50 years of FAUL

Celebrating the Friends’ 50th Anniversary

Welcome to a fresh look Friends’ News! We are delighted to be celebrating a special milestone this year - 50 years of FAUL - and we have some exciting events planned for this Golden Anniversary to extend our thanks to you, the Friends, for a half-century of support for Aberdeen University Library.

Friends are invited to a special celebration evening on 4 October, where a selection of the many rare books and documents which have been purchased with Friends’ help will be on display, and where the President of FAUL, author, journalist and award-winning public speaker, Jack Webster, will present From Maud to Manhattan – a wry retrospective of his career in writing. We look forward to seeing you there.
On 24 September we celebrated the official opening of the University library building - recently named The Sir Duncan Rice Library - by Her Majesty the Queen, accompanied by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

University students and staff were joined by hundreds of alumni and donors to the University for a day of celebration which also included a talk on the University’s treasures, an organ recital in the historic Chapel, tours of the library, and a dinner for over 300 friends and supporters of the University – several of whom had flown in from the USA and Hong Kong to be part of the historic occasion.

A new choral piece by Royal Wedding composer Paul Mealor and a unique ‘soundscape’ of library life by fellow University composer Pete Stollery featured during the formal opening. Her Majesty also viewed the original Papal Bull of 1495 which founded the University, and was presented with a posy of rare flowers from the University’s Cruickshank Botanic Gardens by two students from China.

Guests joining Chancellor Lord Wilson of Tillyorn and Principal, Professor Ian Diamond, for the opening ceremony included Sir Duncan Rice, former Principal of the University and in whose honour the spectacular new library has been named.

Lord Wilson of Tillyorn, Chancellor of the University of Aberdeen, said: “We are hugely proud and honoured to welcome Her Majesty The Queen to the University of Aberdeen for the formal opening of the Sir Duncan Rice Library. There is a very special resonance for the University community in this Diamond Jubilee year, being ten years since Her Majesty’s last visit in her Golden Jubilee year of 2002, which coincided with our hosting of the Scottish Parliament on the King’s College Conference Centre. This was another very happy, significant and memorable occasion.”
The £57million library provides an advanced learning environment in which the latest learning technology adds value to a magnificent collection of over one million books. In addition, adaptable spaces provide flexibility for individual study, group-working, seminars and meetings.

This ambitious project is the largest capital fundraising project yet undertaken by the University, and continues to receive generous support from alumni and private donors around the world, from companies in many sectors of business, and from charitable trusts local and national.

Professor Ian Diamond, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, said: “We are delighted and hugely honoured to be receiving this visit from Her Majesty in her Diamond Jubilee year. Our new library is not only a magnificent and inspirational building – it is a hugely important institutional and regional asset which will benefit students, scholars and our communities for decades to come, and a striking statement of the intellectual and cultural strength of our city and region.”

Chris Banks, University Librarian and Director of Library, Special Collections and Museums said “I’m thrilled that HM The Queen has officially opened The Sir Duncan Rice Library. This has been a wonderful opportunity for us to say thank you to all those who made the project possible, including our architects, all those within the University who worked so hard on the project, and to all our donors who so generously gave in support of the building. Since we opened our doors to students, researchers and the general public twelve months ago, we have had over 700,000 visits!”

Anne-Claire Deseilligny, President of the Aberdeen University Student Association, echoed Chris’s enthusiasm, adding: “This building is really special, and very attuned to what students need today. It’s modern and innovative, with great facilities for the way we study today. Our student community was very excited when we learned that Her Majesty was coming to officially open it for us.”

Conceived as a cube evoking the ice and light of the north, the library has a sharp, modern design, and a striking interior of sweeping contours around an asymmetrical atrium which rises diagonally from the ground floor through seven floors above, giving spectacular views of the Granite City and the North Sea.

Founding Partner of Danish architects schmidt hammer lassen, Morten Schmidt, said: “The University has been committed to creating a magnificent academic library for science and research, which would at the same time be open to the local community of Aberdeen. All through the process the University has made visionary decisions and supported the design of the building. This has had a positive impact on the final result we see today.”

Construction by main contractor Pihl UK began in September 2009 and was completed in summer 2011, following which library staff undertook a massive operation to move over 26 miles of the University’s book, archive and manuscript collection into the new building, much of which was from the Queen Mother Library, which has now been demolished.

In addition to the Foundation Bull of 1495 granted by Pope Alexander VI and the Foundation Book of 1514, her Majesty viewed a selection of treasures including Aberdeen’s greatest treasure the Bestiary which was compiled around 1200, the 15th century Burnett Psalter, Aberdeen Breviary from 1509/10, Robson’s Scenery of the Grampian Mountains showing a coloured aquatint of Lochnagar from 1819, and a print of George Washington Wilson print showing Balmoral Castle.

