



Archives award attracts scholars from around the world

A new awards scheme to enable scholars to access the University of Aberdeen's rich archives and rare books has attracted entries from academics across the globe.

The University is home to more than 230,000 rare printed books – including more than 4,000 sixteenth-century items – as well as 5,000 irreplaceable archival collections, with material dating as far back as the third century BC. The collections cover all aspects of the history and culture of the University, the City of Aberdeen, the region and the relationship they enjoy with the wider world.

Now housed in the state-of-the-art Sir Duncan Rice Library with dedicated reading rooms, the University's Special Collections offer some of the best facilities to academics available anywhere in the world.

To make these important collections more accessible to academics outwith Aberdeen, the University launched the first Special Collections Centre Visiting Scholars Awards at the end of last year.

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The awards are funded by a collaboration between the Aberdeen Humanities Fund, the Friends of Aberdeen University Library and the Special Collections Centre. This year's awards are supported in part by the gift of Henry Doss and Chris Arvidson, and have been selected from a global field of entries.

Henry Doss said: "These awards represent an outstanding opportunity for international scholars in the humanities to work directly with the tremendously important historic collections held at Aberdeen."

The first three recipients are Dr John Stone, Serra Hunter Fellow in English Literature at the Universitat de Barcelona; Dr Samantha Walton, Lecturer in English Literature: Writing and the Environment at Bath Spa University; and Dr Jane McDermid, Reader in History at Southampton University. Each will use the rare resources found in the Special Collections Centre to further their own specialist areas of study.

Dr Stone will focus on library formation at the Royal Scots College, Valladolid, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with special reference to the Scottish Catholic Archives, which moved to the University of Aberdeen last year.

He will examine how cultural artefacts categorised as English and Scottish were imported, consumed, modified or criticised in late eighteenth-century Spain, and hopes that the processes of cultural transfer associated with the Royal Scots College will shed new light on their contemporary reception.

Dr Wilson's research concerns interwar writing, particularly Scottish fiction and modernist culture. The Visiting Scholars Award will enable her to access the correspondence and personal papers of Lewis Grassie Gibbon and Nan Shepherd, which will assist her in establishing the



intellectual, medical, literary and environmental context of their writing.

Dr McDermid has spent the last decade examining female education in nineteenth-century Scotland. She is working on a project called "Evenings out in Urban Scotland, 1870-1940" and will use Aberdeen, which has a rich history of associational activities, as a key case study. The University's Special Collections Centre holds an impressive range of sources including records of churches, clubs, societies, co-operatives and trade unions, and she will utilise these to show what is distinctive to Aberdeen and to identify similarities and peculiarities of urban associational life throughout Scotland.

Siobhán Convery, Head of Special Collections at the University of Aberdeen, said: "The first Special Collections Centre Visiting Scholars Awards attracted a high calibre of researchers from around the world with applicants from Europe, North America, China and Australia. The standard of applicants reflects the international importance of Aberdeen's collection of rare books, archives and manuscripts. We look forward to welcoming the first three recipients to the Special Collections Centre and their presence here will open up further opportunities for research collaboration with our own academic community."

Pilot project: 24/7 opening of library

The Sir Duncan Rice Library recently conducted an exciting pilot, opening the building 24/7 during revision and exams in November and December 2014. In recent years the library has pursued a gradual programme of increasing opening hours. During the exam period, this has largely been limited to an additional four hours, closing at 2am instead of 10pm. The combined interest of students and administration resulted in proceeding with a 24/7 pilot program. The library opened at 11am on Sunday, 23 November and remained open continuously until 10pm on Friday, 19 December.

In preparation for this pilot the library staff formed a planning committee to consider staffing and policy options and prepare for potential pitfalls. We also worked closely with Estates (cleaning and security), IT Services, and Student Services (catering). We were gratified by the support and cooperation from colleagues in each of these areas. Catering agreed to keep the Hardback Café open until 10pm each evening; Security trained, monitored and worked closely with the outside firm hired to staff the library overnight; Cleaning added extra staff and increased services; and IT monitored and maintained the Sentry access system, computer usage and updates affected by these hours.

