



THE PIPER

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*For Books have that strange Quality,
that being of the frailest and tenderest Matter,
they out-last Brass, Iron, and Marble.*

William Drummond,
Bibliotheca Edinburgena Lectori

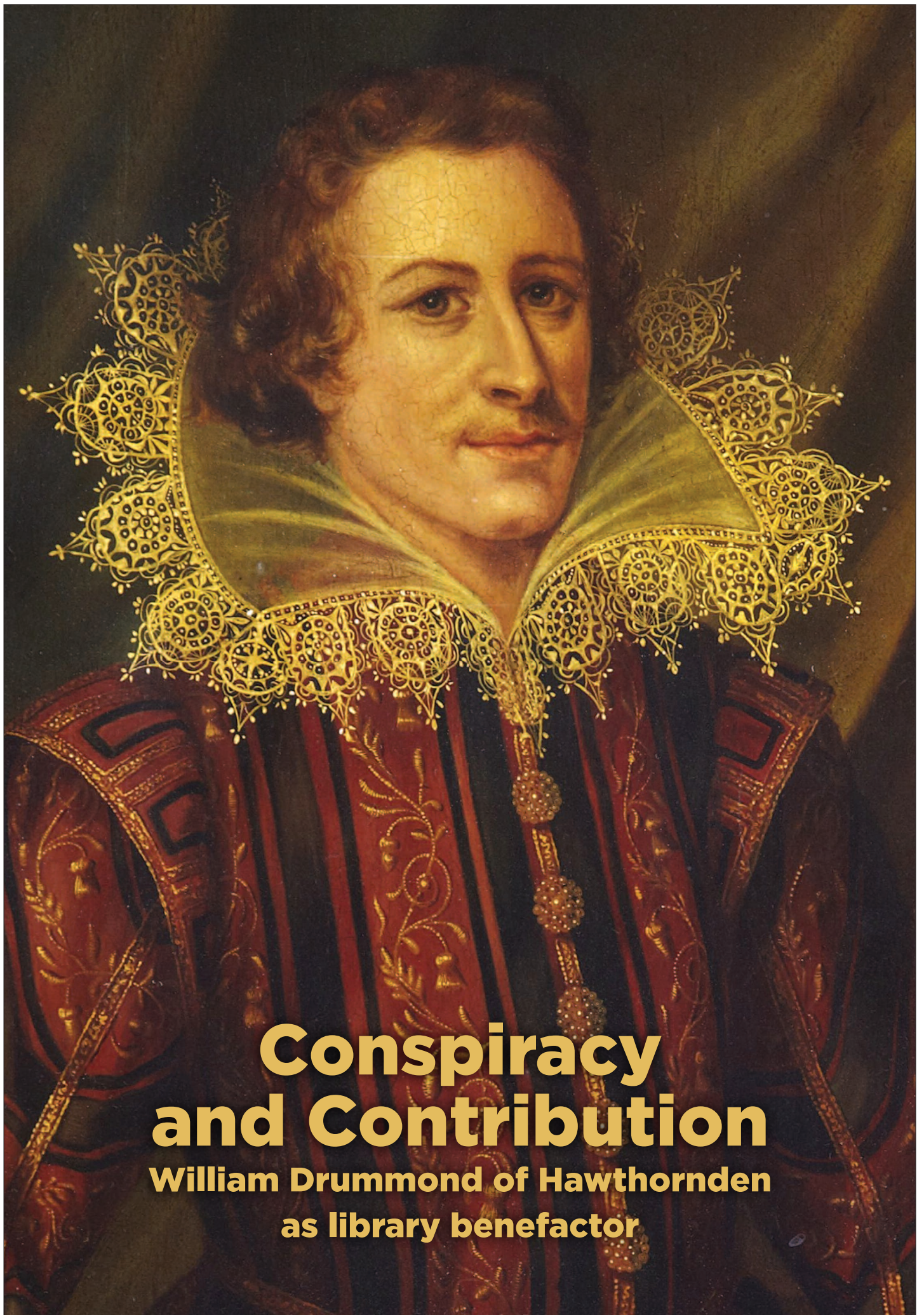
What can I possibly add to William Drummond's quote above? The Library itself, and even more so the Special Collections, are full of perfect examples of books 'outlasting Brass, Iron, and Marble' – and the central aim of 'The Friends of Edinburgh University Library' is, after all, to assist this process!

