Highlights
October - December 2017
The Black Chair: From Birkenhead to Trawsfynydd

A century after the chaising ceremony at the Birkenhead Eisteddfod in September 1917, the Library’s Education Service delivered a series of workshops that followed the journey of the Black Chair from Birkenhead to Trawsfynydd, working with schools on Merseyside and across north Wales. This work was delivered as part of the ScottishPower Foundation funded Hedd Wyn Education Project. To celebrate the success of the project the ScottishPower Foundation commissioned a film installation that was beamed onto the National Library of Wales building at the end of the week leading up to Remembrance Sunday.

35,000 names in the Book of Remembrance transcribed

In a project jointly delivered by the Library and Wales for Peace, volunteers completed the enormous task of transcribing about 35,000 names listed in the Welsh National Book of Remembrance. The Book, which is kept at the Temple of Peace in Cardiff, contains names of those who fell while serving in the Armed Forces during the First World War.

The digital version of the Book is now available for all to see on the Library’s website, and it has now been made searchable as a result of the volunteers’ work.
Over the summer the National Screen and Sound Archive for Wales contributed to a lovely programme called ‘Wales’s Home Movies’ which was broadcast on BBC Wales on October 15. A number of examples of family and community films were shown, together with interviews with people who appeared in the films, who shared their memories of the events which had been captured. Following the showing of the film, the Archive acquired a number of home movies and will acquire copies of interviews with the families involved.

LENS 2017 celebrated the richness of photography in Wales, with presentations by a range of speakers, local, and from further afield. It included images of landscapes and people, with fascinating anecdotes and photographs documenting community life. Will Troughton, the Library’s Photographic Librarian, spoke about the new accessions, including the work of Guy Hughes who worked in Pwllheli from around 1910 to the 1940s. The thousands of glass negatives were sent to us from his family in Australia.

The Library’s volunteers have been assisting with the development and testing of the Library’s new crowdsourcing platform on crowd.library.wales. This platform will help the Library to engage with online volunteers throughout Wales and increase digital access to our collections through tagging items and images with searchable data and transcribing handwritten documents. The first collection to be published on the platform is the Cardiganshire First World War Tribunal records, the tribunals that dealt with appeals against conscription to the armed forces on personal, economic, moral or religious grounds. We are asking volunteers to help us transcribe these records and make them searchable, and therefore more accessible to researchers. The project is supported by The Heritage Lottery Fund and includes working with community groups across Ceredigion. Who Do You Think You Are? magazine has chosen The Cardiganshire Great War Tribunal Appeals Records as one of five projects that will feature as part of Transcription Tuesday on Tuesday, January 23rd, 2018.

Crowdsourcing – An opportunity to volunteer at the tip of your fingers, wherever you are in the world

LENS Photography Festival

Wales’ Home Movies
Access to audio-visual material for the first time in our Reading Rooms

A new service is now available to our users in the Reading Rooms, which is the new Digital Screen and Sound catalogue. This is an interface which allows users to search and view/listen to a large number of our digital audio-visual resources, including items from the ITV collection, our film archive, and television and radio programmes recorded digitally over the past few years.

This is a hugely exciting development which offers vastly improved access to these varied and valuable collections, and which opens a new world of possibilities for both entertainment and research. New content is added daily, from old films that have been digitised to the latest television programmes. Due to copyright restrictions, the catalogue is only available within the Library, and at our special site in Cardiff University. The interface is currently in a Beta version, so we welcome all feedback on the catalogue and its content.

Our collections on tour

We loaned our watercolour of Aberdulais Mill by JMW Turner to the Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art in Japan as part of the Turner and the Poetics of Landscape exhibition. This exhibition, organised by the National Galleries of Scotland, will tour to 4 premier arts venues across Japan in 2017/2018.

Also over the past year the following items have been on tour, although much closer to home!

