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GDL: model infrastructure for a regional digital library?

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Introduction and overview

The [Glasgow Digital Library](#) (GDL) is a cross-sectoral and city wide collaborative initiative involving [Strathclyde](#), [Glasgow](#) and [Caledonian](#) Universities, as well as [Glasgow City Libraries and Archives](#) and the [Glasgow Colleges Group](#), and based in the [Centre for Digital Library Research](#) at Strathclyde University. The brainchild of [Derek Law](#), it emerged as a response to unique environmental circumstances. Across UK, developments such as the [People's Network](#) have positioned public libraries at the centre of a political agenda to improve social inclusion and cohesion through greater access to online learning and the [JISC information environment](#) is providing the vehicle for UK Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) to develop a distributed national electronic resource.

In Scotland, we have a parliament again, the Scottish Executive is promoting the development of "[Digital Scotland](#)" and developing, through [SLIC](#), a pilot Scottish Cultural Portal. Meanwhile, the [City of Glasgow](#) is spearheading a successful, socially inclusive and digitally driven educational vision via "[The Learning City](#)" - an attempt to encourage a seamless regional approach to education. Such an environment, and an initial injection of funding by the [Research Support Libraries Programme](#), has fostered the development of the GDL.

What is the GDL: 3 perspectives

It is useful to look at the GDL from a number of different perspectives:

- As a project that is now an embryonic (and still developing) service
- As a long term vision for electronic information provision in Glasgow (and perhaps elsewhere also) based on

an agreed (but developing) information infrastructure within which a coherent distributed Glasgow digital landscape can grow as a seamless part 'Digital Scotland'

- As an initial set of (small but growing) digital libraries

GDL: The project



Cover of "The Red Dawn", the official organ of The Proletarian Schools and College, a syndicalist inspired magazine for young workers.

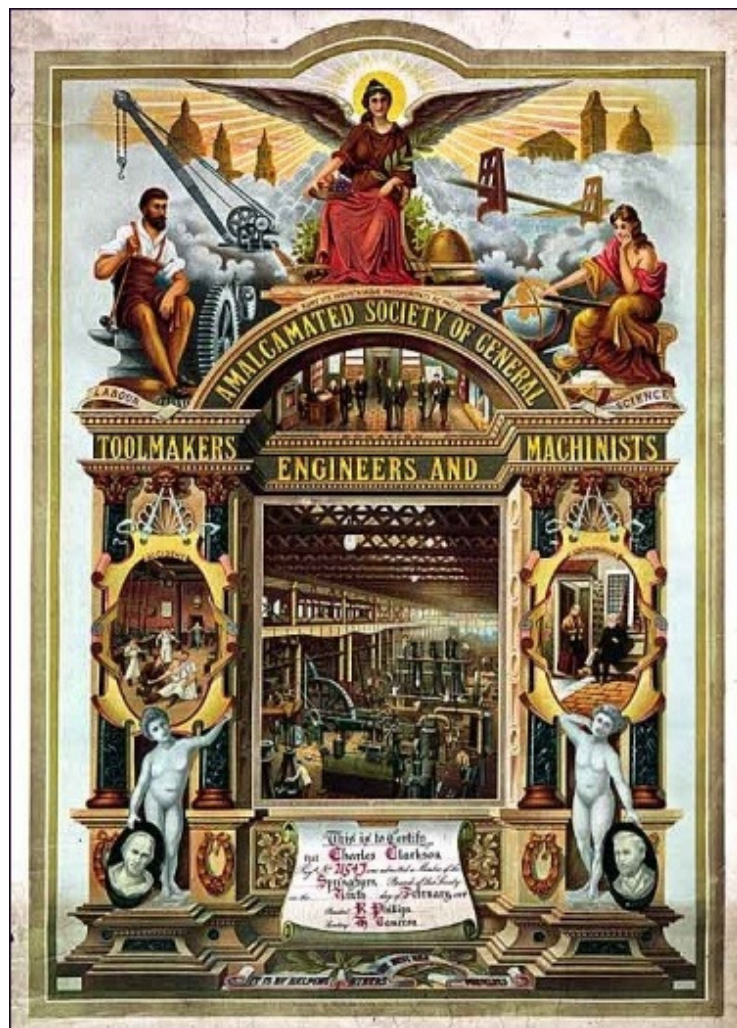
As a project, the GDL ran for two and a half years to the end of July 2002, with the following being amongst its more significant achievements:

- Creating a coherent [GDL website](#) offering integrated access to digital collections held at CDLR and at other locations.
- Setting up an information environment, based on the use of established international standards, that allows additional collections to be plugged in relatively easily, provided the same standards are adopted.
- Utilising [CAIRNS](#) technology to enable cross-searching of the GDL catalogue along with other Z39.50 server-based resource catalogues within Glasgow, including those of the [BUBL](#) Information Service and the [National Grid for Learning Scotland](#).
- Integrated subject and place-name indexes to the GDL collections as a whole, including those held at partner institutions, such as the Virtual Mitchell and TheGlasgowStory.
- Setting up mechanisms for collaborating with other projects about common metadata standards; in particular the shared use of controlled authority files for subjects and place names.
- Promoting broader acceptance of the desirability of thinking beyond the immediate requirements of

specific projects, and taking a longer term view of making digital content available to a wider range of users, at present and in the future.

- Creating new opportunities for collaborative content creation and collection management within the Glasgow area (e.g. with the Royal Scottish Geographical Society and Glasgow Caledonian University), as a result of mutual enthusiasm for digitisation projects being handled within the GDL.
- Helping project partners discover additional value within their existing hard-copy collections as a result of the process of digitisation for the GDL project.
- The creation, with [other](#) regional and national organisations in Scotland of [CoSMiC](#) (the Confederation of Scottish Mini-Cooperatives), a confederation of independent organisations, services and projects working together to foster and sustain co-operation between Libraries, Archives, Museums, Electronic Learning Services and others actively engaged in building and developing "virtual Scotland".

A full final report is available at <http://gdl.cdlr.strath.ac.uk/documents/gdlar2002.htm> and is a useful read for anyone aiming to set up a similar service elsewhere.



Amalgamated Society of General Toolmakers, Engineers and Machinists membership certificate

GDL: From vision to infrastructure

The original aim of the RSLP-funded project was to establish the GDL as a virtual co-library of the majority of public institutions in Glasgow and this continues to be the long-term vision - to create a wholly digital resource to support teaching, learning and research at all levels in the city, bringing together material

currently separated by ownership and physical location. There has, however, been some adjustment in the original view of how that might best be achieved. Some of the original goals proved difficult or impossible to achieve within the project timespan, but other strands have blossomed into a concept and a user service that is considered by the partners to be worth developing further and that should lead ultimately to the same end.

In simple terms, the aim now is to create, collect or provide access to digital content that is **about Glasgow**, **in Glasgow** or **for Glasgow** (without duplicating work done elsewhere) and to do so through the development and implementation of an agreed technical and inter-working infrastructure and a common collection development policy. In other words, the focus of the post-project GDL Development Group will be to help provide an environment in which a coherent distributed Glasgow Digital Library can grow and develop as new digitisation projects develop across the city - to ensure that these initiatives can develop in the context of a collaborative view of digital collection development.

GDL: The libraries

As the home page of the embryonic Glasgow Digital Library Service shows, the GDL currently includes six main digital collections (and a total of over 3000 digital items) with a further two collections under development.

GLASGOW DIGITAL LIBRARY	COLLECTIONS	PEOPLE	PLACES	SUBJECTS	DOCUMENTS
<h1 style="background-color: #008080; color: white; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;">Glasgow Digital Library</h1>					
Organised digital collections to support teaching, learning and research					
 <p>Aspect Access to Scottish Parliamentary Election Candidate Materials 1999</p>	 <p>Red Clydeside Political History of the Scottish Left 1910-1922</p>				
 <p>Springburn Virtual Museum Photographs from Springburn Community Museum 1880-1987</p>	 <p>Voyage of the Scotia Scottish National Antarctic Expedition 1902-04</p>				
 <p>GlasgowInfo Directory information for and about Glasgow 2002</p>	 <p>100 Glasgow Men Memoirs and Portraits of 100 Glasgow Men 1855-1885</p>				
 <p>Virtual Mitchell Images of Glasgow by area, street or subject 1860-1980</p>	 <p>Victorian Times Social, political, and economic conditions 1837-1901</p>				
Overview Contacts Reports Policies					
<p>The Glasgow Digital Library is based at the Centre for Digital Library Research in the University of Strathclyde. It was set up as part of the Research Support Libraries Programme, supplemented by funding from SCRAN for specific digitisation projects.</p>					
GLASGOW DIGITAL LIBRARY	COLLECTIONS	PEOPLE	PLACES	SUBJECTS	DOCUMENTS

Aspect

This is a digital archive of the ephemera - leaflets, flyers, postcards, newsletters - produced by candidates and political parties for the first Scottish parliamentary election in May 1999, but enhanced with supplementary information on electoral constituencies and regions, political parties, the electoral process and the results of the election.

