



THE PIPER

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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‘By Leaves we Live’

Patrick Geddes

We now enter a new Carolingian era. I remember the New Elizabethan one when we were full of hope and optimism for the future. We now live in troubled and turbulent times both at home and abroad when the light of hope often seems dimmed. However, we can be together again sharing friendship and culture and the freedom that better weather and the possibilities of travel give us.

The University Library has been full of students coping with their own future with the challenges and anxieties of exam revision.

The Library has celebrated over the dark days of winter with an exuberant exhibition ‘A Gathering of Leaves’ showcasing prizewinning bindings from the International Bookbinding Competition. It was a glorious cornucopia of exquisite, imaginative bindings that expanded one’s appreciation and awareness of the possibilities of book coverings. There was also a series of related, creative

workshops to be enjoyed. We have purchased two beautiful examples from the Exhibition by Scottish Binders on the Friends behalf and will display them soon.

Creativity and continuity need not just encouragement but also preservation, with sensitive and meticulous archiving. We have three articles explaining this process. The cataloguing and promoting of the LGLS collection. The storage conservation of our Collection of rare and unique instruments. The archiving of Heritage Collection Websites. By preserving our past we can move forward with a clearer understanding of our place in a rapidly changing and, as ever, uncertain world.

Patrick Geddes the Scottish nineteenth-century environmentalist and town planner, and a close friend of Tagore, coined the superb phrase ‘By Leaves we Live’ – not only in nature but in our own recording of it in books archives and art.

Lady Caplan,
President, Friends of Edinburgh University Library

Speaking Out:

Cataloguing advocacy, support and empowerment in the Lothian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard archives

In April 2022, Lothian Health Services Archive (LHSA) launched their Wellcome Trust funded project, *Speaking Out*. The project involves cataloguing and promoting the Lothian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (LGLS) collection.

LGLS was founded in January 1974 after the gay rights organisation, the Scottish Minorities Group, received a request from the Samaritans who wanted to refer clients to a specifically LGBT organisation.

A helpline was established and it took its first call on 2 March 1974, becoming the first gay switchboard in the UK (beating London by just 2 days), and in the 1980s it became the first registered gay charity in Scotland.

LGLS was an activist-run mental and physical health

service for LGBT+ people in the Lothians and beyond. It was the UK's first gay helpline and Scotland's first gay charity, and offered a unique listening and befriending service to anyone experiencing issues or difficulties in connection with their sexuality. They also provided practical information such as details about gay-friendly venues, promoted sexual health education, and advocated for legal and social equality.

Switchboard activists filled a significant gap in mainstream healthcare provision, by offering tailored support to LGBT+ people, publicising sources of support through their specialist knowledge, and communicating with hard-to-reach groups with public health messages.

Switchboard was not only a helpline as volunteers also worked with organisations to raise awareness of LGBT+ issues. For example, in the 1970s, Switchboard volunteers delivered education sessions on homosexuality to medical students and clinicians in local hospitals, and worked with the early HIV information charity, Scottish AIDS Monitor (SAM), to communicate key messages on sexual health after cases of HIV and AIDS came to light in the 1980s.

The archive collection comprises of records created and collected by LGLS, which includes minutes, correspondence, call logs, resources for volunteers and promotional materials. This is a complex collection as it contains a large volume of personal and sensitive data, and as a result it was closed to researchers in its uncatalogued state. This includes data relating to volunteers who ran the service, as well as those who contacted and used the service, and of course these records are closed under data protection legislation.

People who contacted the helpline did so with the understanding that this was a confidential service and evidence of people's anxieties around exposure are evident throughout the call logs, so protecting their identity is extremely important. Where caller's data is concerned it is not just names that could allow them to be identified. From our experience of working with confidential data, we know that confidentiality is not only a name, it's pieces of information that could be placed together to work out an identity.

The project has been working to open up the collection through cataloguing, rehousing and selectively digitising the collection. The process of cataloguing has allowed



Opposite. Front cover of Issue Number 13 of *Gay Scotland*. Courtesy of Lothian Health Services Archive, University of Edinburgh.

Below. A leaflet for Friends of Lothian Gay and Lesbian Switchboard (FROGS). Courtesy of Lothian Health Services Archive, University of Edinburgh.

Right. A zine created by two workshop participants from LGBT Youth Scotland. Courtesy of Lothian Health Services Archive, University of Edinburgh.

confidential records to be identified and closure periods to be applied where necessary, but it has also enabled non-confidential material to be opened for access by researchers for the first time.