A variety of items to Kelmscott Manor, the 16th century Cotswolds retreat of William Morris

Dylan’s ‘Y Story’ along with his doodles in The Dylan Thomas Centre

100 photographs on the theme of agriculture on display in the Assembly Members’ corridors at Tŷ Hywel

Items for the 40 Years of the Drovers Roads of Wales at MOMA, Machynlleth

Items to The Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea for The Moon and a Smile exhibition about Swansea’s leading role in photography experimentation

Individual items in the office of Y Llywydd at The National Assembly and Y Ganolfan Geltaidd

A version of the Arthur and Welsh Mythology exhibition, which was delivered as part of the Library’s contribution to the Welsh Government’s Year of Legends theme, will travel to Wrexham Museum during the second half of 2018.

Yny lhyvyr hwnn

Over 1,100 volumes from the rare book collection have now been scanned, including Yny lhyvyr hwnn, the first book printed in Welsh and Y Drych Cristianogawl the first book to be printed in Wales.
Donate towards the Nation’s Memory: The Collection Fund

We recently launched the Library’s Collection Fund, which is an exciting opportunity for individuals, societies or companies to make occasional or regular giving by direct debit or one-off donation. The donations will be invested in order to earn income and it is this income which will be available to be spent on new items of national importance and significance for the collections. The Collection Fund will be a substantial resource for the Library’s collecting work and will do so in a prudent way that will safeguard our work in the future.

The Library increases medical information available in the Welsh language

The Wici-Iechyd project, which is led by the Library with the support of the Welsh Government’s Welsh Language Unit, and in collaboration with Y Gymdeithas Feddygol, the charities Meddwl and the Lung Foundation, WJEC and Wikimedia UK to increase substantially the number of articles on subjects relating to health and the life sciences that are available on the Welsh language Wicipedia. The first of four edit-a-thons was held in Cardiff on 7 December, and three others will be held in the New Year.

A Welsh journalist’s experience of the Great Famine in the Ukraine

A delegation from the Ukrainian Embassy to the United Kingdom visited the Library to see Gareth Jones’ papers, the Welsh journalist who is widely respected in the Ukraine due to his reporting of the Great Famine or Holodomor (1932-33). His papers include diaries of his visit to the Ukraine in which he described the famine. The diaries, which describe the terrible conditions in the Ukraine during the Holodomor were the basis of Jones’ articles on the subject and also detail his ‘Around the World’ Tour, his visit to Germany in 1933 and his meeting with Hitler.
International Digital Preservation Day

The first International Digital Preservation Day was celebrated on 30 November. In order to celebrate the occasion, the first national digital preservation policy was published by the Archives and Records Council Wales. This policy, with its associated technical appendix, was prepared to assist with the considerable strategic challenges faced by organisations in Wales in permanently preserving digital material.

Gender, Power and Knowledge

This year’s Welsh Political Archive annual lecture was titled ‘Gender, Power and Knowledge in the Welsh Academy’. The annual lecture was delivered by Professor Teresa Rees, Emeritus Professor in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University. She spoke of the issue of gender in academia and politics, mainstreaming equality and unconscious bias. She also looked at bad and good practice, with examples from Wales, Europe and other parts of the world.

Securing Conservation Skills for the Future

Many congratulations to Huw Bonner who has successfully passed the Archives and Records Association assessment process to become a seal curator. Huw proved his knowledge and ability in the field before a panel of conservation experts in King’s College, London, in November. Huw’s achievement will reinforce the specialist skills and the high reputation of the Conservation Section and re-establish the National Library as a training centre.
Joining the IIIF Consortium

The Library was recently delighted to join the prestigious International Image Interoperability Framework Consortium (IIIF-C) as a founding member. The IIIF Framework is being widely adopted by cultural institutions for the hosting, viewing, annotation and sharing of digitised images. The Library has been one of the early adopters of this ground-breaking standard and (as a member) will now join a select group of world-leading institutions.

The Library’s innovative use of the IIIF standard so far includes the ground-breaking Welsh Newspapers online project (newspapers.library.wales) to digitise 1.1 million newspaper pages and also the Cynefin project, a crowdsourcing, georeferencing project which allowed the public to enrich the tithe maps of Wales created in the 1800s. The next exciting project will be to provide the public with a bilingual crowdsourcing platform based on open standards, including IIIF.