It is fascinating to learn about how, more than 400 years ago, William Drummond was so deeply focussed on ensuring the survival of books, a trend, which we often associate

more with the 19th century rather than with earlier centuries ...

The other main article also focusses on books and special collections, and it will particularly appeal to those of you who were fortunate enough to take part in the Friends' visit to the new Funk Reading Room at New College in June 2024; its themes are the collections' move back to the newly refurbished Library – and a new course, which focusses entirely on items from the Special Collections!

Louise Gardiner
President, Friends of Edinburgh University Library



Conspiracy and Contribution

**William Drummond of Hawthornden
as library benefactor**

Four hundred years ago, in 1626, the poet and historian William Drummond of Hawthornden (1585–1649) donated a significant collection of books and manuscripts to the [then] College of King James in Edinburgh. The gift was celebrated by a Latin catalogue, issued by the heirs of Andro Hart in the following year: *Auctarium bibliothecae Edinburgensae, sive Catalogus librorum quos Guilielmus Drummondus ab Hawthornden bibliothecæ D. D. Q. [dedit dedicavitque] Anno. 1627.*

In fact, this donation is only the single largest gift of books Drummond gave to the university in a lifetime of benefaction. His motivations for his long-term support of the library are most clearly expressed in a Latin preface to the catalogue, which imagines the Library addressing the reader, and an English essay on a similar theme, published in the 1711 edition of his *Works* under the title ‘Of Libraries’. Both set out a powerful argument for why libraries – especially institutional libraries – matter. The anniversary of the 1626 donation is an appropriate opportunity to reflect on why Drummond saw the establishment and support of libraries as so vital, and how these ideas shaped the collections which remain a treasure of the university today.

The first point Drummond makes in ‘Of Libraries’ is that building institutional libraries is a civic duty for the benefit of future generations. ‘As good Husband-men plant Trees in their Times, of which the After-age may reap the Fruit, so should we, and what Antiquity hath done for us, do for Posterity, that Learning and Letters do not decay, but ever flourish to the Honour of God, the Publick Utility, and the Conservation of Humane Society.’

He cites classical, Renaissance, and contemporary examples of the founders of great libraries to argue that building libraries is ‘worthy work’ to which ‘all Lovers of Learning should conspire and contribute.’ His use of ‘conspire’ here is interesting, as it suggests a collaborative venture (without implying malignant or unlawful purpose) rather than a solo endeavour. One of the most intriguing aspects of Drummond’s bibliographic philanthropy is that he supported efforts to establish libraries at other universities. He contributed a volume of Xenophon to the library his brother-in-law Sir John Scot of Scotstarvit founded at St Leonard’s College, St Andrews, in 1620, and copies of two of his own works to ‘the librarie of Mr Thomas Rheid in Aberdone’ in 1627. Reid, Latin secretary to James VI and I, had died in 1624. His library at Aberdeen was a bequest to Marischal College of his entire collection of books and manuscripts, together with 60,000 merks capital to provide an annual salary for a librarian. Similarly, Drummond’s close friend William Alexander of Menstrie, poet and later Earl of Stirling, gave what seems to

Opposite.

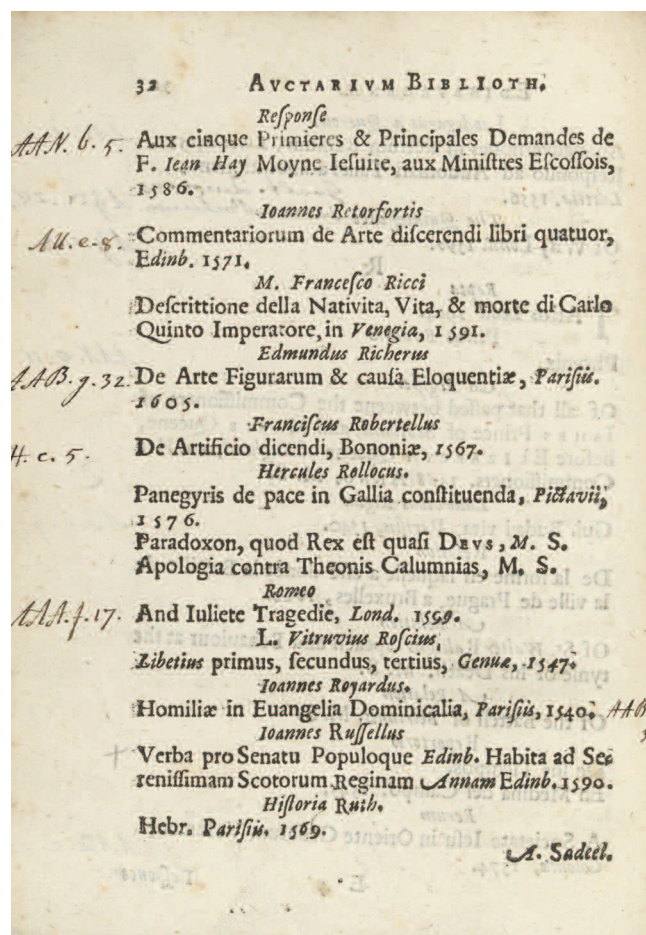
Unknown artist,
William Drummond
of Hawthornden. 19th
century.