In addition to the main cataloguing grant we also secured additional funding through ScotPEN (Scottish Public Engagement Network) to create a series of workshops. Together with Workshop Co-ordinator Eloise Birtwhistle, we conducted outreach events to engage local LGBT+ groups with the history of LGLS, and to help participants develop their writing and creative skills. We brought together participants from both LGBT Health and Wellbeing's LGBT Age Project (over 50s), and LGBT Youth Scotland (13–25) and guided them through a series of writing and zine making workshops. In each workshop participants discussed and created new works in response to LGBT+ experiences reflected in the LGLS archive, and we looked at the themes of protest, safe/queer spaces, and queer animals.



The workshops were designed to be informal and intergenerational and by bringing together different age groups we examined the past and the present, and imagined the future. Those who took part were not expected to have any previous experience in writing or zine-making, nor were they expected to have any experience in consulting archive material. This project is an example of how creative workshops can help demonstrate the power of archives to stimulate discussions on contemporary experiences and how they can work to break down barriers for community groups accessing archives in institutional settings.

The group's writing and zines will be showcased alongside material from the LGLS collection in an upcoming digital exhibition. In the meantime you can find LHSA on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram for updates about the project.

Louise Neilson
Project Archivist, Lothian Health Services Archive

'A Gathering of Leaves' Public Programme

Featuring prizewinning and selected bindings from the Designer Bookbinders International Bookbinding Competition 2022, the exhibition *A Gathering of Leaves* responded to the botanical themes of plants, flora, and gardens. First displayed at the Bodleian Library in Oxford, it opened in the Main Library Exhibition Gallery on 4 November 2022 and ran until 25 February 2023. A trio of free public events were delivered in tandem with the exhibition at the Centre for Research Collections.

The Botanical Bookbinding workshop, held in November, was led by Edinburgh bookbinder Cassandra Barron. Responding to the exhibition's themes, attendees began by making a simple stamp to print their own leaf-inspired papers. Following an introduction to specialist binding tools, techniques, and terms, they transformed their freshly stamped papers into two books: a Japanese Stab twig book with foraged branches and an accordion-fold book.

Barron returned in December to deliver the second creative workshop. An advocate for the use of leftover and recycled materials, the binder showed attendees how to

turn remnant pleather into a collection of small books, each with exposed bindings, decorated papers, and different fastening techniques. Selecting from Barron's large collection of materials gathered from fabric, charity, and vintage shops, including old buttons, maps, wallpaper samples, and music sheets, attendees each left with their own miniature books to gift to friends and family over the festive season.

The final half-day event took place just before the Christmas break and kicked off with demonstrations by prizewinning Scottish bookbinders Gillian Stewart and Tom McEwan whose own bindings were on display in the exhibition. Stewart referenced the cyanotype details of her binding for *The Journey of Thomas the Rhymmer* in the first demonstration, showing different ways to incorporate this analogue photography technique in bookbinding.

McEwan, whose binding for *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* included acrylic ink and gold leaf detailing, followed with a demonstration on edge decoration, showing the tools and precision required to prepare a text block and the



Installation view of the exhibition 'A Gathering of Leaves' in the Main Library Exhibition Gallery



A workshop attendee making a maple leaf stamp.



Completed twig book and accordion-fold book with stamped leaf decorations.



Tom McEwan preparing a text block for edge decoration.

different materials and methods to embellish it from paint to gold leaf.

During a break, Elizabeth Quarmby Lawrence, Rare Books and Literary Collections Curator, brought out a selection of bindings from the University Collections, along with a selection of decorated paper. Some of the bindings illustrated the history of bookbinding, especially fine binding in Scotland, while others showed constructional and decorative features which had been included in the live demonstrations. The audience enjoyed the opportunity to look closely at and handle the different bindings, with many gathering ideas for their own craft activities.

Overall, the exhibition and its accompanying public

programme offered a rich and engaging exploration of the exhibition's themes as well as the art of bookbinding. The events provided attendees with hands-on opportunities to learn a diverse range of bookbinding techniques while also raising the profile of the collections held by the University as a source of research and inspiration.

For more information about the Scotland-based binders who supported the exhibition's public programme, visit bookbindingwithcass.com, jujukbooks.co.uk, and mcewan.co.uk.

Bianca Packham
Engagement Officer (Exhibitions)

Recovering Silent Sounds



The University of Edinburgh holds a rare and unique collection of musical instruments. Many stand proudly on display in St Cecilia's Hall, the Music Museum of the University, visible to the public and played by musicians from around the world. The rest are in storage, available only by request for research, study, or viewing. The collection at the University Collections Facility (UCF) consists of instruments too large to be stored in any of the other locations. Though the time since they were last played can span lifetimes, the collection is anything but silent.

