

Redefining our collections and collection management

Conan Doyle archived
As part of a new programme to safeguard the country's literary archives, the Library secured the core of the Conan Doyle collection by bequest and purchase during the year.



Illuminations online
Our Digital Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts was launched with the support of a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It will ultimately give access to all 10,000 of the Library's medieval and Renaissance illuminated manuscripts, including virtually unknown masterpieces.



Shakespeare in Quarto
Scholars and playgoers can compare and contrast the earliest editions of the Bard online. We've digitised all our 93 Quarto editions of 21 plays printed before the closure of the theatres in 1642, with detailed notes and interpretations to suit different audiences.

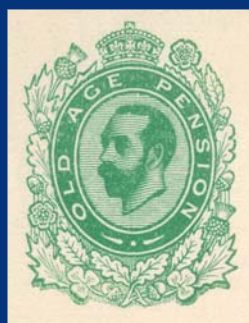


Multivocal Africa
Marion Wallace is the Library's first curator for sub-Saharan Africa. Her appointment has been made in response to the growing interest in the cultures and languages that make up multivocal Africa. Marion is promoting greater accessibility to our extensive African publications and recordings.

* 'New technology'
Regional dialect recordings are on the *Collect Britain* website. Users can hear how accents and word use change in recordings made in the same regions in the 1950s and '90s. Richard Hudson FBA, Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at UCL, says 'the Library is ahead of the world in providing such a wonderful resource'.

'new-fangled tackle'

Stamp duty
HM Customs and Excise presented us with Government revenue stamps spanning 1827 to 1933. They include Table Water Duty, Medicines, Entertainment Allowances and Pensions, and will be of great value to social historians at all levels.



Digital and electronic media account for an increasing proportion of the three million items added to the British Library's collections every year. They are being collected and preserved as expertly as the books and manuscripts that the Library has cared for over the centuries.

The popular image of the British Library is that we receive a copy of every book published in the UK. But today's acquisitions include a wealth of digital and electronic material, ranging from interactive media to websites.

'There is such a huge explosion of electronic material available now,' says Richard Masters, Manager of the National Digital Library programme. 'The critical thing is to ensure we can guarantee that people in 100 years' time will be able to look at it. During the year we laid the foundations for the preservation of our digital collections for the long term.'

The National Digital Library programme is developing technical solutions ready for the implementation of new legislation requiring digital publishers to deposit material with the Library (the Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003). A pilot project, run on a voluntary basis with publishers of academic electronic journals, has been set up to help inform the process by which Government will eventually bring forward Regulations under the Act.

Scientific, technical and medical (STM) journal publishers have been the first to migrate the majority of their titles to the web. For our STM research users, the long-term access to the record of science that the National Digital Library will provide is critical. The Government recognised this in its *Science and Innovation Investment Framework 2004-2014*, and the Office of Science and Technology has now brought

together a working party which includes the Library to scope the UK digital research infrastructure.

New collaborative projects are also underway to ensure that material from websites of national, cultural or topical importance is collected and preserved. The Library is the lead partner in the UK Web Archiving Consortium, and technology is being developed through the International Internet Preservation Consortium.

The Library has already set up its own infrastructure for this. 'The progress we have made in web archiving has been a significant achievement in a complex, innovative area,' says John Tuck, Head of British Collections. 'We're now harvesting websites, which we'll retain for future generations.'

However, alongside the leading edge work with digital formats, the popular image of the Library

still holds true. We receive a copy of everything substantial published in the UK and purchase extensively from publishers around the world; the volumes in print continue to grow at an awesome rate. To help us deal efficiently with this hybrid world in which print and digital information mix freely, we've launched the Integrated Library System to bring together back office processes and streamline the acquisition and cataloguing of electronic and printed items.

'The new system is allowing us to cut processing times for the different types of incoming material,' says Caroline Brazier, Head of Collection Acquisitions and Description. 'It also gives us a single public interface - our new Integrated Catalogue - which covers a vast proportion of the Library's printed materials. It's a major step towards providing users with a unified access point

that will give an overview of everything we hold, including newspapers, sound and manuscript materials.'

Since September 2004 the Integrated Catalogue has been available to web visitors as well as Reading Room users. 'The Integrated Catalogue is having a big impact and usage is high at 1.6 million searches by external users a month,' says Adrian Arthur, Head of Web Services Delivery. 'It's not only brought information together in one place but also improved usability by providing a more intuitive interface. With such a huge international audience for our catalogues, clarity and ease of use are critical to success.'