

University of St Andrews Library Special Collections Division

The University of St Andrews Library is fortunate to possess very fine Special Collections, under the care of a well-staffed and professionally run Special Collections Division. Staff with specific curatorial expertise in rare and early printed books, manuscripts/archives and photographs, and a strong reader services team, are keen to provide access to the collections to academic staff and students of the university, visiting scholars, and non-affiliated researchers. They also provide research assistance as well as a range of teaching, interpretative activities and high-quality reprographic services to any who wish to use the collections. From the beginning of December 2013, the Special Collections Reading Room, to which all materials will be delivered for consultation, will be located within the newly renovated Martyrs Kirk Research Library in the heart of historic St Andrews.

The collections themselves, amounting to some 13.5 linear kilometres of shelving, are as varied as they are extensive. Information regarding many collections and individual highlights is available via the Division's website at www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/specialcollections, and informal discussion of much of the Division's work can be found on the active and popular blogs [Echoes from the Vault](#) and [Lux](#). What follows, therefore, is additional information about a few cross-collection themes and strengths which may whet the appetite of potential visiting scholars. The Special Collections team will of course be happy to discuss any aspect of the collections, or proposed research projects, with prospective applicants for the visiting scholar scheme. Contact details are provided on the website.

History of Science

In a Library environment which might be assumed to be naturally strong in the arts and humanities, it is worth highlighting a particular strength, across all collecting fields, in the history of science. Some of the star printed items are seminal early scientific works, and in the Libraries of several eminent scientists, as well as in gathered collections, works may be found which chart the development of scientific thought (including medicine and natural science) from its earliest days to the present. Such collections include, notably, the astonishing library of James David Forbes, glaciologist and Principal of the United Colleges of the University from 1859-68; a fine alchemical collection; and many treasures of scientific writing within our 17th and 18th century holdings. This wealth of printed resource is complemented by significant manuscript holdings, including personal and research papers of Isaac Newton, JD Forbes, D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson and others historic and modern, and an increasing strength in environmental (especially maritime) archives. A significant cataloguing grant has just been received to work on records relating to the whaling industry, for example – an award specifically for “projects of the greatest international scholarly interest”. Our extensive historic and modern photographic collections enhance this resource even further, with important holdings of material of scientific and environmental significance.

Photography

In 1839 a close friendship between two great scientists, the British inventor of photography (WHF Talbot and the Principal of the United College of St Andrews (Sir David Brewster), was the genesis of the University of St Andrews Library's Photographic Collection. It was in St Andrews that the earliest practitioners of photography in Scotland honed their skills to master this new science and art, taking influential first steps and pioneering notions of the medium's potential.

In the 1970s the University Library began actively collecting photography, establishing its historical, educational, and artistic importance within the university and for the greater public. Successions of vast photographic

acquisitions have added rare and unique images from across the British Isles. Through a marriage of several generations of seminal photographers as well as previously hidden luminaries, we now present a world-class collection to an international audience for both academic and personal research. It provides an extensive cross-disciplinary primary resource, documenting both the socio-cultural transformation of Scotland and beyond, and the development of the photographic process itself, from the 1840s onward.

The collection numbers in excess of 800,000 photographs, existing in an almost comprehensive variety of photographic formats, and is complemented by a wealth of photography which exists with the Division's manuscript holdings, and a growing collection of 19th and 20th-century photographic books. An increasing proportion of the collection is also accessible via an online searchable database.

Travel and Exploration

The theme of travel and exploration is present throughout the collections. The manuscript collections hold important material relating to many Scots individual and families abroad (involved in colonial administration, commerce and personal travel), particularly in the 19th century, as well as highly significant holdings of material relating to specific projects, such as the renowned archaeological digs in Turkey in the 1930s and 1940s. The records of student societies include additional material relating to overseas missionary and sporting activities. Amongst the very extensive collections of 17th - 19th century printed books are many rare works within this genre, including maps, atlases and travelogues, and there are substantial numbers of works relating to travel, exploration and cartography in Scandinavia, mainland Europe, the Near and Middle East, Central & Southern Asia and Northern Africa. Earlier printed works include examples of natural and world histories from as early as the 15th century.