Response to the extended opening hours was overwhelmingly positive with significant library usage. The average number of students in the library ranged from 162 at 1am to 21 at 5am. In the end the combination of



thorough preparation by library staff, the support of colleagues across campus and a professional security staff resulted in a remarkably effective and trouble-free pilot. Minor issues with plumbing and cleaning were quickly addressed, and there were no health and safety or security issues. The Sentry system which controls access to the SDRL and to the upper floors worked without a fault, and computers and self-issue machines showed good usage. After 27 nights we had not a single complaint from a student or staff member, and several students made a point of complimenting the professionalism and friendliness of the overnight workers.

The library staff committee prepared a bookmark for the 24/7 period that included safety tips and the telephone number to the desk on the ground floor with a short survey on the back. These bookmarks were scattered at desks throughout the library each night of the 24/7 pilot. Seventy-one of the surveys were returned. Most of the students simply said that they appreciated access to the library at night and would use the service again. Seventeen asked that the 24/7 hours be extended to the entire term. Anecdotal evidence gathered by staff speaking with students was also overwhelmingly positive, with many saying that they or students they know used the service and they appreciate knowing the option was available to them.

The December pilot was the first in three steps this year in our continuing search to determine optimal library opening hours. Our next step is to extend opening hours this term (Spring 2015) until 2am Sunday to Thursday nights (instead of closing at midnight). Our third step will be to repeat the 24/7 pilot during revision and exams in April and May. During this term we will also benchmark with other university libraries across the sector, consider staffing implications, examine alternative staffing models and finalise a report on resource implications with the goal of recommending new library hours for September 2015.



Crafting Kingdoms: The Rise of the Northern Picts

Old treasures, new finds and fresh perspectives on the Picts of Northern Scotland from the University of Aberdeen's Archaeology Department.



Ancient treasures and new discoveries will be on show until 31 May 2015 at the University of Aberdeen's King's Museum in an exhibition exploring the origins of the Picts.

"Crafting Kingdoms: The Rise of the Northern Picts" draws on recent projects in the University of Aberdeen's Archaeology Department which have been investigating the Pictish kingdoms of North East Scotland and where their main power bases were situated.

Objects on show for the first time include a recently unearthed Pictish silver hoard discovered during fieldwork at Gaulcross and finds from the excavations at Rhynie showing that this was the seat of a powerful ruler around AD 500 with the place name now known to be recording that it was "a very royal place".

On display from the University Museums collections are a beautiful Pictish silver chain found at Nigg Bay in Aberdeen in 1796 and a carved stone depicting a sea eagle and the mysterious Pictish beast, along with loans of Pictish silver and other artefacts from Aberdeenshire Museums, National Museums Scotland and the British Museum.

The exhibition also contains experimental reconstructions of Pictish metalworking by the Scottish Sculpture Workshop and artefacts by the Rhynie Woman Artists' collective reflecting on the Pictish legacy.

Crafting Kingdoms was co-curated by Dr Gordon Noble of the University's Archaeology Department, who led both fieldwork projects and whose research is revealing much about how the Iron Age tribes of northern Scotland became early medieval kingdoms.

"The sites at Rhynie and our work in the Moray Firth area have revealed some stunning finds," explained Dr Noble. "This exhibition is an opportunity to share these exciting finds with the wider public and to see first-hand some of these beautiful artefacts, some of which are more than a thousand years old, and shed new light on the origins of the Pictish kingdoms."



Visiting King's Museum

Old Aberdeen Town House,
High Street, Aberdeen AB24 3EN



King's Museum is open free:
Tuesday - Saturday 11:30-16:30
Sunday & Monday closed

Night at the Museums: "An Ancient Egyptian Adventure"

A fun-filled family event at the University Museums



On 16 May 2015, the University of Aberdeen's Museums will host a "Night at the Museum" with the theme for the night being "An Ancient Egyptian Adventure", a special evening for families to be able to come to the university and explore the museums and take part in fun-filled activities at night. The event will take place in four University venues: the Zoology Museum and King's Museum in collaboration with the Aberdeen Biodiversity Centre and the Cruikshank Botanic Garden, which will all be open for people to enjoy.

The main venue will be the Zoology Museum, and a rare chance to visit this museum at the weekend as it is normally only open during the week. The museum will come to life, literally, as people who are brave enough will have an opportunity to hold live animals like ones they would have had in ancient Egypt. There will be scary scorpions, hissing snakes and marvellous meerkats! A professional storyteller will present enthralling tales from ancient Egypt. Visitors will be able to hear about gruesome practices, such as how to mummify someone and why! Visitors will also be able to have their face painted like a pharaoh's and have their photo taken dressed up like an Egyptian.