The Sir Duncan Rice Library is open 8am-10pm during weekdays for students, researchers and members of the public.

By the Communications Team, Office of External Affairs, University of Aberdeen, King’s College, Aberdeen. Tel: (01224) 272014.
On 26 November 1962 Dr Simpson wrote to Cosmo Gordon as first Chairman of the Friends, setting out his proposed arrangements for the press conference including his proposal to have an exhibition in the Senate Room of a number of the Library’s treasures.

(Cosmo Alexander Gordon was born at Ellon on 23 June 1886 and died at Insch on 9 May 1965. For his obituary see p.156 of Vol. XLI of Aberdeen University Review.)

On 30 November 1962 Cosmo Gordon replied enthusiastically to Dr Simpson and suggested that one of the treasures to be displayed should be Ramelli (A) Le Diversi et artificiosi machine, Paris, 1588 adding that: ‘the plates are all such as would appeal to intelligent but not bookish people. A copy was sold a month or two ago for £300 or £400. Ours is a splendid copy as no doubt you know’.

This suggestion seems to have prompted Dr Simpson to prepare a list of the possible items for display because he had written, in pencil, on the reverse of Cosmo Gordon’s letter.

The treasures on display for the first Friends

- Queen Mary document
- Prince Charles Edward letter
- Papal Bull of Foundation
- Bestiary
- Jerome
- Caxton
- Vaus
- Hebrew Bible
- History of Britain
- Raban
- Spalding M.S.
- Audubon
- Portuguese Atlas
- Ramelli
- Book of Kells
- Aberdeen Breviary

In their fifty-year history, the Friends have either bought or contributed towards the purchase of over 150 magnificent additions to our Special Collections and Museums. Highlighting just one or two items presents any of Aberdeen’s curatorial staff with a challenge, albeit a very pleasant one.

To select an acquisition from the Friends’ first decade, there is a copy of Petrus Apianus’s Astronomicum Caesarum, purchased in 1968. Among the numerous facsimiles the Friends have acquired for us over the years, this is a splendid reproduction from 1967, including illustrations in colour, of the 1540 original. Apianus (1495-1552) was born in Saxony, and after studying in Leipzig and Vienna served as Professor of Mathematics at the University of Ingolstadt from 1527 until his death. During a distinguished career, he produced a number of important works on navigation, cartography and astronomy.

Dedicated to the Emperor Charles V, the Astronomicum or ‘Emperor’s Astronomy’ stands out as a masterpiece in both the history of that science and of the art of printing. Issued only three years before the revolutionary work of Copernicus which displaced the Earth from the centre of the universe, it is a fascinating late expression of the older, geocentric or Ptolemaic, worldview.

The Astronomicum functioned as an instructive manual explaining the use of the astrolabe (for calculating the altitude of stars) and other instruments used for computing planetary positions. Only about 40 original copies of the Astronomicum survive.
Our facsimile includes reproductions of the original’s volvelles - some 21 figures with moveable disks fitted with circles and other measuring devices. These were intended as visual aids, designed to replace the calculations and tables that had proved impenetrable for many astronomers. Included is a beautiful reproduction of a rotatable star map. This shows the constellations inside and outside the line of the ecliptic in relation to the signs of the zodiac.

More recently, in 2008, the Friends helped buy the only copy in Scotland outside Edinburgh of a 17th century museum catalogue. Athanasius Kircher’s *Romani Collegii Societatis Jesu Musaeum Celeberrimum* was printed in Amsterdam in 1678.

Another true ‘Renaissance man’, Kircher (c.1601-1680), Jesuit scholar and author of over 40 books in his own right, collected many antiquities and ethnologically important remains. His assemblage became the foundation of a famous museum at the Roman College in Rome. The catalogue, the text of which is written by Giorgio de Sepibus, represents an inventory of the museum’s contents, and was compiled towards the end of the scholar’s long life. It is a wonderfully illustrated volume, reflecting the fact that Kircher’s museum encapsulated his full range of interests and distinctly eclectic, approach to knowledge. In addition to a frontispiece portrait, the catalogue includes curiosities of nature and images drawn from Kircher’s own work and inventions in such diverse fields as Egyptology (a subject of study he helped to pioneer and in which he was recognised as being the leading student of his day), geology, numismatics and magnetism.

Aberdeen’s reasoning for acquiring the catalogue is rooted in the antiquity of our own collections, not least our having amongst the oldest surviving university museums in the English-speaking world. Holdings in natural history and numismatics from King’s College were joined, from the 1780s, by scientific and astronomical equipment from Marischal College, our other forebear.