Becoming a founder member of the IIIF-C supports the National Library of Wales’ new strategic plan for 2017-2021, The Nation’s Memory: Informing the Future in which the Library outlines its ambitious vision to double the number of digital items available to the public to 10 million by 2021.

Accessions Day

The Council Chamber was full for the National Library’s first Accessions Day. All the guests had contributed something important to our collections, a valuable item or a financial donation enabling us to purchase a specific item. The Library has benefited from the generosity of the public since its founding and the Accessions Day was an opportunity for us to say thank you very much to our friends by creating a varied exhibition of some of the treasures that have come through the doors in the past few years and by offering them the chance to socialise over lunch.

Specialist Library staff gave several presentations on different aspects of the collections: a look at the wonderful family pedigree of Gawen Goodman; a description of the various interesting ways that archives arrive here, traditional paper archives and screen and sound recordings; and the importance of Gwilym Pritchard’s sketch books in the process of creating a painting.
To celebrate the tercentenary of the birth of the hymn-writer William Williams Pantycelyn, the Library has digitised almost 90 of his books and pamphlets. The new digital collection will enable the public to see some of the nation’s most well-known hymns as they were first seen in print, on the Library’s website.

Generations working together
We are currently developing a cross-generational project with Gwynedd Fusion Partnership to work in Blaenau Ffestiniog on the Gwilym Livingstone Evans photograph collection. This project will use the Library’s new crowdsourcing platform to engage with schools and with older individuals. The project is designed around the vision of the Welsh Government’s Fusion Programme, particularly with an aim to achieve the following: gaining a qualification, regular volunteering as a route to work, improved digital skills and improved attitude to formal learning.

Christmas Festivities
The Library held a successful late night shopping evening in December with over 700 people visiting the Library, many of whom visited for the first time. There were many seasonal activities including stalls by 26 local craftsmen, entertainment by popular singer Linda Griffiths and the “Swynol” party, tasting sessions with Llinos and Dylan, Dylanwad Da, and not forgetting Santa’s visit!
On the trail of the king in his various guises
To mark this year’s Explore Your Archive campaign, an event was held in the National Library on 15 November to draw attention to the theme of legends in our archives. Dr Maredudd ap Huw, the curator of the Arthurian exhibition, led visitors on the trail of the king in his various guises: from the legendary Welsh character in sources such as the Black Book of Carmarthen and White Book of Rhydderch, through his manifestations in French literature, before returning to his mixed reception in Tudor Britain.

Partnering with institutions from across Europe to chart ‘Rise of Literacy’
The National Library of Wales is one of 13 partners from across Europe that will be working together to digitise, share and curate digital content relating to the theme ‘the Rise of Literacy’ on the Europeana Collections platform. The Library will share hundreds of relevant objects, ranging from medieval manuscripts to early printed works and nineteenth-century newspapers, so that they can be discovered and displayed alongside similar materials from other parts of Europe.

On screen with Bryn Terfel
The Library received excellent recognition in one of the principal programmes broadcast on S4C on Christmas Day, namely ‘Taith Bryn Terfel: Gwlad y Gân’. The programme showed Bryn Terfel travelling across Wales and visiting the National Library to see some of the treasures of the Welsh Music Archive.

People’s Collection Wales reaches 100,000 items
People’s Collection Wales has reached the milestone of 100,000 items on its website. The People’s Collection was launched in 2008 and the programme is delivered in partnership by the National Library of Wales, National Museum Wales and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. The Library leads on the development of new content for the website and community engagement.

Kyffin 100
As part of the Library’s many activities in 2018 to mark the centenary of the birth of one of Wales’ most prominent artists, Kyffin Williams, the Library is also working with Graffeg design company and Oriel Môn to develop a range of unique products. Also, in conjunction with Art UK, we are developing a system that will allow customers to order prints of their choice from the Kyffin collection.