There will be an opportunity to hold real objects from ancient Egypt at the new object trolley. On a specially created trail visitors will be able to find all the animals that were Egyptian Gods and hold real ancient Egyptian amulets.

Visitors will be able to take part in craft activities in the new education and events space, a short cobbled walk from King's Museum. There will be a special one-off exhibition on display for that night, where people can come and see the rare objects from ancient Egypt. The objects will include a mummified cat, crocodile, canopic jars and much more.

University Museums, Saturday, 16 May 2015, 17:00-21:00

All events and activities are free to attend.



Inaugural Thomas Reid Prize



Part of the Bestiary given to the University by Thomas Reid

When Thomas Reid (d. 1624), a former Regent of Marischal College, gave his alma mater a colourful bestiary which once graced the library of King Henry VIII, he ensured that 800 years after its creation it would survive to be enjoyed by the scholars of today.

Now current students at the University have the opportunity to follow in Reid's footsteps by selecting a new donation to the institution – and netting a prize worth a total of £750.

Philanthropist and scholar Dr William Zachs has gifted funds to Aberdeen as part of a new Scottish Universities Book Collecting Prize Scheme, which seeks to encourage the collection of the printed word in physical form among the students of Scotland's ancient universities. Aberdeen's prize commemorates Reid, who served as Latin secretary to King James VI and I, and who is said to have been given the Bestiary by his friend Patrick Young, son of the Royal Librarian to the King. The volume has remained in the care of the University's dedicated Special Collections Centre and is now revered as one of the best-preserved and most exquisite books to survive from the period.

Students are invited to submit a written list or catalogue of a collection they own, together with a separate statement of the idea behind the collection, its scope, intent and meaning, to be in with a chance of winning a prize worth a total of £750. The collection can take any form of the printed word, from match or concert tickets to film posters or magazines.

The winner will be awarded £500 to spend on an item or items for their own collection, and £250 to spend on a gift of their choice to the University's Special Collections Centre.

Full details of the Thomas Reid Prize and how to enter can be found at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cass/research/the-thomas-reid-prize-for-book-collecting-380.php> Entries must be received by 5pm on Monday, 1 June 2015.



Team Pigment & The Aberdeen Bestiary

In November 2014 a multi-disciplinary team from Durham University visited to carry out research on a number of items from the Special Collections Centre, including the twelfth-century Aberdeen Bestiary.



The team, known as "Team Pigment" by their colleagues, are interested in the Bestiary as part of a larger project investigating inks and pigments used in medieval manuscripts from across the UK.

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The work of “Team Pigment” will help us gain a better understanding of the place of the Bestiary in terms of techniques and pigments used. Information about pigments used may also result in an improved understanding of the links between the Aberdeen Bestiary and the Ashmole Bestiary (MS Ashmole 1511) held at the Bodleian Library. The two manuscripts are not identical, but many illustrations are very similar, and it is thought by some that they may have been created by the same hand.



Figure 1: Multispectral imaging

The team are using two techniques, both non-invasive (i.e. they don't require samples). First they look at an illustration using Multispectral Imaging (Figure 1), a technique which uses filters to separate wavelengths reflected from the image and in doing so allows us to capture data from the same image at different sections of the electromagnetic spectrum (Figure 2). When this information is combined, it reveals important information about the identity of the pigments present.



Figure 2: The same image viewed under different light sources (23v)

Once this information has been captured, a technique called Raman Spectroscopy is used to look more closely at individual pigments. In this technique a beam of single coloured light is focussed onto an area and the light scatters. The energy from this beam is less than a laser pointer, but where the light hits certain molecules it loses some of its energy to those molecules and bounces off at a different frequency. This means there will be a difference between the light directed at the sample and the light bouncing back from it.

Through examining this information, it is possible to identify the vibrational spectra of the molecules and ultimately the pigments. Preliminary results have revealed a range of pigments used on the Bestiary, including the precious blue lapis lazuli pigment. The project is ongoing and we look forward to comparing our data with that from the Ashmole Bestiary and other manuscripts created during this period. This is just one of a number of projects centred on the Aberdeen Bestiary. Watch this space for more details.

Acknowledgements

Team Pigment is: Andy Beeby, Professor in the Department of Chemistry at Durham University; Richard Gameson, Professor in the Department of History at Durham University; and Kate Nicholson, Lecturer in Physical Chemistry at the University of Northumbria.