© The University of Edinburgh

Below.

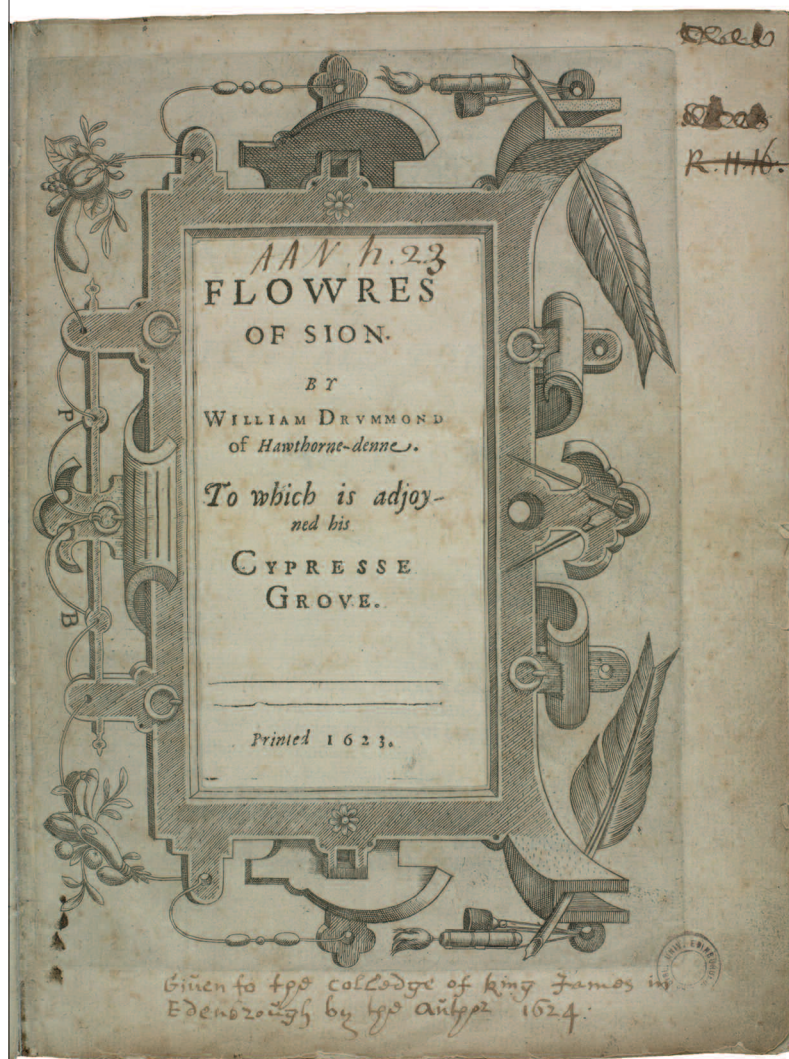
William Drummond,
*Auctarium Bibliothecae
Edinburgensae*, 1627, p. 32.
University of Edinburgh.
Showing the Shakespearean
quarto filed alphabetically
under ‘Romeo’.

<https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/detail/UoEgal-5-5-76790-105875>



have been his own copy of Henry Briggs’ *Arithmetica*, 1628, to Drummond to be added to ‘his catalogue for Edinburgh College’ in 1631. Rather than working in isolation or competition, Drummond clearly saw building and nurturing university libraries as a communal activity.

