

UNITED KINGDOM: WALES

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

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The second and final stage of work on the Library's new visitor centre was opened on 12 June 2004 by the actress Siân Phillips.

The centre contains:

- two new exhibition spaces: the 'Peniarth Room' for general exhibitions, and the 'World of the Book', showing the development of printing in Wales
- two education rooms, used extensively by school groups
- new accommodation for the National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales
- a reception area
- restaurant ('Pen Dinas'), which specialises in Welsh and locally-sourced produce
- a shop (an electronic shop will follow shortly)
- a new entrance suitable for those with mobility difficulties
- a 100-seat multimedia auditorium (the 'Drwm'), equipped with state-of-the art projection and networking facilities
- above it, a carefully-controlled 'sensitive materials' display area ('Hengwrt'), where for the first time we can show the 'treasures' of the Library in the best possible environment.

The Centre will enable the Library to make its exceptionally varied collections - printed works, manuscripts and archives, maps, pictures and drawings, sound recordings and moving images - much more visible to a larger and more varied audience.

The official opening came in the middle of a highly successful two-week programme of public events, mostly held in the Drwm: lectures, musical performances, film showings, readings, lectures, even theatrical performances for children. Already these have succeeded in bring in to the Library many people, children and adults, who have never been before.

Digitisation work has continued, as part of the 'Digital Library Initiative'. Recent additions to the website include key medieval Welsh manuscripts; photographs by Mary Dillwyn, one of the earliest woman photographers; topographical prints; and a pamphlet entitled A most strange and true report of a monstrous fish, who appeared in the forme of a woman, from her waste upwards (1603). ¹

¹ http://www.llgc.org.uk/drych/drych_s004.htm

Culturenet Cymru, the new partnership organisation based in the Library and dedicated to promoting Welsh culture online, has achieved much in its first year of existence². Among the projects were:

- a continuation of the all-Wales digital museum/archive/library 'Gathering the Jewels'
- 'Books from the past', a toolkit for the affordable digitisation of whole books
- '100 Welsh heroes', an online poll that generated 3.5 million visits in six months
- seminars and workshops for member organisations, eg on copyright and web access standards

The new **fund-raising strategy** is being implemented. The initial emphasis is on three plans: a legacy scheme, a 'regular giving' scheme, and applications to trusts and charities for major development projects.

The Library has arranged a staff exchange with the **National Libraries of Estonia and Latvia**. Two members of staff (both conservators) from Tallinn and Riga came to Aberystwyth for two weeks in May-June 2004; an exchange visit will take place in September-October. It is hoped that this will lead to further exchanges and other joint activities between the libraries.

Plans have been drawn up to acquire **a new computer system for managing all the Library's collections**. This needs to have the capacity to handle the wide range of materials in the collections, including electronic materials (digitised, acquired through legal deposit in future, electronic archives etc.).

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² <http://www.culturenetcymru.com/?lang=en>