The emphasis within the *Musaeum Celeberrimum* on Egyptian artefacts in Rome, especially obelisks, relates closely to the University’s holdings of James Playfair’s designs for Cairness House, built for kinsmen of Lord Byron. The building has a central room in the Egyptian taste which most likely draws its decorative ‘hieroglyphics’ from Kircher.

We are very grateful to the Friends of Aberdeen University Library for their contribution to the acquisition of this catalogue, the *Astronomicum Caesareum* and much else over the course of their first half-century. Both these works, and many others, will on display at the Friends’ birthday party celebrations on 4 October.

By Keith M C O’Sullivan, Senior Rare Books Librarian

“... these works and many others will be on display at the Friends’ birthday party celebrations on 4 October”
### The first Friends

Reverting to the first Executive Committee meeting on 6 October 1962, the list of those elected to be the first holders of the various office was as follows:

- **President**
  - His Grace the Duke of Atholl

- **Vice-Presidents**
  - Major-General the Rt. Hon. Lord Arbuthnott C.B.E.
  - Sir Alexander Gray, C.B.E., LL.D.
  - Major Malcolm Hay, D.L., Alex.
  - Keith M.A.
  - Professor W.O. Kermack M.A., D.Sc., LL.D., F.R.S.
  - Sir Ian Forbes M.A., D.Sc. LL.D., F.R.S.
  - Professor W.S. Watt, M.A.

In the notes opposite, reference is made to the fact that the Friends came into being at a Joint meeting of the Library Committee and the Steering Committee held on 6 October 1962. A small Steering Committee had been set up comprising the Curator, the Principal, Mr Maurice Cramb, Professor Kermack, Mr Cosmo Gordon, the Librarian, the Deputy Librarian and three ex-Curators namely Professors Stephen, MacRitchie and Watt. The Steering Committee was then very active in drafting a proposed Constitution. In a very helpful entry of Library Notes at page 250 of Volume xxxix of Aberdeen University Review for 1961-62, Douglas Simpson advised that permission has now been received from the University Court to found a Society of Friends of Aberdeen University Library on the pattern of those at present in existence elsewhere. A Constitution has been drafted and has been submitted for approval by the University Court.

On 7 February 1962 Mr J. George, Assistant Secretary to the University, wrote to Douglas Simpson confirming that the Senatus Academicus had concurred in the provisions of the draft Constitution.

On 20 February 1962 Mr W. S. Angus, University Secretary, wrote to Douglas Simpson confirming that the Court had approved the proposed Constitution of FAUL but suggested that the words ‘Society of’ be not used as part of the title as the words ‘Society of Friends’ are associated with another body. Douglas Simpson confirmed that such suggestion would be accepted and that the Steering Committee would now be approaching suitable people for the posts of President and Vice-President. Without a doubt one of the Vice-Presidents would have been the then Principal, Sir Thomas Murray Taylor, who was always a strong supporter of the University Library and had been a member of the Steering Committee. Sadly he died on 19 July 1962. In his tribute to Sir Thomas, on page 298 of Vol. xxxix of the Review Douglas Simpson wrote, ‘I can also testify to the keen interest which the Principal displayed in the University Library which, during his term of office, has had its full share of the problems created by the combination of academic expansion with currency inflation. Above all he remained to the end a scholar. He was a frequent reader in the Library and, to the end of his days, he set aside, and firmly maintained a proportion of his time for general reading.’

By August 1962 Dr. Simpson had, with the help of Professor O’Dell as Chairman of the Library Committee, adjusted the terms of a formal appeal to all Graduates of Aberdeen University to contribute to, join and support a new body to be called the Friends of Aberdeen University Library.

On the 25 August 1962 Dr Simpson wrote to the Duke of Atholl at Blair Castle, explaining the background to the proposal to form FAUL, sending him copies of the drafts of the Constitution and the Letter of Appeal and inviting him to accept the office of President.

In his letter he wrote, ‘We, in the University Library here, are very conscious and highly proud of our connection with Blair Castle through the investigation that we are undertaking of your muniments and which we hope will, in due course, and subject to arrangement with yourself, result in an interesting series of published studies illustrating the history of a great Highland house and the economy and management of a great Highland estate. It therefore seems to us that it would be extremely appropriate if you were to consent to act as the President of the Friends...’

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### A history of the Friends

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of Aberdeen University Library.’ On 30 August 1962 the Duke of Atholl accepted the invitation and was to remain as President for the next twelve years.

A meeting of the Steering Committee was held on 19 September 1962 at which the following decisions were made.