In ‘Of Libraries’ Drummond declares that just as a forest contains shrubs and bushes as well as tall cedars and oaks, ‘so may all sorts of Books be in a Library’. This is a distinctive contrast to the better-known views of Sir Thomas Bodley, who explicitly excluded certain genres such as almanacs and playbooks from the Bodleian Library (expressed for example in a letter dated 15 January 1612 to Thomas James, Keeper of the Library). Bodley dismissed the majority of these texts as worthless, but was clearly also influenced by reputational concerns if rumours spread that the Bodleian was ‘stuffe[d] ... full of baggage bookes’. Drummond’s deliberately more inclusive policy reflected his own interest in reading dramatic texts and theatre-going, shown both in his record of books read in 1606 and in his annotations in some of his extant playbooks, as well

**Left.**

An example of how Drummond inscribed his books when donating them: William Drummond, *Flowres of Sion*, 1623. Frontispiece. University of Edinburgh.

Marble, nor Brass, nor Gold, no not the Diamond it self, are able so to preserve the Glory of their Actions, as are some few Sheets of Paper. Estates and Republicks owe much to those, who like Torches waste themselves to shine and give light to others; but without these Fathers of their Countries, who endeavour to preserve and communicate to Posterity what these ingeniously have done, their Works should be little better than Spiders Webs: For what availeth the Writing of Books, if they be not preserved; and how many excellent Pieces, by the Barbarity and Negligence of Ages, have perished?

He was acutely aware of the vulnerability of books and libraries to 'the Roughness of the former age' and 'the fury of Civil Wars', when they, 'with many other Monuments, had their fatal Period'. His biographer Masson read this as an allusion to the specifically Scottish experience of destruction and alienation in the sixteenth century, at the hands of the English in the 1540s, and internally

during the Reformation crisis of 1559–60 when many churches were purged or 'cast down' by the Reformers, and the active lives of most pre-Reformation ecclesiastical libraries effectively ended. Like an earlier benefactor of Edinburgh University Library, Clement Littill, Drummond's collection included books which had formerly been owned by Scottish monastic houses. Whether he and Littill were motivated to 'give shelter' to books under threat, or took the opportunity to enhance their collections by acquiring works which were of interest and suddenly available, is impossible to answer. It is clear, however, that Drummond believed that by donating these books and manuscripts to the University Library, they would be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

Drummond believed in the importance of commemorating and perpetually celebrating benefactors. His personification of the Library even says to the reader of the *Auctarium*, 'to be forgetful of those who have been beneficial to me, were the Height of all Ingratitude.' The collection of his books and manuscripts at Edinburgh remains a magnificent monument to Drummond's memory, and his thoughtful reflections on why libraries matter are still an inspiration.

as his manuscript account of seeing over twenty plays in Bourges in September 1607. Whether the university shared Drummond's vision or gladly accepted the complete donation without cherry-picking is not recorded, but the inclusion of the playbooks in the published catalogue does not suggest that the institution feared or expected a scandal such as Bodley anticipated. The *Auctarium* lists two Shakespearean quartos which are still in Edinburgh University Library, the 1598 Second Quarto of *Love's Labours Lost* and the 1599 Second Quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*. The latter was printed anonymously, but Drummond annotated the title page 'WIL. Sha.' to indicate the authorship.

Preservation of the past

The over-riding concern in 'Of Libraries', however, is the importance of preservation. He applies this both to the recording of history, and to the preservation of the books in which that history is written. No other monument, no matter how iconically durable the material, can communicate the events of the past as effectively as 'some few Sheets of Paper':

Great Men were not so much beholden to Arms and their Conquests, whilst they lived, as after their Death to Letters; for neither their Monuments of

Elizabeth Henderson
Special Collections Rare Books Librarian,
Institute of Scottish Historical Research

New College Collections

A New Course

One exciting venture has been the teaching of a new course in semester 1 2025–26 oriented entirely around the Special Collections of New College and the Main Library and taught in the new bespoke space of the Funk Reading Room. This is ‘New College Collections: Archival History and Theology’ which is a joint course with a cohort of both undergraduate honours students and postgraduate students. The course owes its genesis to Dr Sara Parvis (Senior Lecturer in Patristics) the Director of Teaching at the School of Divinity, who was seeking a way to give students the opportunity to acquire skills in archival research, as well as to showcase New College’s rich collections and integrate them into mainstream teaching. The hope especially was to give students the confidence to pursue independent archival and library research in their undergraduate or Masters dissertations and as preparation for doctoral research.

