

# Gaelic gone digital at the National Library

✘ An online collection of Gaelic literature is proving to be a big hit, clocking up hundreds of thousands of downloads since its launch.

The National Library of Scotland has spent the past two years digitising 434,000 pages from its Early Gaelic Book Collection.

Since the site was completed in October it has proved to be a huge success attracting 323,000 downloads with the Archaeologica Britannica, documenting the histories and customs of the original inhabitants of Great Britain, receiving the most clicks.

The Early Gaelic Book Collection includes 1,800 books in Gaelic and other Celtic languages, as well as works about the Gaels, their languages, literature, culture and history.

Lee Hibberd, Digitisation Manager at the National Library of Scotland, said: "Digitising the collection is a fantastic way of keeping the language alive and bringing it to a modern audience.

"The collection is also culturally very important not only for its content but for those who created it. Individuals such as Angus Matheson, the first Professor of Celtic at Glasgow University and Hew Morrison, the first City Librarian of Edinburgh proved to be pivotal figures in Gaelic literary history."

Digitised items also act as a preservative, offering a surrogate version for Library staff to access, limiting wear and tear on the originals. Films and sound recordings stored on perishable mediums, such as reel-to-reel tapes, also

benefit from digitisation.

When the project to digitise the 1,800 book collection began in September 2008, the Library's largest online project contained 7,000 images. The Early Gaelic Book Collections contains 60 times that number from the collections of five Scots including the aforementioned academics, Lady Evelyn Stewart Murray, John Francis Campbell of Islay and J. Norman Methven.

Lee Hibberd added: "Digitisation is a wonderful way to bring the content of the National Library to people in the comfort of their homes. We have had online visitors from four of the five continents and you never know someone in Antarctica may have an, as yet undiscovered, interest in Gaelic literature."

For more information on what documents are available online visit the National Library website: [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk) 'The Early Gaelic Book Collections' can be viewed at <http://digital.nls.uk/pageturner.cfm?id=75733573>

The National Library of Scotland recently put its draft Gaelic Language Plan out for consultation prior to its submission to Bòrd na Gàidhlig at the end of July. NLS' draft Gaelic Language Plan is available at [www.nls.uk](http://www.nls.uk) and responses are welcome. These should be sent to Paul Hambelton at NLS, by email [p.hambelton@nls.uk](mailto:p.hambelton@nls.uk) or post to Paul Hambelton, National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1EW no later than 8th July 2011.