1) A joint meeting of the Steering Committee and the Library Committee would be convened on 6 October 1962 for the purpose of setting up the body to be known as Friends of Aberdeen University Library.
2) The Business at that meeting would be the adoption of the Constitution and the election of the Office Bearers and Executive Committee.
3) It was remitted to the Executive Committee to arrange for a General Meeting off the Friends. The Steering Committee would then dissolve.
4) It was remitted to Dr Simpson to amend the draft Appeal as discussed and to write to those persons suggested for the Executive Committee and as Vice-Presidents.

The joint meeting was duly held on 6 October 1962 and the following decisions were taken.

1) The draft Constitution was formally adopted.
2) The President, Vice-Presidents, Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and other members of the Executive Committee and the Auditor were all elected as follows (see ‘The First Friends’ columns)
3) Matters relating to the Appeal and a Press Conference were remitted to the Executive Committee.
4) The Steering Committee was then formally discharged amongst votes of thanks all round.

Eo Die: There followed the first meeting of the Executive Committee with Cosmo A. Gordon in the Chair. The matters discussed, the style and content of the Appeal for members and funds, of which 15,000 copies were to be printed; the preparation for an information leaflet to be sent to various clubs and bodies; contact being made with all friends in America and all Honorary Graduates; a Press Conference to be held in November with all members of the Executive Committee attending. On a suggestion from Professor Kermack it was agreed that there should be incorporated in the Appeal, the following: ‘It is intended that at intervals a Newsletter will be sent out informing Friends of the latest developments and acquisitions in the library.’

No doubt the intentions of the Committee with regard to the Newsletters were good, but, the execution of those intentions was not. The first issue of the Newsletter of the Friends did not see the light of day for twenty years. Issue No.1 was produced in April 1983 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the first AGM.

The proposed Press Conference was also delayed, but only by one month. It was held on 10 December 1962 in the Senate Room (now the Old Senate Room) at King’s College. Among those invited were Harry Hogan of the Aberdeen office of the BBC, and Charles Smith of Grampian TV. Invitations were also sent to twenty-four local and national newspapers. The event was ‘trailed’ in the Evening Express of 27 November 1962 under the heading ‘Talks on aim of ‘Friends’.

The article intimated that some of the treasures from Aberdeen University Library would be on view at the press conference. (see pg 2)

By Graham Hunter, FAUL Chairman

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**The first Friends**

**Since 1962 he Offices of President, Chairman, Secretary and treasurer have been filled as follows:-**

**President**
- The Duke of Atholl 1962-1974
- Lord Tweesmuir 1974-1986
- Jack Webster 2001 - to date

**Chairman**
- Cosmo A. Gordon 1962-1965
- Alec Parkin-Moore 1965 -1973
- J.V.Skinner 1973-1987
- Roy H. Thomson 1987-2009
- Graham C. Hunter 2009 -to date

**Secretary**
- W.R. Macdonald 1974-1982
- Dorothy Johnston 1982-1986
- Mary Williamson 1986-1990
- Iain Beavan 1990-1998
- J. A. Stewart 1998-2001
- Carole Munro 2002-2004
- Christine Miller 2004-2008
- R. Armstrong Viner 2008-2010
- Sheona Farquhar 2010 –to date

**Treasurer**
- E. C. Finlayson 1962-1972
- N. S. Soane 1972-1973
- P. D. Lawrence 1973-2001
- Carole Munro 2001-2002
- Graham C. Hunter 2002-2010
- R. Armstrong Viner 2010-2011
- VACANT 2011 – to date
Visitor figures soar

In our first year of opening there has been a 52% increase in overall usage of The Sir Duncan Rice Library compared to the last year in the old Queen Mother Library. Over the year there has also been an increase of 202% in visits by non-members.

This very high number of external visitors - far beyond levels previously experienced, and on a sustained basis - represents not just the curious coming to have a look at the building when it opened (although the figures for October do show that there was a great deal of interest at this point) but also a huge boost in engagement with the wider public. The month-on-month figures show a sustained increase in use, but following more or less exactly the same pattern of usage to that made of QML the previous year.

Our hopes of greater outreach to the community have surely been exceeded by the number of visitors so far.

By Marion Blacklaw, Circulation Manager

Composing for Royalty: An Illustrated Talk

On Monday 19 March the Friends of the University Library and guests were welcomed to the Spring Meeting by the Chairman, Mr Graham Hunter. The Friends were privileged to have as the speaker Professor Paul Mealor, Professor of Composition in the University, who has had such a momentous year achieving worldwide acclamation through his compositions which have captivated so many millions.

Paul began by outlining his personal background and the influences on his later life. Born in 1975 at St. Asaph in North Wales he showed an early interest and aptitude for music. He composed a symphony at the age of nine, but confessed that its quality did not quite reach that of his later work! He received lessons in composition from William Mathias and John Pickard, sang as a chorister in church choirs, and learned to play the trombone which he played in brass and wind bands and orchestras.