As the idea developed Dr Parvis recruited Dr Simon Burton (John Laing Senior Lecturer in Reformation History) and Dr Felicity Loughlin (Lecturer in the History of Modern Christianity) as co-teachers and the course also developed a wider focus on the interaction of the History of the Book with the disciplines of Church history and theology. As Curator of New College Library Dr Burton was especially keen to promote this important collaborative venture between the School and the Library and ended up taking the helm as course organiser. Indeed, the support of both the Main Library and New College Library at all levels has been invaluable and the direction of the course has been shaped and continually enhanced through dialogue with Dr Elizabeth Quarmby Lawrence (Rare Books Librarian) and Daisy Stafford (Research Services Supervisor). Daisy and Elin Crotty (Archive and Library Assistant, New College) have also beautifully curated the items for each week and provided much-needed hands-on support. The unparalleled expertise of Professor Paul Parvis on early modern patristic editions also brought a rich dimension to the course.

Each week the students have the opportunity to interact closely with a rich and varied set of books, manuscripts and pamphlets from across the centuries. The topics vary widely from Books of Hours and editions of patristic texts, through incunabula and Reformation prints, to Enlightenment debates over religion and Victorian missionary journals. Some texts are iconic like the Nuremberg Chronicle of 1493 or the Wode Psalter and some are incredibly rare – including one recently discovered seventeenth-century catechism which is the only copy in the world – but all are interesting and have a story behind them. A number of the texts also have important Scottish connections including a work of



Staff and students examine a folio in the Funk Reading Room. New College Library, University of Edinburgh.

Franciscan theology owned by William Scheves, a fifteenth-century Archbishop of St Andrews and Scotland’s ‘Renaissance man’, and inscribed with his distinctive owner’s mark and some of the earliest reports of the 1741–2 revivals at Cambuslang.

Students are often thrilled to handle material centuries old and have been poring over exquisite medieval manuscripts, intricate scientific diagrams and leather-bound volumes of eighteenth-century sermons. Soon they will be beginning their poster project in which they pick one of the books studied in class and prepare an academic poster on an interesting or unusual bibliographic feature. However, the highlight of the course will undoubtedly be the opportunity to carry out a supervised research project on an item from the university’s rich collections and explore contextually its theological or historical relevance and importance. Such opportunities are all too rare and even if many of the students go into other fields the memories of meeting such remarkable books and the skills acquired will surely go with them.

Simon Burton
Senior Lecturer, School of Divinity

'It's the Third Disruption!'

Many of us are familiar with the sight of New College keeping a stern eye on Edinburgh's city centre from its position at the top of The Mound. Less well known is that its Library and Special Collections are stored safely and snugly two floors down into the ground. The safety of the collections which make up the UK's largest theological library was the impetus for the 'New College Fire Asset Protection Project' or as Library staff called it, 'The Move', capital T, capital M. So it was in 2019, that a group of Library professionals put their heads together to start planning and moving the contents that would keep everything secure and, as far as possible, minimise disruption.

The complexities of a long-established collection in a long-established institution are too numerous to detail but simply put they necessitate a specialist move. Curators, conservators and librarians ensured every aspect of managing collections was considered from maintaining a service to deframing pictures for improved storage. Appointing a project manager, conservator Katharine Richardson, and student interns helped share the burden of work. Almost 50,000 rare books were cleaned ahead of specialist movers Restore Harrow Green (RHG) packing them up and taking them to their secure stores in England as there was not enough suitable, spare storage space in Edinburgh. This inevitably meant that a large proportion of books were inaccessible.

In the autumn of 2019, initial preparatory work was disrupted by an emergency elsewhere. By December 2019, the User Services team had removed to 40 George Square,

to provide access to the lending stock and student study. No sooner had Heritage Collections staff begun again in earnest when the pandemic hit and all the measuring, stabilisation work, listing, labelling, logistics planning was upended for everyone. 'It's the *Third* Disruption!' the Head of School declared: the first, of course, being the genesis of New College itself in 1843, when over 200 ministers turned their back on The Kirk to form the Free Church of Scotland.

In 2020, Heritage Collections staff continued to work remotely as best as they could on 'The Move' planning and in due course were able to return to the site, working within pandemic restrictions. By December 2020 the Special Collections were all out, carefully dispersed between the Centre for Research Collections or the University Collections Facility (UCF) or RHG stores. In total, almost 5.5km of collections items were moved:

- 3484m general collections
- 217m archives
- 1908m rare books
- over 100 historic objects, furniture and paintings

Before the first semester of 2023/24, and working around the many disruptions of the Festival Fringe, User Services Team returned home to New College. There were still snagging issues with the underground storage conditions for the rare books and archives, which further postponed their return. For long-term preservation reasons, it was not



Left.