The instruments and accessories stored here moved to the UCF from areas of the library and from the Reid Concert Hall's basement. When I started my internship for St Cecilia's in June 2022, all but a few recent acquisitions were wrapped in plastic bubble wrap, which had started to degrade. That wrapping method creates a microclimate



Tyvek covered instruments

which prevents pest and water incursion, but doesn't allow for regular conservation or inspection of the instrument. To keep the collection alive we must let it breathe. Thus, the aim of the Thomson Dunlop internship was to create made-to-measure covers from storage-safe material, allowing access to each instrument for research and conservation purposes. Our material of choice for the task was Tyvek, a lightweight plastic-based fabric.

Tyvek must be sewn carefully because each puncture is permanent. It requires clips instead of pins, and top and bottom edges lined with stiff tape to keep the material from getting caught in the machine. I started the internship in June and sewed over 120 covers by the end of August. I returned in November as a Library Assistant, to finish what I had started, sewing covers for the remaining instruments of the collection stored in the UCF and creating barcode labels that linked with Vernon CMS (our collection management software).

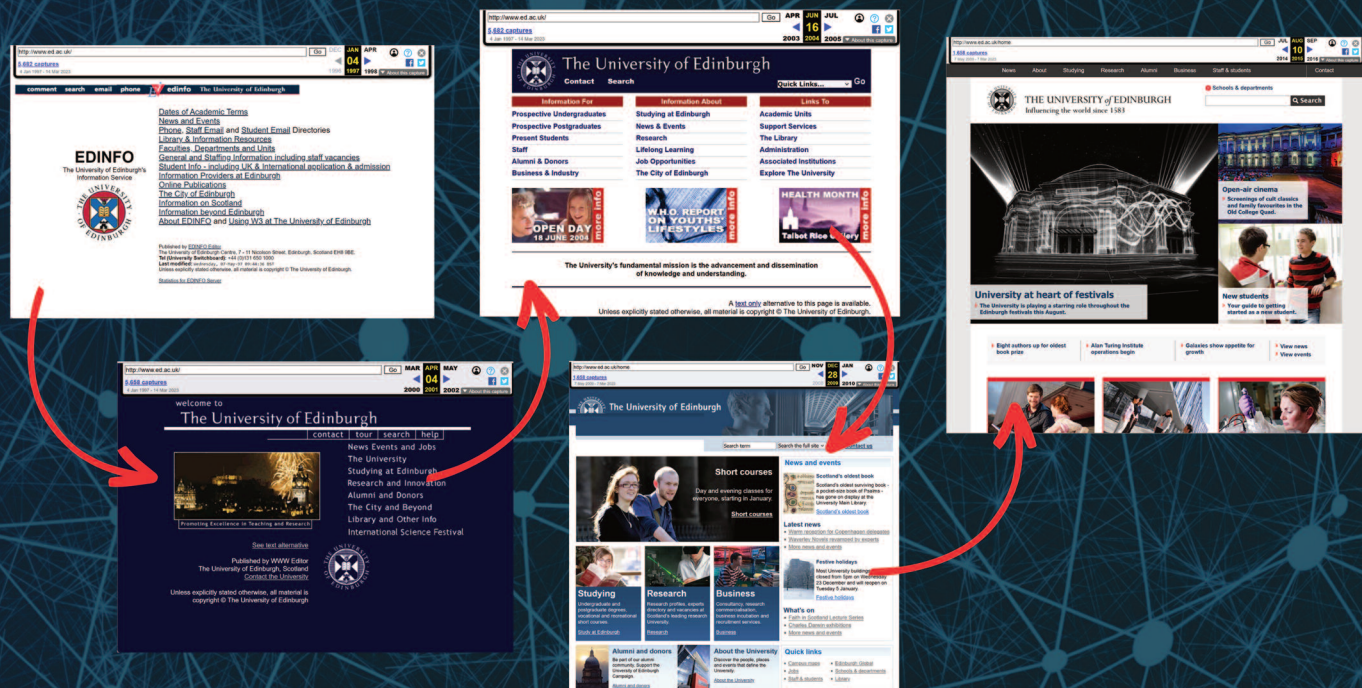
I spend my time in the UCF measuring, drawing out patterns, calculating seam allowances, sewing, and printing labels. This storage unit holds centuries of musical history, but each instrument means so much more. Long-forgotten people live on through hand painted motifs, through names carved on spinet lids and writing exercises on the undersides of repurposed piano stands. They may not be on display, but these 'songs that voices never shared' are still breaking the silence of time¹.