A strong influence from Paul’s early years came from an experience when he was close to drowning with the realisation of the meaning of life and death and the Christian faith: entry to the priesthood was considered, but music was embraced as a surrogate. Significant musical influences included the symphonic structures of Sibelius, Mahler and Vaughan Williams, composers of the Tudor period such as Gibbons,
the Scandinavian composers Nørgård, Nordheim and Abrahamsen, and the American music of Randall Thompson and Morten Lauridsen. In November 2012 Paul received a phone call to inform him that HRH Prince William and Catherine Middleton had fallen in love with one of his compositions, ‘Now Sleeps the Crimson Rose’, and were considering it for performance at their forthcoming wedding, although his had be to kept secret.

The text of the piece, which had been commissioned originally by the John Armitage Memorial Trust for their Scottish tour, comprised four madrigals on the theme of a rose, the rose acting as a symbol for love in all its guises. It was the first movement that was chosen by the Royals for their wedding, but a request was made for some rewording as allusions in the text were considered to be too sensual for the church service. Paul turned to the words of the ancient Ubi Caritas for the text and this was approved by the Royal couple, becoming the only Latin used in the ceremony. Some alterations were made in the music including a key change to assist the treble voices and a part introduced for a treble solo. The music was duly performed at the Royal Wedding in Westminster Abbey in April 2011 and heard worldwide by some 2.5 billion people. A recording of the beautiful motet by the Tenebrae Choir was played to the Friends.

In the second part of his talk Paul spoke of his invitation later in 2011 by Gareth Malone to compose a new piece of music for a TV program ‘The Choir: Military Wives’ featuring the wives of serving soldiers. The wording of his composition was a poem constructed from extracts of letters written by the military wives and concluded by the passage from the Gospel According to St. John (15:13) ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’. The music composed in Paul’s cottage in Anglesey aimed to be a simple, lilting melody. The outstandingly successful outcome of the combined words and music, entitled from the start of the first line ‘Wherever You Are’, was premiered at the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance in the presence of HM The Queen at the Royal Albert Hall. Later in the year the song entered the UK Singles Chart as the Christmas No.1, selling 556,000 in the first week and contributing some £1 million to charity. A recording of the song was played to the Friends present.

The evening was concluded by words of thanks to Paul from Graham Hunter for an enthralling and inspirational talk, and this was endorsed by the appreciative audience.

By Professor Derek Ogston
The original minute book of the Friends runs from 20 October 1962 to March 15 1982. There were, and indeed still are, a number of items which regularly appeared, and appear, in the minutes of the Committee. One of the more unexpected ones used to be the production and sale by the Committee of Christmas cards in the aid of funds.

The first mention was in the minute of a meeting held on 30 April 1963 when it was recorded that “After a full discussion the committee decided that the Friends should produce a black and white Christmas card this year.” A sub-committee consisting of the Librarian, the Deputy Librarian, the Curator and the Chairman, Mr Cosmo A. Gordon, was formed to consider the choice of suitable illustrations. The accounts show that the profit that year for the Friends was £7:13:8d. The total number of sales and the profit gradually rose, with the average yearly profit for the period 1963-1981 being £154.

In 1976 it was recorded that the total number of cards sold was 8,854 and that the number of cards sold at the various sales points were:

- By post – 2,807
- King’s College Library Issue Desk – 3584
- King’s College Library Xerox Room – 750
- Medical School Library – 665
- Senior Common Room – 550

Unfortunately this entrepreneurial activity did not escape the eagle eye of H. M. Inspector of Taxes! In the accounts for each of the years from 1972 to 1978 there were debit entries in the profit and loss accounts for Corporation Tax which averaged £18 per annum. These debit entries stopped in 1979 but the records do not reveal whether this resulted from a successful negotiation with the Inspector of Taxes or from the fact that the Treasurer included any Corporation Tax liability amongst ‘Other Sundry Expenses’.

In the Autumn/Winter edition of the Friends’ Newsletter of 1994, the Hon. Treasures Dr Paul Lawrence, reminded readers that the two Christmas cards available through the Friends that year were both most attractive and on popular themes – a view of King’s College in 1887 by W.E. Lockhard, R.S.A. and a stained glass window from King’s College Chapel from a watercolour by V.E Davidson, showing two ‘musica’ angels.

Sadly, by the Autumn/Winter edition of the newsletter in 1996, a joint article by Iain Beavan, as secretary, and Paul Lawrence, as treasurer, revealed that earlier that year the Friends Committee had decided, very reluctantly, to stop selling Christmas cards on behalf of the Friends. Winter 1995/96 had seen the sale of 3,500 cards, resulting in a small financial loss. There was by then a surfeit of charity Christmas cards on the market and, although the cards were inexpensive at 30p each, the print runs were too small to be able to bring the price down further. It was therefore decided to stop selling the cards except old stock which was available for the Winter 1997/98 season.

