensuring that senior members of the University make regular visits to the Library, and see how well it is being used.

The Special Collections are now looked after in a manner more fitting the rare and special materials in the University of Edinburgh, in well-managed environmentally controlled archive stores. The Centre for Research Collections on the 6th floor provides a suite of services in purpose designed rooms – reading rooms, digital imaging, conservation, seminar rooms – located around the archive stores. The Exhibition Room on the Ground Floor, supported by the Friends, provides a wonderful environment for displaying the collections to a wider audience.

While the inclusion of the Student Services – Careers, Counselling and Disability – in the redeveloped Library was initially controversial, it too has proved beneficial, seeing vastly increased usage of these much needed services by students.

### Keeping going during the project

The project has been hard, but rewarding, work. All services have been maintained throughout the project, with no building closures,



or appeals against exam results, as a result of the project. We have had temporary entrances, noise, dust and dirt, smells, temperature fluctuations, but communications have been key to keeping our users on side. The phased nature of the project has meant that people have been able to see, from an early stage in the redevelopment, what we have been aiming for, and we have kept the support of the student body, and of the University to complete the project, despite the difficult financial circumstances which started soon after the construction work commenced.

### The Building

I often ask myself if Sir Basil Spence would have approved of the changes, and I think he would. The building has retained its look and feel, and many of the features, including some of the original 1960's furniture, still in good condition. We have created a grander entrance, with the proud and confident LIBRARY sign, and we have succeeded in 'bringing the outside in', in making George Square and the Meadows more important in the internal visual landscape.

**Sheila Cannell**





# Masterpieces

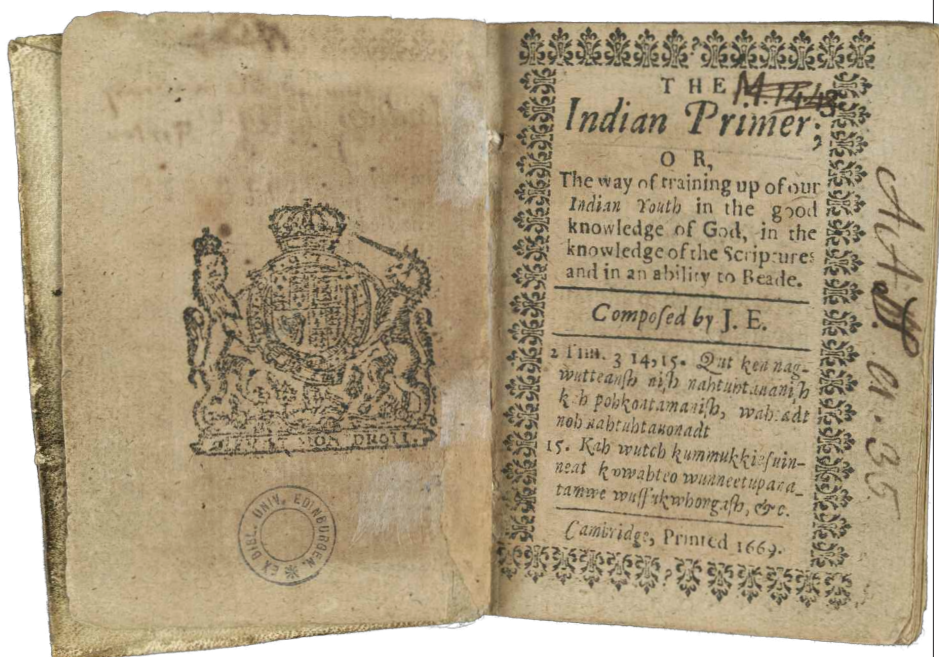
Masterpieces II, Main Library

Monday to Saturday 10.00am – 5.00pm closes 7th July

'From its origins in the sixteenth century, the support of enlightened individuals has been at the heart of Edinburgh University Library, making it one of the most outstanding library collections in Europe.' MASTERPIECES II highlights twenty-two items from these Collections, ranging from 9th century manuscripts to a mid-20th century object. Representing many disciplines they provide equal fascination for general viewer and specialist alike.

Three main themes: 'Ideas and Innovation'; 'Creativity, Art and Design'; 'Technique and Execution' highlight a variety of material with iconic items representing academic research and scientific discoveries, as well as cultures worldwide.