THE FAR NORTH

Frozen Stars, Shifting Ice & the Silence Beyond

The new exhibition in the Gallery of the Sir Duncan Rice Library explores the idea of the the Far North through contemporary art and music, historical artefacts and written words.

The Far North has been a place of fascination since the first travellers' tales of otherworldly icebergs and the Northern Lights reached the temperate zones, and the first treasures of amber and narwhal ivory were sent southwards.

This fascination increased in the era of the great Arctic expeditions, culminating in the intensity of myth and memory which still surrounds the disastrous Franklin expedition to discover the Northwest Passage in 1845.

The collections of the University of Aberdeen are rich in artefacts from the Far North, particularly from Arctic America, and there are extensive holdings of manuscripts and illustrated books. The University also has a special research emphasis on "The North", at a time when the Arctic territories are once more a focus of intense ecological, aesthetic and ethical debate.

The exhibition is accompanied by a programme of public events (see overleaf). From curators' talks to Family Fun and children's summer schools, there will be something for everyone.

The exhibition will run until 20 September 2015.

Gallery Opening Hours

Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat: 10:00-17:00

Thu: 10:00-19:00

Sun: closed



The Far North: Frozen Stars, Shifting Ice and the Silence Beyond

- Public events -

Venue for all talks: The Special Collections Centre Seminar Room, Lower Ground Floor, The Sir Duncan Rice Library

Note: Admission to all talks is free but booking is advisable.

Contact: scc.events@abdn.ac.uk

Expeditions into Naboland

Thursday, 21 May 2015, 18:00-19:00

Reinhard Behrens' illustrated and lively talk about his 40-year-old artistic concept of Naboland that features a toy submarine, penguins, Orientalist camels, Viking adventures and an excursion through Flemish art history on the way to Venice.

German-born artist Reinhard Behrens started his Scottish life in 1979 when he joined Edinburgh College of Art as the recipient of a DAAD grant. What was meant to take only one year was the start of the artist's on-going fascination with Scotland and its wild, inspiring landscape and rich history.

Scotland proved to be a fertile ground for Behrens' whimsical approach to art, making use of visually rich references to expeditions of the Edwardian Age with the polar adventures making the first chapter, "Naboland the North", of his investigation into the existence of "Naboland".

A chance find of a toy submarine on the German North Sea coast in 1974 and the discovery of a Turkish newspaper article that described the collision between a cargo ship named "Naboland" and a Turkish submarine set the artist off on a lifelong quest to explore aspects of Naboland, which so far has led to the additional chapters "Naboland the East", "Across the Desert", "The Italian Visits", "A Flemish Excursion" "Beyond the Nabo-La" and "The Viking Connection".

Elaborate installations of explorers' huts next to drawings, paintings and prints generate a high degree of "authenticity" of Naboland as a parallel yet accessible world. www.naboland.co.uk

Polar Horizons

Thursday, 04 June 2015, 18:00-19:00

What happened when polar explorers took to the skies in the 1920s? **Dr Marianne Cronin**, a Research Fellow in the University of Aberdeen's North Theme, discusses how the Far North was re-imagined in the age of aerial exploration and how the resulting images continue to influence contemporary debates about the region.

In the 1920s, polar explorers embraced the new possibilities offered by aircraft and took to the skies. But what did this mean for popular ideas about the Far North? Dr Cronin's talk will address the question as to how this cutting-edge technology fit with existing images of the polar regions as a pristine wilderness that existed outside the modern, industrialised world.

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The Far North: Frozen Stars, Shifting Ice and the Silence Beyond

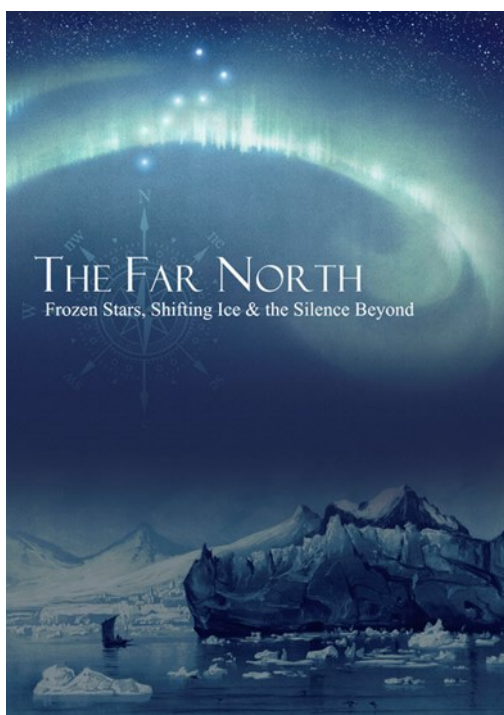
- Public events -

continued

Venue for all talks: The Special Collections Centre Seminar Room, Lower Ground Floor, The Sir Duncan Rice Library

Note: Admission to all talks is free but booking is advisable.