By Graham Hunter, FAUL Chairman
Christmas Cards

Published by
The Friends of Aberdeen University Library

Reproduction of an engraving of King's College (c. 1830) by P. C. Auld

PRICE:
Colour, 8d. Black and White, 4d.

CHRISTMAS CARD PUBLISHED BY THE FRIENDS OF ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Marischal College quadrangle, 1881. From an oil painting by James Giles, R.S.A.
Colour only. Price 5p.

The greeting is:
WITH BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR

Christmas Card published by the Friends of Aberdeen University Library

Bridge of Balgownie, c.1850. From a painting by Michel Bouquet.

Colour only. Price 5p.

The greeting is:
WITH BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR

With thanks to Special Collections staff for assistance in finding these images from the archives
Many passing through the Old Aberdeen environs in recent years have been struck by the sight of the upward growth of the iconic glass-encased edifice, finally emerging as the new university library. Few, however, have yet had the opportunity to explore the interior of this remarkable and imaginative building which is now such a striking feature of the Aberdeen skyline.

On the evening of Tuesday 17 January, around 50 Friends of Aberdeen University Library took advantage of the invitation to a guided tour of the Library. On arrival they were welcomed by Chris Banks, the University Librarian, who provided a characteristically lucid introduction outlining a number of the major aspects of the new Library, including its welcoming, barrier-free entrance with a café. Many innovative and sophisticated features had been designed to enhance student learning, including spaces for collaborative working, provision for students with disabilities and the expansion of computer facilities. Their success has been underscored by the increased numbers using the Library since its opening. Greater access to groups from the wider community including schools, business and the church has been encouraged.

Following the introduction the Friends were divided into groups to visit parts of the Library under the guidance of a number of senior library staff.

A visit to the Gallery, which at the time housed the exhibition ‘Rebels with a Cause: the Jacobites and the Global Imagination’, previously shown at the Scottish Parliament, was hosted by Scott Byrne who also called attention to a programme of forthcoming exhibitions and events in the Gallery.

Siobhan Convery guided groups through the Special Collections Centre in the Lower Ground Floor, detailing its state-of-the-art conservation features for the preservation of the rare books and manuscripts and the scanning and photographic facilities, and spoke about the greater access to the University’s treasures. The Friends’ Room, gifted by the Friends of Aberdeen University Library, was included in this part of the tour.

Groups of a size aimed to minimize noise in the interest of students studying for examinations were escorted to a number of areas in the tower floors by Chris Banks, Laurence Bebbington, Wendy Pirie and Sheona Farquhar. Such facilities as the machines which enable easy and rapid withdrawal and return of books, meeting rooms, seminar rooms, quiet rooms and a unified journals area were pointed out. The visit to the seventh floor provided the spectacular and unforgettable sight of the open spiral core of the Library winding down to the Ground Floor. Nick Morrice manned the Print Shop before and after the tour where the newly published handsome Library Collection volume was available for inspection and purchase.

The meeting concluded with welcome refreshments and words of thanks to the library staff from Graham Hunter, Chairman, for providing such an enthralling and informative evening.
Unless you have been on the moon since January, you probably know that 2012 is the bicentenary of the birth of the novelist Charles Dickens. To mark this important cultural milestone, the Friends of Aberdeen University Library have joined forces with staff in the Library, University Events and the Centre for the Novel to run Dickens in 2012, a series of lectures and performances from May to November celebrating both the author’s work and the Library’s world-class collections related to all things Dickensian.

So, what better way to mark the Friends’ Annual General Meeting on Thursday 24 May than in Dickens’s own words? Reading aloud was a popular activity in the Victorian age, both within the family circle and beyond. Charles Dickens was not only a prolific writer; he was also an accomplished public performer. Ever interested in amateur dramatics, and always keen to treat family and friends to domestic readings of his new works, Dickens decided in 1858 to go public. For the last twelve years of his life, public readings of his works became an increasingly personal project, playing to packed houses up and down the country. He was a powerful stage presence, and poured much of himself into performances. Some even felt that the intense emotion and raw energy required for the ‘Sykes and Nancy’ scene in particular was partly responsible for hastening his death in 1870. Talking Dickens, therefore, was an effort to recreate the Dickens reading experience—thankfully without the fatal consequences.

Hazel Hutchison, Ali Lewis, Tim Tricker and Dan Wall, all members of the University’s English Department presented readings by and about Dickens. It’s not easy to condense any writer’s career into an hour and a half, especially not a writer as prolific and varied as Dickens, but the programme was as tightly packed as the theatre stalls at one of Dickens’s own performances: the famous opening and closing of A Tale of Two Cities; some sketches by Boz; the drinking scene from David Copperfield; that murder. The studious souls on the Library’s seventh floor spending their evening reading up for exams must have wondered what they were missing in the Craig Suite.

