
SMC response to “Breaking Through the Walls: a draft strategy for the National Library of Scotland”

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The Scottish Museums Council (SMC) is the principal avenue for Scottish government support to, and the membership organisation for, Scotland's 340 non-national museums and galleries. SMC combines strategic leadership for the sector, developing national policies and initiatives with the distribution of grants, practical advice and services for members.

SMC welcomes the opportunity to comment upon the National Library of Scotland's (NLS) draft strategy. Overall, the strategy gives a positive view of the way forward for NLS and at the same time takes into account the practical considerations.

1. Vision and Mission

It's very useful to have such a clear statement of NLS's mission, core values and principal functions. You can see at a glance what the organisation's priorities are and what areas of work it covers.

2. Collections

It is very encouraging to read in the strategy that NLS plans to work closely with stakeholders in order to fulfil its collections related aims, e.g.

- development of collection policies where gaps currently exist
- development of a national collection strategy for local Scottish materials
- implementation of the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003.

NLS also demonstrates a forward-looking stance, particularly regarding the collection and preservation of electronic resources. It will be beneficial to other bodies involved in collecting and/or preserving this type of material to have a national body leading on this area of work.

It is not clear what the strategy means by “the development of a distributed national lending collection”. The National Audit of Museums and Galleries in Scotland highlighted that there is a distributed national collection in terms of museums. In this case, a distributed national collection means that objects of national or international significance are distributed throughout the nation in non-national museums. Is the strategy referring to items held by NLS or non-national

libraries which have national significance? Do the items in the distributed national lending collections have to be available for loan to members of the public or only other libraries? It would be helpful to have this clarified.

3. Access

NLS is to be commended on making a commitment to ensure that the library is an accessible source of information, for all sectors of the community. The use of stakeholders in the development of accessible services demonstrates that NLS is keen to provide services that really do address access needs.

4. Consultation and relationships with users and other stakeholders

Again, the use of stakeholders in the consultation process about current and potential users demonstrates that NLS views itself as part of the community, and sees the importance of user opinions.

5. Partnerships and collaboration

It is very encouraging to see a clear statement of intent regarding working with partners, and that this includes learning, cultural and heritage organisations as well as libraries. Also, NLS's support for key political and social priorities, such as, access to education, enterprise and economic development, and lifelong learning.

6. Organisational development

The strategy gives a positive view of NLS's future development in terms of organisational standards, staff development and funding and revenue generation.

7. Infrastructure

NLS clearly recognises the need for a robust infrastructure to support the plans outlined in the strategy. This is not only in terms of ICT but also the library buildings.

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Scottish Museums Council

County House 20/22 Torphichen Street Edinburgh EH3 8JB

Tel 0131 229 7465 Fax 0131 229 2728

E-mail inform@scottishmuseums.org.uk

Web <http://www.scottishmuseums.org.uk>

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