Contact: scc.events@abdn.ac.uk



Stitching Skins, Filming Lives: Inuit Hunting Families Today

Thursday, 11 June 2015, 18:00-19:00

During a recent fieldtrip to an Inuit community, Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet), in Canada's Eastern High Arctic, **Dr Nancy Wachowich** worked collaboratively with seamstresses and filmmakers to explore the ways in which women's skills are fostered, maintained and communicated between generations. They focussed on indigenous techniques for seal skin processing and garment making.

In this talk, Dr Wachowich will use film clips and photographs to reflect on the relevance of these creative practices in the lives of Inuit hunting families today.

Dynamic Identities: The Deconstruction of an Inuit Stereotype

Thursday, 18 June 2015, 18:00 - 19:00

Museum objects often conjure up images of southerners' heroic exploits and their unique encounters with "ancient" people living in a frozen landscape. This talk by **Alexander C. Oehler** critically examines southern stereotypes of the Canadian Arctic and its people by exploring the dynamic nature of contemporary Inuit identity across art, language and hunting. It also looks at the internal challenges posed by curating heritage while making space for new Inuit expressions of identity.

Southern audiences are often disappointed when they see footage of an Inuit whale or seal hunt. Some will ask why endangered animals must be killed. Others bemoan the fact that high power rifles are involved. The latter prefer to see the "original" Inuit; a hunter who speaks Inuktitut, thrusts a handmade harpoon, travels in a seal skin qayaq and shares meat in an igloo. Southern imagery of Inuit life is highly iconic, largely static and easily disappointed.

Demand for Inuit art is still largely expected to reflect this stereotype. But what does it mean to be Inuit today?



Women, Science, Narrative

Novel perspectives on female experience in a scientific age

The Centre for the Novel has been awarded a grant by the Royal Society of Edinburgh for a research network on the theme of Women, Science, Narrative. Led by Dr Hazel Hutchison and Dr Alexandra Lewis, this project brings together scholars across the College of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Aberdeen with experts in this area from other UK universities. Covering a range of topics from botany, geology and medicine to horticulture and domestic science, it explores how women writers engaged with the sciences, both in fictional and non-fictional narratives, in the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. It also considers how male novelists understood the relationship of women to science during that period.

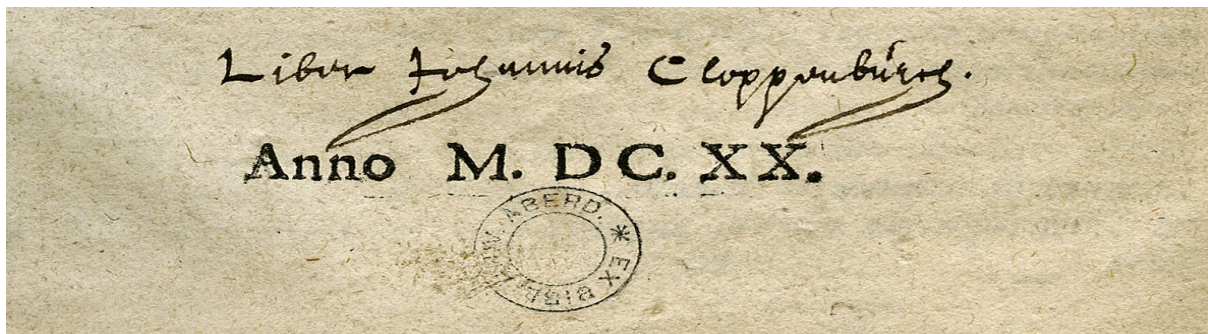
A number of the scholars involved are working closely with materials held in the Special Collections Centre, including Professor Patience Schell, who is researching the editor, travel writer and scientific observer Maria Graham (1785-1842). Graham's *Journal of a Residence in Chile 1822* and her *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil and Residence There, 1821-23*, both published in 1824, chronicle her observations of political events, local culture and natural history as well as her personal experiences. However, Graham discovered that contributing as a woman to the "polite society" of early nineteenth-century intellectual debate was far from straightforward. Professor Schell's project examines Graham's travel narratives, of which the SCC holds rare early editions, alongside her letters, manuscripts and her controversial report to the Geological Society of London on the 1822 Chilean earthquake, to see how Graham created a space for herself in Britain's natural history community.