Talking Dickens also included responses to the novelist by other writers: George Orwell, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Henry James, all of whom fell under the Dickens spell, and thought long and hard about the qualities that make his work so compelling. As Virginia Woolf notes there is something extraordinary about Dickens’s ability to generate characters ‘who exist not in detail, not accurately or exactly, but abundantly in a cluster of wild and yet extraordinarily revealing remarks, bubble climbing on the top of bubble as the breath of the creator fills them’. We can’t help but visualise embellish them. In doing, she adds, Dickens makes ‘creators of us, and not merely readers and spectators’. This is perhaps the secret of the enduring appeal of Dickens’s fiction. It is hard to read it, without wanting somehow to join in, which is of course the fun of ‘talking’ Dickens.

By Dr Hazel Hutchison
With the fit out of the Glucksman Conservation Centre near completion, work has begun on a programme of interventive conservation. In the first instance this covers ‘first-aid’ treatment to some items from the rare books collection. Books have been selected on the basis of their condition: if there is a high risk that material might be lost, even with careful handling, and if this can remedied with an uncomplicated treatment, they are included in the programme. The work involves consolidation of degraded leather, reattaching loose end-bands and covering material, and repairing broken caps. Such procedures can be carried out relatively quickly, and so a large amount of material can be stabilised in a brief period.

Running in tandem with this is a cleaning and re-housing programme for recent archives acquisitions. Again, this is a remedial procedure with great benefits that will continue to run beyond the current bedding-in period. Later the programme of work will expand to encompass more comprehensive conservation treatment of priority items identified by special collections staff, and over the longer term a survey will be completed to identify wider conservation priorities within the collection.

Preparation of material for the recently opened *Pharmacopoeia* exhibition has also been a priority over the last few weeks: items have been documented in written and photographic form; plant specimens on loan from the University’s Herbarium have been secured and mounted; books have been cleaned and repairs undertaken; and a collection of custom-made book cradles have been made to provide tailored support for the openings selected for display.

In addition, the existing preventive programme of environmental monitoring and integrated pest management continues. Conservation policies and procedures in areas such as new acquisitions, exhibitions and disaster planning also continue to be refined as the centre embarks on this new phase of work to ensure that our collections are preserved for generations to come.

By Louisa Coles, Paper Conservator.

Prominently located opposite the Ground Floor entrance to the University Library, the Gallery is the primary venue for our ongoing programme of exhibitions showcasing many aspects of the University’s collections, and it is also one of the most accessible public areas of the new building. The Gallery is a dedicated space for presenting culture as expressed through visual art and the written word.

Since opening to the public on November 24th 2011, the Gallery has welcomed over 25,000 visitors during four ambitious exhibitions and an engaging public programme. Importantly, the Exhibitions Programme has enabled the exposure of rare and precious items from the Special Collections to a public audience in a substantial and meaningful way.

The Exhibitions Officer works closely with Learning & Outreach Officers at the Special Collections Centre to amplify the impact of the exhibitions to schools and community groups. The public programme enhances the exhibitions through publicly accessible talks and activities facilitated by academic staff and invited speakers.
Activities generally take place on Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons and have covered subjects such as the Polish heritage of Bonnie Prince Charlie, a short history of early photography and a substantial series of events marking the centenary of Charles Dickens, culminating in a talk by broadcaster James Naughtie on 11 October.

The inaugural exhibition at the Gallery, Rebels with a Cause: The Jacobites and the Global Imagination, had already received positive plaudits during a successful run at the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh before returning to Aberdeen in an expanded and slightly augmented version. The exhibition drew upon rarely seen and internationally significant material from the University’s collection, including rare engravings, portraits and letters, a Jacobite recruitment slip and songbook, a letter written while in exile by the ‘Young Pretender’ Charles Edward Stuart, a first edition of Sir Walter Scott’s novel Waverley and a selection of artefacts relating to the Jacobite Risings. The exhibition proved to be a popular success, with a diverse programme of events and talks attracting wide ranging audiences.

A selection of the glass plate negatives that form the substantial collections of George Washington Wilson and the Aberdeen Harbour Board produced a set of fine photographic prints that were exhibited by the Special Collections Centre at in Set in Silver: Contemporary Reflections on Glass Plate Photography. The fragile photographic plates are made from glass, with the image retained in a silver solution that rests delicately on the surface. Many thousands of the plates have been digitally scanned at the Special Collections Centre through a painstaking process which has resulted in the exposure of a special selection of prints for the first time to a contemporary audience.

