THE FRIENDS OF ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Reception at Chanonry Lodge
Old Aberdeen
[opposite St Machar Cathedral]
on
Monday 20 June at 5.30 pm

The Principal of the University, Professor C Duncan Rice, has most graciously invited Friends, together with prospective Friends, to a Reception at his home in Chanonry Lodge, Old Aberdeen.

The Reception will allow us to hear the Principal and others involved speak on plans for a major new building phase for the University Library on the Old Aberdeen campus.

Friends will have read about this new Library Project in the last Spring/Summer Newsletter and may have been at last year’s June meeting when the then Librarian, Carole Munro, together with Professor Chris Gane, now Vice-Principal with responsibility for library and information services, talked to us on these developing plans. The Project is also the focus of the latest (March) edition of the University’s Aberdeen Magazine, where Professor Rice uses his foreword to emphasise the importance of the collections.

You are invited to bring a friend or friends as your guest/s and so introduce others to the work of the Friends. A form for you to complete and return is included with this Friends’ News. You and your friend/s will receive a personal invitation from the Principal in due course.

All Friends and their friends are most welcome

FRIENDS’ ACTIVITIES

Date for your Diary

THE FRIENDS OF ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

AGM and Spring / Summer Meeting

in

Old Senate Room
King’s College
Old Aberdeen

on

Thursday 9th June

7.00 pm - AGM

followed at approximately 7.30 pm by an illustrated talk:

The Collection:
Archives in the University Library

by

Siobhan Convery
Senior Curator, Historic Collections
University of Aberdeen

We hope, also, to have some of the items which the Friends have helped to purchase on show

All Welcome

Light Refreshments will be served after the meeting

The Friends of Aberdeen University Library
We are most indebted to Tom Hall, Deputy Librarian when Mike Smethurst was University Librarian, and subsequently Acting Librarian, who has kindly written a tribute covering the time that Mike was with Aberdeen University Library.

Mike’s contribution to the wider world of librarianship and the information arena was covered in the obituaries in the national press.*

During his time with us Mike Smethurst was, of course, also President of the Friends. He was always most supportive in this role, particularly in the formative years of our organisation, and the Friends flourished under his leadership and enthusiasm. He continued his interest and position up to 2001.

J Michael Smethurst, Librarian of the University of Aberdeen from 1972 to 1986, oversaw and to a great extent was personally responsible for the most striking developments in the University Library’s history.

When he came to Aberdeen, the Library’s methods of management were much as they had been left in 1926 by the then Librarian, P.J. Anderson, and were quite inadequate for a rapidly growing library and university. Mike Smethurst’s involvement with automation had begun when, as Librarian of the Institute of Education in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, he had been associated with a group active in this area there. Even so the issue system and catalogue which he found in Aberdeen must have presented a formidable challenge.

However after a great deal of planning, and an immense amount of detailed work by the staff, the Library acquired an automated issue system, and a catalogue which opened the way for the sophisticated versions later in use. Aberdeen was in fact one of the first university libraries to move to a microfiche catalogue, and the first to have both a full retrospective and current catalogue on microfiche. For a stock the size of ours - over a million items - this was an outstandingly ambitious project.

Although Aberdeen’s library methods were old fashioned it did have new buildings, and the old Library in King’s College had been substantially modified and extended. Nevertheless it was clear that no more could be done here and that further developments would have to be elsewhere; Mr H. Drummond, the previous Librarian, had already recognized this and initiated discussions on possible buildings on another site.

To persuade the University community that this was the way to go was no easy task for the Librarian, even when the funding body, the University Grants Commission, had accepted the implications for the Library of its own wish for the University. In the end Queen Mother Library was built, incorporating the then Science Library, and its opening in 1983 as an extended building was a fitting conclusion to Mike’s many years of preparation. He very kindly recalled the ceremony for Friends in an article for the Newsletter after the Queen Mother died.

All this was a remarkable achievement and would have been a lifetime’s work for most librarians. However, three years after the opening of Aberdeen’s new library, Mike Smethurst moved to the vastly greater problems of the British Library, for which his work has been recorded elsewhere.

Tom Hall
Deputy & Acting Librarian
1966–88

[* Official obituaries to Mike Smethurst appeared in various national newspapers including The Times, The Scotsman, The Daily Telegraph and The Independent (repeated in Update, the journal of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals). They understandably concentrated on his latter years at the British Library and we are grateful that Tom Hall was able to give us a perspective on Mike’s time at Aberdeen.]

Many of you will be familiar with the earlier Dictionary of National Biography and its various Supplements. The case for revising it built up over the 20th century and last year it came out in a new edition in 60 volumes, together with an Index of Contributors volume. It is now the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. For the first time the new publication includes illustrations – 10,000 images for nearly 20% of the entries, and more than 20% of the 54,000 biographies are now of women.

This new edition, and the earlier set, are in Queen Mother Library Ground Floor Reference Collection at the shelfmark: Gen Ref 920.042 Dic 2


Oxford Dictionary of National Biography contribution for Dr W Douglas Simpson from Tom Hall

Those of you who know Tom Hall and his particular interests will not be surprised to learn that he has spent much of his time since...
Top Library Management Changes

In March, Carole Munro, Honorary Secretary of the Friends until December 2004 and Librarian and Manager of Library Services, left the University of Aberdeen to take up a new post as Director of Knowledge and Information Services at the Robert Gordon University.