Of course, the photographic collections provide an additional wealth of material, documenting many parts of the world from the mid-19th century to the present day, and including the work, for instance, of contemporary writer and photographer Hamish M Brown, whose well-known literary and mountaineering activities have led to an extensive collection of photography relating primarily (but not exclusively) to Scotland and Morocco; and a rapidly increasing holding of golfing photography from across the world.

18th century

From 1710 to 1836 the Library was entitled to a copy of every book printed in Britain under the Copyright Deposit Act. Not every book to which we were entitled was claimed, of course, but nonetheless the result is a particular strength in 18th century printed material, with a special emphasis on books relating to the Scottish Enlightenment. Subsequent collecting has further increased the breadth of material relating to the "long 18th century", in the areas of both print and manuscript. An example is the library of Dr JD Fleeman (1932-1994), noted Samuel Johnson expert and bibliographer, consisting of over 1000 volumes by and about Samuel Johnson and Boswell, and which is particularly rich in early editions of Johnson's works. Fleeman's personal papers are also held within the manuscript collections. Another example is the working library of James Simson (1740-1770), 2nd Chandos Professor of Medicine at St Andrews, which includes over 200 volumes of medical books of the 16th to 18th centuries, chiefly 18th century.

The records of the University itself are also particularly rich in 18th century material, including important and detailed series illuminating the development of the Library (through records of Stationers' Hall, and successive library catalogues) and its use by both academic staff and students. Extensive series of records relating to the administration of the University's constituent colleges are fruitful (and as yet relatively unexplored) areas of study for a range of administrative, tenurial and sociological subjects.

Literary studies

In the area of literary studies, the collections are strong in the 18th century, as described above, (with the Fleeman Collection a highlight, again). Additionally, there are major strengths in collections of books and manuscripts by and relating to literary figures, including for example, the Scottish author Andrew Lang (1844-1912), and a very fine collection of editions of 19th century British authors (particularly the Brontes and Wilkie Collins). The general strength of the printed collections from 16th – 20th centuries make them a treasure trove for many areas of literary study. Literary manuscripts are a growing strength, the most eminent collection so far being the voluminous personal papers of the award-winning contemporary Scottish poet Douglas Dunn. The strong tradition of the teaching of creative writing in the University (established by Douglas Dunn himself) offers potential for further significant acquisitions in this field.

Once again, the University's archival records offer good opportunities for the study of many subject disciplines, including literature and its reception. In addition, several excellent collections of personal papers and the libraries of past professors and principals offer possibilities for detailed study of research and writing in related areas, such as classics, theology, church history, philosophy and beyond.

Church History and Theology

The study of Theology has been a consistent feature of the life of the University since its foundation, and was given added vigour with the foundation of St Mary's College, now synonymous with our Faculty of Divinity, in 1538. It is no surprise, therefore, that there is an abundance of material in the collections of relevance to this discipline. From medieval manuscripts (including, for example, a selection of the works of St Augustine of Hippo written in the scriptorium of St Andrews Priory in the late 12th century, a 9th century Arabic work on the Christian religion, and a series of extraordinary 15th – 19th century Qur'ans) to a voluminous archive of correspondence relating to the 19th-20th century Catholic Modernist movement, the manuscript and muniment collections are replete with interest. Printed materials include a magnificent collection of some 1600 bibles (16th-19th centuries), the excellent collections of church history and theology gathered by the 19th century theologian George Hay Forbes, Sir James Donaldson (Principal of the United College from 1886-1915) and Rev. Frederick Crombie (Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism from 1868-1889). A particular strength in Scottish church history is represented with the library of St Andrews historian David Hay Fleming (1849-1931).

Of course, the above brief synopses may serve to do no more than hide other collection strengths: a magnificent University archive (with one of the finest archives of medieval records of any European University) is an obvious source for the history of University education and many related subjects; the fine 15th and 16th century (and beyond) records of both the university itself and of the burghs of east Fife, including St Andrews, are rich sources for a wide range of topics; the decorative arts have hardly been mentioned; music, drama, architecture, local history – all of these and many more are well represented within these truly exceptional collections. The Special Collections Division will be delighted to discuss enquiries relating to research in any field of study.