To find out more about the Women, Science, Narrative project, go to the Centre for the Novel's webpages at www.abdn.ac.uk/sll/research/centre-for-the-novel-215



Special Collections Centre Provenance Database



The Provenance Database provides information on previous owners and readers of the printed books held in the Special Collections of Aberdeen University Library.

The overall aim of the project is to create a web-based, searchable database of provenance that links readership throughout the printed book collections and provides an overall picture of readers, owners and donors of books in our library.

Evidence left in books by owners and readers can be used by researchers to reconstruct dispersed and disseminated libraries and collections. It can demonstrate the transmission of books and ideas, and show the personal connections, professional and friendly, between readers.

Provenance evidence comes in a variety of forms: signatures, inscriptions, book plates, book stamps, monograms, mottoes and bindings. Some signatures and inscriptions are written clearly, others less so and some have even been deliberately obscured or erased. Some book plates and binding stamps only show an armorial crest rather than a name and identification can be difficult.

We hope to provide visual evidence where possible to make identification easier.

The database is a work in progress with records being added in phases. The first phase of the project was the transcription of two hand-written provenance registers of mainly sixteenth-century printed books held in the library, which is now complete. The next phase of the project is to incorporate images of selected provenances and to begin transcription and incorporation of other provenance registers held in the department.

The database can be found on the Special Collections Centre webpages. It can be searched by a keyword "browse" facility or by searching the list of book owners, with each record linking directly to the library catalogue.

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/provenance>

Suggestions, amendments and input from anyone studying these books are welcomed. Contact: Jane Pirie at j.b.pirie@abdn.ac.uk



Conservation of a Papier-Mâché Snail at the University of Aberdeen

by Marion Gouriveau, Intern at the Glucksman Conservation Centre

I am a student on the Master's degree course in conservation-restoration at the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and currently on a placement at the Glucksman Conservation Centre (GCC), Sir Duncan Rice Library at the University of Aberdeen. I have worked on several projects including a miniature book and a plate of papyrus fragments at GCC, and I have also had the opportunity to work under the University Museum conservator, Caroline Dempsey, on an anatomical model of a snail, executed in papier-mâché.

This model was made during the nineteenth century by Louis Auzoux, a French doctor born in 1797. His factory offered a wide catalogue of clastic [from Greek *klastos* meaning "broken"] models, which could be taken apart in order to access the internal organs. Each section is composed of several layers of paper pressed into metal-lined wooden moulds. These are then filled with a pulp composed of flour starch paste, shredded paper, hemp fibre, lime and Poudre de Liège (powdered cork). To this, dry arteries, veins and nerves, composed of wire covered by hemp and paper, are added and fastened with nails. Finally, the paper is painted with pigment bound in fish glue then sealed with an additional layer of the same adhesive. Printed labels aid dismantling and reassembly.

The snail is in poor condition. Its age, exposure to light and changes in RH have caused the paint and the adhesive to crack, especially along the edges. It has been particularly affected by fluctuations in relative humidity, having previously been stored in close proximity to a plant room. It is also believed that it suffered from smoke damage as a result of a fire in the University's Zoology Department a number of years ago. The papier-mâché suffers from distortion and delamination, and some metal parts such as iron hooks and clasps, used to attach the various components, are corroded. A membrane of goldbeater's

skin is detached from the structure representing the pulmonary arteries. There are many losses, the surface is very dirty and one of the antenna is missing.

Some stabilising treatment had already been carried out to prepare the snail for exhibition, and tests had been carried out for cleaning, consolidation and the re-construction of the pulmonary arteries. The snail had therefore already been cleaned with saliva, but I attempted to reduce the dirt further through the use of iced water. According to Richard Barden, conservator at the National Museum of American History, the use of iced water reduces the risks of disruption of the gelatine coating.



The next step was to re-attach the flaking paint. While iced water retains the integrity of the gelatine layers, it does soften it enough to allow for the manipulation of lifting flakes back onto the support. These are then re-adhered, edge to edge, using 10% Paraloid B72 in acetone. This choice of adhesive reduces the risk of distortion of the pigment layer and gelatine coating. Where a stronger repair was required, Japanese tissue was added and adhered with 5% Paraloid B72 in acetone.