Drawing by Grace Chalmers for her father Thomas

Opposite top.

Illustration by Anna Phoebe Traquair for moderatorial address to Rev Prof Alexander Whyte

Opposite bottom.

The Witness, 23 February 1864



possible to return all of the collections to The Mound. About 170 metres of veritable tomes, volumes exceeding 48cm in height, are now permanently stored flat rather than upright at the UCF along with 13,800 volumes of general collections. Despite the distance, a well-established van service means that these books are still accessible on request.

Losing about 200 linear metres of storage to the fire protection measures meant that the recant project manager, archivist Jasmine Hide, had to utilise her 3D visualisation skills to fit as much of the collection into New College Library, without compromising on good, professional practice. Collections stabilisation work, replacing over 400 archive boxes or re-housing the extraordinary sequence of printed pamphlets in bespoke boxes, some 700 so far, has helped to optimise the available space. A by-product of this ongoing work has revealed to current staff the richness of this resource. The pamphlet *Free Church Alliance with Manstealers. Send Back the Money. Great Anti-Slavery Meeting in the City Hall, Glasgow*¹ includes a verbatim account of the speeches, the reporter recording,

Scotland is in a blaze. Well may she be ... The people were not consulted in this guilty participation with man-stealers in their ungodly gains ... Send back that money ... [Great applause.]

Thankfully, among all the efforts and delays are significant improvements. The Funk Reading Room, funded by the late, generous benefactor Dr Robert Funk, was moved upstairs adjacent to the David Welsh Reading Room. Staff from Research Services Team were appointed to invigilate researchers and answer enquiries; the Rare Books Curator joined the Archivist to provide collections development and expertise; and the reading room became a flexible space to host teaching with collections, hands-on collections work and support visits.

New College staff were especially delighted to welcome The Friends in June 2024, where alongside Dr Simon Burton's presentation, curators Elizabeth Quarmby Lawrence and Kirsty M. Stewart, showcased an array of the returned Special Collections.

This included the magnificent volume of Walton's Polyglot Bible,² a real feat of early printing in nine separate languages; and the first Gaelic Bible,³ remarkable beside the 17th-century correspondence⁴ which led to its creation and distribution to the Gaels. The Friends' generosity has enabled work on more contemporary collections. In 2024, a student intern was employed to conserve and rehouse photographs of New College staff and students, which span from 1856 to the present day.⁵ These are now ready for long-awaited digitisation work, destined in due course for the Digital Collections portal.⁶

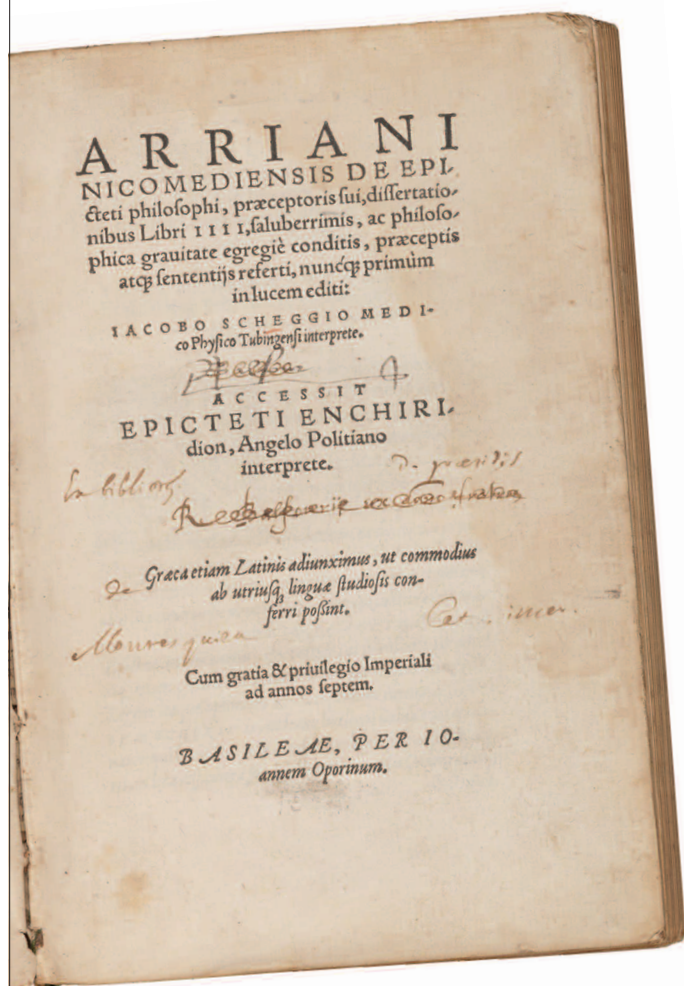
Some six years on, in late 2025, the last remaining items returned home: marble busts of Free Church founders; National Covenants and satirical cartoons to the new plan chests; and the assortment of objects including a Disruption medal. While there have been no medals for this disruption, 'The Move' will definitely be a significant point in the long history of New College Library.