Set in Silver incorporated a selection of films produced by students of the Film & Visual Culture course at the University of Aberdeen, introducing dynamic moving image elements to the exhibition. The films document a contemporary version of the scenes evident in the featured photographs. In this way, the viewer was able to observe the changes in the city and around the harbour area to the present day.

The third exhibition in the University Library’s Gallery was called Gilded Beasts: Exhibition of the Aberdeen Bestiary. The exhibition is an exquisite illuminated manuscript from the 12th-century, rendered in rich gold and magnificent colour. It is a work of extraordinary artistry and craftsmanship in which tales of animals are used to illustrate essential moral beliefs. The pages of this stunning book were turned every week so viewers could see a different section on each visit. The manuscript may only be exposed to minimum light levels for strict periods, making this exhibition a ‘once in a generation’ experience.

Most recently, and in celebration of the British Science Festival 2012, the Special Collections Centre produced Pharmacopeia: The Art of Making Drugs - an exhibition featuring rare and fascinating printed and manuscript material that demonstrates some of the earliest recorded interpretations of the natural sciences - a history of health. Illustrated and annotated, the documents explore the study of the medicinal qualities of plants in the treatment of disease, making links with contemporary scientific research and practice at the University of Aberdeen.

The production of exhibitions in the Gallery has encouraged the involvement of a wide range of academic staff and departments in diverse collaborations including the School of Language and Literature, the Geology Department, the Marine Biodiscovery Centre, the Kosterlitz Centre for Therapeutics as well as the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy. External collaboration has also been fruitful as evidenced through participation with Gray’s School of Art as part of the Set in Silver exhibition and with Peacock Visual Arts on a forthcoming exhibition. We have augmented two exhibitions with fabulous items from the collections of Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums. This is a useful collaboration which enhances the display of items from the Special Collection Centre and exposes items from local collections that would not have otherwise been displayed.

During the forthcoming year, the Exhibitions Programme plans to build on the success of its inaugural year with the production of three more dynamic exhibitions. We will also engage with a programme of Audience Development that will enable us to get to know our audiences better so that we can better meet their needs and surpass expectations.

By Scott Byrne, Exhibition and Programming Officer
Friends’ 50th Anniversary reception and talk

This special reception for Friends will be followed at 19:00 by a talk by Jack Webster, President of the Friends, and the chance to see a selection special collections items purchased by FAUL.

Thursday 4th October at 18:00, Craig Suite, 7th Floor, Sir Duncan Rice Library

RSVP by Monday 1st October to s.c.farquhar@abdn.ac.uk
Tel. 01224 273773

Pharmacopoeia exhibition

An exhibition of printed and manuscript material from our Special Collections exploring a history of health in association with the British Science Festival.
01 Sep - 17 Nov 2012
University Library Gallery

Food Stories exhibition

Explore the fascinating stories of what we eat and why through our Museum Collections
04 Sep 2012 - 26 Jan 2013
King’s Museum

King’s Museum Tuesday Lectures

September 2012 – January 2013

Successful Strategies to Healthier Eating Behaviours - 2 October, 7.30pm, New King’s 10, Free. Dr Clare Scott, University of Aberdeen: Rowett Institute of Nutrition and Health. Psychologist Dr. Clare Scott hosts an interactive lecture exploring social, cultural and emotional pressures that shape eating behaviour. With the Rowett Institute and King’s Museum Food Stories exhibition.

The Architecture of Society: recent work on the Iron Age of Caithness - 9 October, at 7.30pm in New King’s 10, Free. Dr Andrew Heald, Dr Graeme Cavers and Dr John Barber, AOC Archaeology Group. With the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

Journey of a Lifetime 18 October, at 6.30pm in MacRobert, Free.
A talk accompanying a photographic exhibition by Baroness Symons. The photographs on display were taken by HRH Princess Alice during a visit to Saudi Arabia in 1938. Please note: This lecture takes place on a Thursday, at an earlier time than usual Staff will guide visitors to the lecture hall in the MacRobert Building.

The Closet of Sir Kenelm Digby: cookery and science. 23 October, at 7.30pm in New King’s 10, Free. Professor Peter Davidson, University of Aberdeen. With the King’s Museum Food Stories exhibition.

Treasures from Tobar an Dualchais/the Kist o Riches 30 October, 7.30pm in MacRobert, Room 055, £3. Chris Wright, Tobar an Dualchais/University of Edinburgh. With the Elphinstone Institute.

Athens: the World’s First and Last Democracy. 6 November, at 7.30pm in New King’s 10, Free. Dr Peter Jones, retired lecturer in Classics at Newcastle University and co-founder, Friends of Classics and Classics for All..With the Scottish Hellenic Society.