A selection of the earliest items illustrates the diversity of the Collections: three carvings of the Buddha, from Ancient Gandhara (north-west Pakistan), superb examples of Buddhist art from the 1st – 2nd century CE. The beautiful and important work, *al-Athar al-baqiya*, (*The Chronology of Ancient*



**Below.** The Indian Primer, John Eliot, Cambridge [Mass], 1669, a unique copy of one of the first American books.

**Bottom left.** Alexander Fleming presented this sample of the mould for penicillin to the University to commemorate his Rectorship.

*Nations*) by the Persian scholar al-Bīrūnī, written originally c.390AH (1000CE), is one of the most iconic Islamic manuscripts in the world. Nearby lie fragments of the Qur'an from 9th-century manuscripts which were once in the Mosque of Amr in Fustat, one of the earliest mosques in Egypt and, indeed, Africa.

A 15th-century Book of Hours, *Use of Utrecht*, represents the extraordinary and beautiful collection of mediaeval prayer books within the Collections, while a superbly hand-coloured book of mid-17th century documents the history of comets – *Theatrum Cometicum*, by a Polish scholar, Stanislaw Lubieniecki, published in Amsterdam. And published in London only two decades later, Sir Isaac Newton's 'Principia', *Philosophiae naturalis principia mathematica* (1687).

Four instruments from 16th – 18th centuries: a piano mid 18th century: a 17th-century recorder

from Amsterdam; a late 16th-century violin, and a clarinet c. 1740, represent the world-class collection of musical instruments.

Elements of art are highlighted by items so diverse as Japanese paintings and kimonos, a rare Picasso drawing, shawl pattern designs and two touchingly beautiful 19th-century drawings by, Andrew Kennedy, an unknown artist incarcerated in an asylum. Other 19th-century items include calotype prints by David Octavius Hill and Robert Adamson.

Into the 20th-century, 'Feathers of the Leghorn Fowl' brings together art and science in an extraordinary way with the beautifully executed drawings of a bird's plumage by a Chinese animal geneticist while working on his PhD in Edinburgh. And only slightly later, mid 20th century, a tiny medallion-like object holds a sample of the mould for penicillin.





## New Ways to Promote the University's Collections



The Centre for Research Collections has embraced the recent developments in social media to develop its audience and communicate to users. Facebook pages

have been set up for the Musical Instrument Museums Online project, EUCHMI, the Torrie Collection, the Talbot Rice Gallery and Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) as well as the CRC itself ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)). Albums of images have been added to Flickr ([www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)) while blogs – for LHSA ([www.lhsa.blogspot.com](http://www.lhsa.blogspot.com)) and the Towards Dolly project (<http://towardsdolly.wordpress.com/>) – and tweets ([@lhsaeul](http://www.twitter.com)) have been written to give interesting insights into the CRC's work. These avenues are a great way to share images of, and information about, the collections, and we hope you'll take a look.

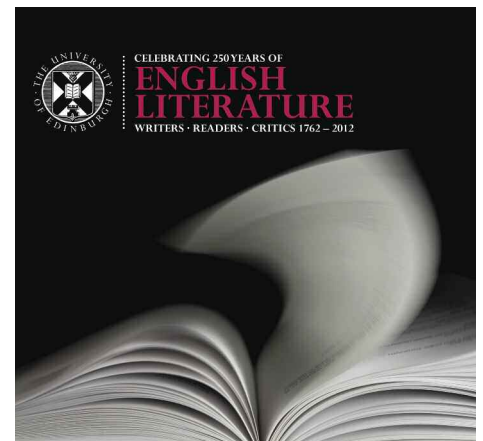
Please contact Norman Rodger ([norman.rodger@ed.ac.uk](mailto:norman.rodger@ed.ac.uk)) for further information.

## City of Words: Writers, Readers, and Critics in Edinburgh

3 August – 27 October 2012, Monday – Saturday,  
10am – 5pm Main Library Exhibition Room (Ground Floor)

This landmark exhibition celebrates the 250th anniversary of the oldest Chair of English Literature in the world, founded at Edinburgh University in 1762. It uncovers pivotal events and characters in the literary life of the University, and reveals their manifold interconnections with writers and readers in this City of

Literature. Highlights include: letters written by Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott to various Edinburgh professors; previously unseen memorabilia from famous former students; documents of the James Tait Black Memorial Prize, signed first editions, and letters from distinguished prizewinning authors.



## Come and join us!

For a membership form, telephone 0131 651 3814  
or email: [FoEUL@ed.ac.uk](mailto:FoEUL@ed.ac.uk)



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