

Information for librarians & information professionals working in Edinburgh - April 30th 2008

The National Library
of Scotland
Map Library

Golden Anniversary

READING ROOM & SERVICES

May 2008 sees the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of a dedicated Map Room in the National Library of Scotland, with the first readers on 13 May 1958.

The reading room, on the ground floor of what was then the new National Library building in George IV Bridge, had been planned for some time. In July 1952 cartographer John Bartholomew (1890-1962), a trustee of the Library, offered advice: "1) Maps require furniture of appropriate design for their storage in safety; 2) Accommodation [for using maps] is necessary alongside with good lighting for their study; 3) Books on carto-bibliography and cognate subjects should be within easy reference reach; 4) The services of a specially trained librarian in attendance would be indispensable."

These requirements are as true today as they were in 1952, and NLS Map Library (as it is now called) offers large tables for using or tracing maps, open access shelves for browsing, containing reference material such as gazetteers, atlases and guide books, together with books on the history and bibliography of cartography, or map design and technology. The Map Library moved to an old factory building at Causewayside in 1974, then to the new Causewayside Building at 33 Salisbury Place from 1988.

As NLS has the largest map collection in Scotland, with around 2 million maps in paper and digital form, there are no comparable facilities elsewhere, so the reading room has always been accessible to everyone, with no readers' tickets required. However to look at pre-1850 material we do need evidence of identity.



A current major project is to make accessible the vast Bartholomew Archive, which contains the records of the world famous cartographic firm from the mid-19th century to 1995, when the firm left Edinburgh. With funding for 3-years from the John R. Murray Charitable Trust, we aim



to conserve and catalogue the Printing Record, specimens of everything Bartholomew printed from 1888. There is more information in issue 11 (July 2007) of *Cairt: newsletter of the Scottish Maps Forum*. The Map Library initiated and supports the Forum (open to anyone who is interested in maps) and organises an annual seminar relating to early Scottish maps and their context.

DIGITISATION

Digitisation has transformed our remote services. Over the last ten years, our map images website has grown enormously, thanks to collaboration with two large scanning projects 'Charting the Nation' and 'Resources for Learning in Scotland', plus some internal funding. We now have over 6000 zoomable high-resolution images of maps of Scotland available on-line and are currently scanning around 14,000 Ordnance Survey 1st edition maps (1850s-1880s) at 1:2500 (25 inches to 1 mile). We can provide map photocopies, and digital images and colour printouts up to A0 size, and this has become a most popular worldwide service.

COLLECTIONS & CATALOGUING

As a Copyright library, we benefit from the legal deposit privilege which enables us to claim material published in the UK, which make up about 1 million of the paper maps in the collection. We also add to the collections by purchase and donation – a large number of our foreign maps (there are around ½ foreign million maps) are superseded editions donated by the Ministry of Defence.

Maps are often perceived by librarians as 'difficult'. Whether in the form of atlases or as flat sheets, they do take up more space, both in reading space and in storage, where horizontal drawers in map cabinets are best for sheets. Maps are a wonderful source for



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displaying change, so most readers need to use several maps side by side for comparison, and it is easy to spread over several square metres.

But perhaps their greatest problem is in cataloguing and retrieving them. Few readers know what map they need; they are unlikely to know what scale is appropriate; or which map could answer their question, or even if it exists. Cataloguing methods for books are not satisfactory for maps, except, possibly for single sheet maps, where a title and mapmaker might be similar to a book description. Map series, where a country, area, or region of the world may be covered in multiple map sheets, require different methods of control, such as graphic indexes (a small scale map showing the sheetlines) or, more recently with digital products, geo-referencing.

Another success of the last few years has been the conversion of the map card catalogue (some 63,000 records) to an online catalogue. Although there are still some items to add, the majority of single sheet maps and atlases are now recorded in the main NLS catalogue, although most map series have yet to be catalogued – you may have noticed rather a large discrepancy between the 1.5 million paper maps, and the 63,000 records! These are retrievable through a rigid, self-indexing filing system, where maps are arranged by continent-country-scale-sheet number-date, and through staff knowledge, which takes us full circle to item four on John Bartholomew's original list of requirements.



