

# LEARNING AND OUTREACH POLICY

## 1 Purpose

The Special Collections Centre holds a wealth of archive, manuscript and printed material that has the power to inspire learning at all levels, from academic to early years. The aim of the Learning and Outreach team is to create opportunities for people to enjoy using the collections for learning, by encouraging unique and meaningful interactions with the rich historical material that provoke thought, increase knowledge and inspire creativity.

This Learning and Outreach team aims:

- to provide a learning service for schools by offering collections-based resources and workshops that support the *Curriculum for Excellence*
- to create exciting public programmes to accompany the exhibitions that include both scholarly and popular interpretations of the exhibition themes, and place emphasis on interactivity
- to maximise the opportunities provided by local and national campaigns and festivals to offer a broad programme of events for a variety of ages and learners
- to work with external partners where appropriate to develop bigger scale and/or longer term learning projects than is possible within the core learning programme provision
- to increase the audience for the Special Collections, both building on existing audiences and developing new ones
- to utilise social media to increase awareness of both the collections and the learning programmes, both to local audiences and further afield
- to carry out ongoing and after-event evaluation with a view to understanding audience needs and expectations, and meeting those needs and expectations where possible
- to contribute to the development of archives/manuscripts/rare books learning and outreach as a wider profession and public provision, beyond the confines of the Special Collections Centre.

## 2 Facilities and resources

Situated within The Sir Duncan Rice Library, the Special Collections Centre has a Seminar Room and a Learning Room which provide visitors of all ages with dedicated spaces to learn more about the collections through seminars, workshops and educational activities. The adjacent Glucksman Conservation Centre carries out vital preservation and conservation work enabling wider access to these collections. The Centre also runs a rolling programme of exhibitions in the Gallery on the ground floor of the Sir Duncan Rice Library, and holds informal learning and public engagement events in the adjacent Events Space.

The Learning and Outreach team consists of a Learning and Outreach Officer who, together with the Exhibitions Officer, co-ordinate public engagement initiatives within the Special Collections Centre. The Learning and Outreach team is also supported by a small pool of volunteers who help both with the preparation of resources and the delivery of public events.

## 3 Types of provision

The Special Collections Centre provides a variety of collections based events designed to address different audiences' needs and learning styles. Current provision includes:

- Primary school workshops which support the *Curriculum for Excellence*
- Resources and material to support secondary school teaching (currently on an *ad hoc* basis)
- Family Fun events (informal creative workshops)
- Exhibition talks
- Interactive resources as part of the exhibitions programme in the Gallery
- Interactive adult workshops (e.g. bookbinding)
- Festival-style series of events as part of larger city and university-wide events and national campaigns (e.g. May Festival, Book Week Scotland)
- Annual Flash Fiction Competition for writers of all ages, world-wide

As part of the wider team, the Learning and Outreach Officer works closely with the Exhibitions Officer to provide an integrated and cohesive public exhibitions programme. The team also works in close collaboration with other departments within the Special Collections Centre.

The Learning and Outreach team frequently works with external partners where appropriate to provide exciting and innovative learning opportunities, in addition to the core programme.

#### **4 Audiences**

Since the launch of the Learning and Outreach programme in January 2012, the Special Collections Centre has built up a core audience of local primary schools, families with children aged 3-11 years, and adult audiences who attend exhibition talks and interactive workshops such as bookbinding.

Other audiences which currently engage with the Special Collections on a less regular basis, and which should be addressed in coming years, include:

- Students (for informal events)
- Secondary schools
- Other community groups, including special interest groups

#### **5 Evaluation**

Evaluation is integrated into the Learning and Outreach programme at all stages of planning and delivery, and involves both self-reflection and audience feedback, as well as statistical analysis. The programme is constantly evolving as a result of the evaluation process and is able to build on its own successes and adapt to new practices and structures where necessary, and where possible within the constraints of location, budget and resources.

#### **6 Development of learning and outreach**

The Special Collections Centre is committed to exploring innovative ways of using and interpreting archives and rare books collections for learning, and to contributing to the development of education as a whole, beyond the confines of the University. The Special Collections Centre has taken part in best practice project research with the Scottish Council for Archives, and the Learning and Outreach Team sit on the committee for the Archives and Learning Section of the Archives and Records Association (ARA). Staff actively identify and pursue opportunities for increasing their skills set in interpreting the collections to different audiences, and contribute where possible and appropriate to conferences, training days and journals.

#### **7 Responsibility and Review**

This policy has been approved by LSC&M Senior Management Team in January 2017 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.