

Ian Rankin gifts his archive to Scotland

The UK's biggest-selling crime novelist, Ian Rankin, has donated his literary archive to the National Library of Scotland. We know he was moving house recently, and may need some room in his new pad, but seriously, this is an important gift of material from which he has created his novels over the years.



Ian Rankin in conversation with and National Librarian, John Scally. PHOTO | Neil Hanna Photography

Ian Rankin's work has resonated with millions throughout the world – with his novels translated into 36 languages.

Totalling around 50 boxes of material, which in shelving terms is more than 21 feet, the archive includes typescripts of manuscripts with handwritten annotations and notes by the

author. Also included is correspondence with literary figures such as J.K. Rowling, Iain Banks, Ruth Rendell, Val McDermid and Jilly Cooper, as well as figures from across the political and cultural spectrum. Not surprisingly, police officers feature regularly in correspondence.



Ian Rankin holding one of his early manuscripts surrounded by some of the 50 boxes donated. PHOTO Neil Hanna Photography
Described by Rankin as “a pretty complete author’s life,

late-20th century-style”, the archive material dates from 1972–2018.

National Librarian Dr John Scally welcomed Ian Rankin to the Library today. He said: “Ian Rankin is a well-known face to us here at the National Library. We knew him when he was researching Muriel Spark as part of his PhD, and we knew him when he penned his first novels here in our very reading rooms. Little did we know then just how successful he was to become, and that in time, his archive would be as gratefully received as Spark’s. It will be preserved into perpetuity alongside other Scottish literary giants.

“Rankin’s main protagonist, John Rebus, has walked George IV Bridge many times, and frequently visited this very Library while researching cases. We are honoured to be a character in the Rebus novels alongside the city of Edinburgh, and we feel this is the rightful home for Ian’s archive. Because of his generosity, readers will be able to gain insight into the creative process of this wonderful writer.”



Ian Rankin in conversation with and National Librarian, John Scally. PHOTO | Neil Hanna Photography
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Ian Rankin said: “I remember that in my first week as a

postgraduate student we were given a tour of the National Library of Scotland, including access to the basement levels. Those vaulted underground corridors would reappear in the climactic scenes of my first Rebus novel. The Library has seemed like a friend ever since, so it seems fitting – as well as a thrill and an honour – that my archive should find a permanent home there.”

The National Library also announced that it will recruit a curator to catalogue and promote the Ian Rankin archive.