*Diana Webster, Map Collections
Manager in the Bartholomew Archive*

Our enthusiastic staff act as intermediaries, and usually select the maps they think will best answer a reader's questions. We like to think we offer a special library service to the general public, in a national library context. We enjoy a challenge and, with every enquiry, we never cease to discover more about the wonderful collections we have in our care, so do get in touch.

Contact: maps@nls.uk 0131-623-3970 (tel); 0131-623-3971 (fax)
Map images website: www.nls.uk/maps
Map collections and services: www.nls.uk/collections/maps
Cairt: www.nls.uk/collections/maps/subjectinfo/cairt.html

VACANCY:

PRISON LIBRARY OFFICER City of Edinburgh Council, Services for Communities: HMP Edinburgh, Stenhouse Rd & Access Services, 343 Oxbgangs Road North

The Prison Library is about to undergo an exciting relocation/ redesign/ refurbishment. The post holder will organise/ provide library services to prisoners and play a substantial role in modernising and developing the service. A degree level qualification in Librarianship and Information Studies or equivalent is required. Closing Date:- 2 May 2008. Ref No:- 7277
<http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/CEC/Jobs/JobView.jsp?ID=11534>

NEWS & EVENTS

The ELISA Staff Development & Training Group is pleased to present a two day course "Copyright for Information Providers" on 10th and 11th June at the National Library of Scotland. The training provider is Aslib (The Association for Information Management). The tutor, Graham Cornish, has worked in copyright since 1983. He has run several hundred training courses on copyright, and has written a similar quantity of articles and papers on the topic for libraries and archives from many different perspectives.

For more details and to book your place, please use the booking form on the News page of the ELISA website. 12 places are available on each day. Closing date for application 30th May. For more information and return of booking forms please contact, Gilly Dennis gilly.dennis@edinburgh.gov.uk 0131 529 7843. The offer of this course is an example of how ELISA can work collaboratively to provide practical solutions for Edinburgh-based services.

ELISA Open Forum: Tuesday 13th May 2008, 9.30 – 1.00; National Library of Scotland, Causewayside Building: "NEXT STEPS". Join us to explore the options available for all kinds of opportunities for career and professional development. Let's find out what is really possible in Edinburgh and see where ELISA might help. See http://www.edinburghlibrariesagency.info/?page_id=131 for programme and e-mail Wendy.ball@edinburgh.gov.uk to book a place. Over 45 people from over 20 services are already booked, come and meet them all and enjoy delicious elevenses provided by our sponsors Edinburgh Training & Conference Venue <http://www.edintrain.com/>.

Edinburgh's Festival of Libraries 2008
http://www.edinburghlibrariesagency.info/?page_id=158. Check out the ideas that are cooking. Are you in the pot? – contact Wendy now wendy.ball@edinburgh.gov.uk

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The National Museums Scotland – Library News

As you may already know, the National Museum is currently undergoing a major redevelopment. The Royal Museum Project is a £46.4 million initiative to renew and reinvent the magnificent Victorian building and its facilities. The project will transform access by providing a welcoming arrivals hall at street level, creating 16 new galleries, doubling the number of objects on display and putting education at the heart of everything we do, we will celebrate the discoveries of the past and ensure that Scotland's National Collections are a source of excitement, inspiration and education for generations to come. We will also be gaining a new Research Library as part of the project. This will open at the end of November 2010. More information on this can be found at <http://www.nms.ac.uk/nm-royalmuseumproject.aspx> From April 28th 2008, the current Library based in the Royal Museum will be closed to the public until the new Library opens in 2010. During the closure period, we will lose access to significant amounts of our collections and we will not have reader accommodation that we can offer to the general public. We will however continue to offer our Library Service at the National War Museum at Edinburgh Castle which focuses on the armed forces in Scotland at home and abroad from 1600 to the present day. During the closure period, we would request that any researchers contact us to discuss their research requirements to find out if we can help. If we can physically access the required materials we shall and will take them to our Library at the Castle where they can be consulted.

Contact us on: Email: library@nms.ac.uk /Tel: 0131 247 4137