This is a delicate process and each section must be dry before adjacent flakes are treated. It is therefore necessary to work on different areas at the same time, switching between treatment stages. This has proved to be a valuable experience in learning how to best manage time efficiently.



Prospects and Prospectuses: Thomas Hood's "The Progress of Cant" and the Art of Advertising in the 1820s

A talk by Professor David Duff, University of Aberdeen



Thomas Hood "The Progress of Cant" (image reference number: SB ff741.942 Hoo)

To most of us, a "prospectus" is a brochure that advertises the educational wares of a university or college, but in the early 1800s it generally meant something else entirely. In the early nineteenth-century book trade, a "prospectus" was a printed pamphlet advertising a forthcoming book or series of books, often with a view to recruiting subscribers to help offset the printing costs. Quirky, pretentious, extravagant, poetic or dutifully descriptive, the prospectus was usually the first glimpse that the public would get of a publisher's new outputs, and it would help to whet the reader's appetite for something more substantial.

However, as Professor David Duff told us at a FAUL evening talk on Thursday, 19th February 2015, the prospectus has never been given much credit as a form of literature. Most of these pamphlets were simply thrown away once the books they advertised appeared in print, and those that survive have often done so by accident, folded inside other publications, or bundled in with other kinds of archival ephemera. To Professor Duff, however, these documents offer a fascinating glimpse into the world of early mass publishing and reveal an age remarkably like our own, an age obsessed with marketing and acquisition, with status and celebrity, with the gap between reality and "cant" – that's "hype" to you and me.

Of course, the prospectus is an ideal place to practise the art of cant, and as Professor Duff has discovered in his research project into publishers' advertising, many highly admired writers and poets indulged in the practice of puffing up their own works, sometimes writing the copy for their own prospectuses. Walter Scott and his publishers made shrewd use of the prospectus as a means of securing subscribers for the collected edition of his Waverley Novels. William Wordsworth wrote verse in the style of a "prospectus". Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote a tongue-in-cheek prospectus for a book on Euclid that never appeared.



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Like the dust-jackets of later works, early nineteenth-century prospectuses offered a format where business sense, literary merit and a sense of playfulness about the conventions of publishing could all merge in a bid to catch the reader's eye.

One figure of the period who possessed all three of those qualities was the publisher, poet and cartoonist Thomas Hood. In 2013, FAUL received a request from Professor Duff to assist with the purchase of a very rare colour copy of Hood's satirical cartoon "The Progress of Cant" published in 1824. Playing on the double meaning of "progress" as both a development and a public procession, Hood's cartoon shows a London street full of all kinds of caricatures representing all walks of life, politicians and pickpockets, prisoners and parsons. But all of Hood's figures are united in their use of hypocrisy displayed in the banners they carry. The fine words printed on these banners are belied by the reality of what we can see taking place in front of our eyes. It is a hilarious scene, which even features a prospectus in the form of an advert for an allegedly high-end girl's boarding school, whose pupils can be seen in the back of the picture flirting with the boys in the school next door. The whole image, like the publishers' prospectuses of the era, gives an insight into the period when advertising came of age and laid the foundations for modern techniques of branding and spin.

Professor Duff's research project will develop over the next few years into a book-length study on publishers' advertising in the 1800s. So, watch this space, as they say in advertising. No doubt the prospectus for his own volume will come along anytime now.

By Hazel Hutchison



Special Collections Centre reading room





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Friends of Aberdeen University Library Annual General Meeting



Thursday, 28 May 2015, 7pm

**Special Collections Centre, Seminar Room,
Lower Ground Floor**

The Sir Duncan Rice Library

The Annual General Meeting for Friends will take place at 7.00-7.30pm and be followed at 7.30pm by a talk from Ms Diane Bruxvoort, University Librarian & Director, to which members of the public are welcome.

Ms Bruxvoort will talk about the 21st-century academic library in transition. She will discuss the latest changes to the day-to-day running of the Sir Duncan Rice Library, putting longer opening hours and a new food and drink policy into context with digital collections, greater research support and just-in-time services, among other topics.

All welcome but booking is advisable to help us plan the catering.

Contact: scc.events@abdn.ac.uk

www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/friends-of-the-library/