Kirsty M. Stewart

Scottish and University Collections Archivist

- 1 Pamphlet *Free Church Alliance with Manstealers. Send Back the Money. Great Anti-Slavery Meeting in the City Hall, Glasgow*, containing speeches delivered by Messrs. Wright, Douglass, and Buffum, from America and by George Thompson, Esq. of London with A Summary Account of a Series of Meetings Held in Edinburgh by the Above Named Gentlemen, Glasgow, 1846. Shelfmark. M.d.9-10.
- 2 Walton, Brian. *The Considerator Considered, or, A Brief View of Certain Considerations upon the Biblia Polyglotta ... and the Ancient Hebrew Character Briefly Handled*. London: Printed by Tho: Roycroft, and are to be sold at most book-sellers shops, 1659. Print. Shelfmark TR.1140.
- 3 Bedell, William et al. *An Biobla Naomhtha ...* [London], 1690. Print.Shelfmark: B.r356.
- 4 Correspondence of Rev James Kirkwood (c.1650–c.1708) regarding the provision of Irish Bibles to the Gaelic-speaking Highlands and Islands of Scotland c.1690. 4 September 1688, ref. MS KIR 3.1.
- 5 Annual photographs of staff and students at New College, 1856–present, ref. AA1.8.2.
- 6 Website: <https://digital.collections.ed.ac.uk> (beta site).





Friends' Support for New Acquisitions

In February, the Committee agreed to support the purchase of two items presented by Heritage Collections.

Arrian of Nicomedia. *Epicteti Philosophi, Praeceptoris Sui, Dissertationibus Libri IIII ... Enchiridion.* (Basel, per Joannem Oporinum, 1554). (Photograph, left)

This first Latin edition of the Discourses of Epictetus as set down by his disciple Arrian of Nicomedes has an exceptional provenance, from the libraries of the first great Scottish bibliophile, Bishop Henry Sinclair (1507/8–65), a significant Scottish Renaissance philosopher, Robert Balfour (c. 1553–1621), with his annotations in Greek, and the great French political philosopher, Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu (1689–1775).

Eleven autograph letters from Colin MacLaurin to James Stirling, 1728–1738.

Colin MacLaurin (1698–1746) was one of the earliest adopters of Newton's theories and subsequently professor of mathematics at Marischal College, Aberdeen, and then in Edinburgh from 1726. James Sterling (1692–1770) may have studied briefly in Edinburgh before matriculating in 1711 at Balliol College, Oxford. He travelled and studied widely in Europe. From 1737 to the end of his life he was chief agent for the Scotch Mines Company at Leadhills, South Lanarkshire.

Spring/Summer Events

26 March – CRC, 6th Floor Main Library, 3.30pm.
Dr Alan Brown, 'Cinema and Theatre Collecting: A 70-year passion.' The speaker will focus on his cinema and theatre archive collection which he has donated to the Library.

Summer events are likely to include another talk (details to follow) and a joint event with Friends of St Cecilia's Hall highlighting the 16th-century lute manuscript the purchase of which Friends supported.

Bookmark our website for more details as well as all issues of *The Piper*: <https://friendsofeul.co.uk/>

Library updates newsletter

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

<https://library.ed.ac.uk/library-news-events/library-updates-newsletter>

David Laing Book Collecting Prize

The Friends support the annual David Laing Book Collecting Prize run by the University's Heritage Collections. The £500 prize aims to encourage collecting by recognising a collection formed by a student. Judging and prizegiving will take place on 1st April. The prize is offered in honour of David Laing (1793–1878), the distinguished antiquarian, collector and librarian who bequeathed his important collection of manuscripts and other materials to the University of Edinburgh in 1878.

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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