Carole arrived at the University of Aberdeen as Library Services Manager in 1998 and following the retirement of Colin McLaren in August 1999 was appointed to the post of Librarian and Manager of Library Services. Carole’s time at the helm of Library Services has seen many changes and she has had a leading role in plans for new library build in Old Aberdeen.

We thank her for her work on the Friends’ Executive Committee, both as Honorary Secretary and previously as Honorary Treasurer, and wish her well in her new post.

Meantime, Wendy Pirie has taken on the role of Acting Librarian & Manager, Library Services. Wendy is a long standing and highly experienced member of Directorate staff. She has a long association with the Medical Library, in particular, and her most recent post has been as Information Consultant for Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. We welcome Wendy to her new post and to Friends’ Executive Committee meetings in her new capacity.

Library Moves

In June 2005 the Education Library at Hilton Campus will close. The past year has seen older and duplicated Education Library material being removed from the shelves and sold. In the next few months the remaining material from Education Library will be moved to Queen Mother Library.

To create the necessary space needed to successfully move the Education Library material into Queen Mother Library, library staff are currently identifying and moving print journal parts that are also available electronically to offsite storage. Soon after that will follow the relegation of some less used monograph materials to a new local library store and internal moves within QML.

A busy summer of library stock moves and catalogue updates is ahead.

William MacGillivray - Aberdeen’s forgotten artist and naturalist

Thirty-five members of the Friends of the Library and their guests gathered in the Zoology Building on the evening of Thursday 10 March to hear Robert Ralph (previously Curator of the Zoology Museum) present an enthralling account of the remarkable life of the Old Aberdeen naturalist William MacGillivray.

MacGillivray, an illegitimate child born in 1792, was brought up on his uncle’s farm on Harris, but returned to Aberdeen to study for a general degree at King’s College.

Later he walked the whole distance to London, even taking a circuitous route including Ben Nevis. This culminated in the study of the bird collection in the British Museum, resulting in his resolve to be an ornithologist.

William MacGillivray’s work on birds was closely linked with the American naturalist and artist John James Audubon who painted all the known species of North American birds in the early 19th century, his paintings notable for setting the bird illustrations in a natural setting.

Audubon travelled to Europe in search of patrons and a publisher for his paintings and met MacGillivray in Edinburgh around 1830. MacGillivray was subsequently responsible for much of the text which accompanied the paintings in Audubon’s The Birds of America.

MacGillivray was himself a prolific author and artist, producing over 200 paintings of birds, mammals and fish. Dr. Ralph illustrated his talk with a number of reproductions of both Audubon and MacGillivray’s paintings.

MacGillivray returned to Aberdeen on his appointment to the Regius Chair of Natural History at Marischal College where he continued his natural history studies together with teaching, emphasising the importance of fieldwork to his students.

Professor Ralph was thanked by Roy Thomson for providing such an informative and entertaining evening.

After an interval for refreshments Friends had the opportunity to visit the Zoology Museum which was founded by William MacGillivray. A plaque and the portrait of MacGillivray shown here, recently donated by his descendants in Australia, adorn the walls.

Professor Derek Ogston
THANKS TO YOU …

New Developments in Aberdeen University Library Buildings

At our Autumn / Winter meeting in November Friends agreed to guarantee £100,000 towards the Principal’s request for assistance with the new Library building developments. The bulk of this does, of course, come from the very handsome bequest to the Friends from Lewella Keith, wife of the late Alexander Keith, in 1998.

We are immensely proud to be able to contribute in this way to the University’s ambitious and exciting plans, which demonstrate its future commitment to the Library. Those of you who have been Friends for any length of time will know that this project has been in the pipeline for quite some time and we are all highly encouraged to see that it should now come to fruition over the next few years.

The Friends have also indicated that there may be more financial help from us, assuming there are guarantees from the University and appropriate acknowledgement of the Friends’ contribution. However, we will, of course, ensure that we always retain enough funds to carry on the work we have been able to do in the last few years.

In the latest issue of the University’s Aberdeen Magazine the Principal writes, “At the moment the library is our priority principally because the challenge of housing and using our special collections coincides with the desperate needs of our student body for better reading and studying facilities.

The impact of building a new library will also strengthen our visibility by making a statement about what we think important, and our competitiveness by meeting the needs of the students and staff we have here and would like to have here.”

We hope you will all be as pleased as we are by this flagship project of the University’s Sixth Century Campaign.

Friends of Aberdeen University Library

Executive Committee

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Mr Jack Webster

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Mr Roy H Thomson

Honorary Treasurer
Mr Graham Hunter

Honorary Secretary
Miss Christine A Miller

Members
Miss Sheona C Farquhar
Professor Trevor Salmon
(Chair Library Users’ Committee)
Professor Michael C Meston
Professor Bill Nikolaisen
Professor Derek Ogston
Mrs Wendy Pirie
(Acting Librarian)
Miss Eilidh M Scobbie
Mrs Helen Stevenson

Reminder … Friends on the Web

Friends Web site

http://www.abdn.ac.uk/diss/friends

QML, Taylor and the Medical Library

Monday - Saturday 9.00 am - 10.00 pm
(all close at 8.00pm on Fridays)
Sunday 11.00 am - 10.00 pm

Special Libraries
Monday - Friday 9.30 am - 4.30 pm

The Friends of Aberdeen University Library

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