Veronica Wilson

formerly: Thomson Dunlop intern
now; Archives and Library Assistant

1. Simon and Garfunkel

Web Archiving at the University of Edinburgh



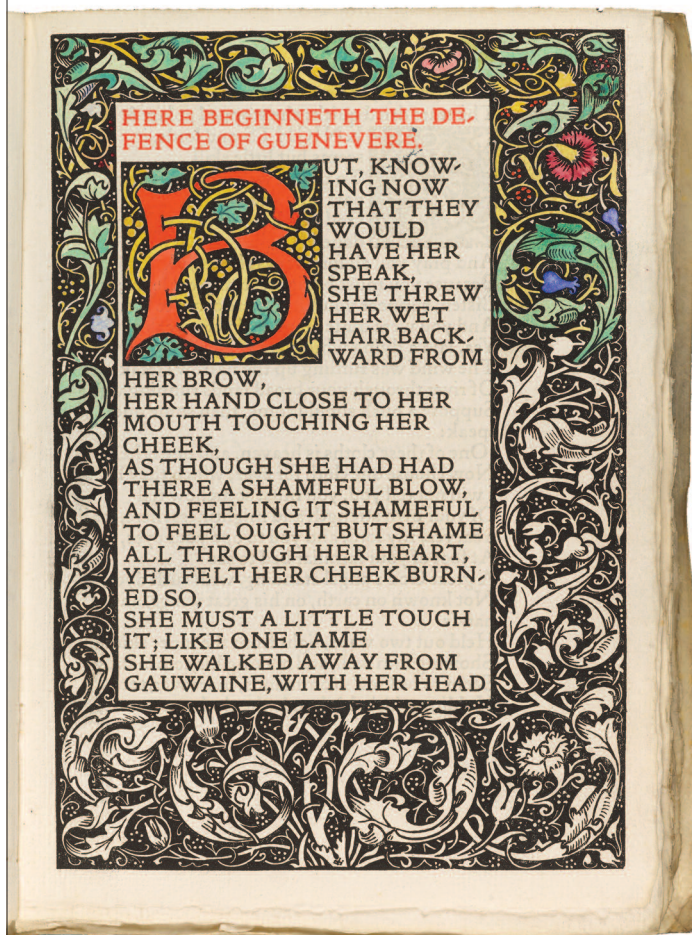
Heritage Collections hold records that document over 400 years in the life of the University and allow us to trace developments in teaching, learning, administration and student life, both in Edinburgh and on a global scale. Over the past twenty-five years, the web has come to play a significant role in how the University communicates with its staff, students and wider community: a reality that became starkly apparent during the Coronavirus pandemic as so much of university life moved online. Many of these University websites represent the latest chapter in the University's long history, but this history is at risk.

Traditionally, records are transferred to an archive at the point when they are no longer being used by the individual or organisation who created them, but the nature of digital records means we don't have this luxury. Paper records may seem delicate, but in average conditions

they can survive for decades stashed away in a box or filing cabinet. Digital content is much more demanding and can become unusable quickly without appropriate action. This is particularly true for websites as content is changed, updated, and removed – the average lifespan of a website is around just two and a half years.

This year, Heritage Collections are working with University colleagues and the British Library's UK Web Archive team to develop a web archiving programme that will allow us to extend our collections into the digital age and preserve the contemporary history of a twenty-first century institution. If you know of a university website that needs to be preserved, please get in touch at: HeritageCollections@ed.ac.uk

Dr Alice Austin
Web Archivist



William Morris, *The Defence of Guenevere*, Kelmscott Press, 1892.

New acquisitions by Heritage Collections

If you would like to know more about new acquisitions by Heritage Collections during 2020 and 2021, please take a look at the two publications available here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery/cultural-heritage-collections/crc/collections-and-search/recent-acquisitions>

You will see items acquired through purchase, commission, gift, and bequest. These collecting efforts are supported by the University's capital investment programme, by external foundations and individual philanthropy, by alumni and donors, and in partnerships with the University's Schools and Colleges.

In the 2021 listing you will see on page 24 a donation from the Friends (see above), forming part of the significant Dobbin bequest.

Richard Battersby

Friends of Edinburgh University Library forthcoming events

Details of each event will be sent out to members as usual.

Tuesday 13 June: 3.00 pm in St Cecilia's Hall

'The University's Heritage Collections from a Conservator's Perspective' – an event to be hosted at St Cecilia's Hall by Senior Conservator Dr Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet

Wednesday, 20 September, 3.00 pm

'Crusoe's Books: Discovering Victorian Readers in the Archive' – a talk on 'Reading and the Empire' to be given by Professor Bill Bell of the School of English, Communication and Philosophy, University of Cardiff

November 2023

(the details to be announced in due course)

It is hoped to combine the AGM with a visit to the refurbished New College Library

Library updates newsletter

Library Updates is a monthly online newsletter, sharing the latest news on library services, resources and projects.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/information-services/library-museum-gallery/library-services-update/library-updates-newsletter>

Gift aid

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If you have already given us a Gift Aid Declaration, thank you. Please let us know if you want to cancel this declaration, or change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you have not previously provided a Gift Aid Declaration and now wish to do so, please complete the appropriate section of the Membership Application Form on the Friends' website. Please send the signed form to the Friends' Administrator.



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