[Red Clydeside](#)

The Red Clydeside collection provides access to digital copies of original source materials from the Red Clydeside era - a period between 1910 and 1922 when the city of Glasgow was witness to an unparalleled wave of working class protest and political agitation which challenged the forces of capitalism and even the state itself.

[Springburn Virtual Museum](#)

On 30 March 2001, Springburn Community Museum closed its doors for the last time, unable to secure sufficient funding to pay for staff costs, essential building repairs and the upkeep of the collection. The GDL offers one route to a possible future through the creation of [Springburn Virtual Museum](#) with a small but representative selection of materials.

[Voyage of the Scotia](#)

This will be an online exhibition marking the centenary of the Scottish National Antarctic Expedition which took place between 1902 and 1904. It will present photographs, artefacts, maps and documents from the collections of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, including an illustrated account of the life and work of Dr William Bruce, and his scientific expedition to the Antarctic on board the Scotia in 1902-04.

[100 Glasgow Men](#)

This project involves the digitisation of the whole of the book entitled

Memoirs and portraits of 100 Glasgow men who have died during the last thirty years, and in their lives did much to make the city what it now is

by James Maclehose. This book was published in two volumes in 1886 as a limited edition of 400 copies. Digitisation of all 524 pages is being carried out by agreement with Glasgow University Library, who hold copies of the book.



Wash house in back court of Springburn tenements, 1950s

[Glasgow Info](#)

This provides a directory of organisations located in Glasgow and information sources about the City of Glasgow and its inhabitants.

[Virtual Mitchell](#)

This collection holds a selection of photographs and other images of the city that have been digitised by the Mitchell Library as part of an ongoing project to make its resources more widely accessible. The selected material is of local and historical interest.

[Victorian Times](#)

The Victorian Times project aims to research, consolidate, digitise and provide access to original material relating to social, political, and economic conditions, events, people and actions from the Victorian era. The materials will be intelligently and interactively embedded in a single, multi-level, timeline-based, learning and research environment.

GDL futures

In conjunction with the existing partners, and hopefully some new ones also, the CDLR is intending to continue development and maintenance of the GDL infrastructure (and therefore the GDL itself) within the context of other funded digital initiatives based in Glasgow. These include:

[HalRST](#), a project that includes two members of the current GDL partners - Strathclyde University and the Glasgow Colleges Group* - and has a remit to work with two others. HalRST - the name is taken from an old Scots word meaning harvest - stands for Harvesting Institutional resources in Scotland Testbed and will aim to improve access to electronic teaching and research resources in HE and FE institutions in Scotland (and, hence, Glasgow) and also to manage them, foster the institutional environments that support their creation, harvest related metadata, integrate OAI based e-prints catalogues with Z39.50 catalogues, and develop associated institutional and inter-institutional collection policies. Provided the GDL infrastructure is taken into account (as it will be), this work will enhance both the content and the facilities available to the GDL.

[Victorian Times](#), and [SAPIENS](#). Both projects are based at Strathclyde University and, being concerned with the creation of Glasgow-based digital resources, will enhance GDL content if common standards are adopted. In addition, Victorian Times will address other questions relevant to GDL's aims - in particular, it will create a digital library that is also a learning environment that offers different types of users (primary and secondary school students, life long learners, researchers and others) a different view on the content according to their needs.

The Glasgow Story, a project based at Glasgow University, that is actively co-operating with the GDL and providing funds to allow the CDLR to advise on interoperability, particularly in respect of subject terms (The CDLR is currently collaborating with the National Library of Scotland, Strathclyde University Library and Glasgow University to extend the LCSH subject vocabulary to include additional British and Scottish terminology via the Library of Congress NACO and SACO processes, so that it becomes more suitable for use by British projects. This is a long-term process which is intended to continue irrespective of the status of the GDL, but the work already done within the GDL will be a valuable starting point).

In addition, the various partners, old and new, will aim - on an ongoing and co-ordinated basis - to attract funding to develop new digital collections, extend existing ones, and move towards an increasingly more sophisticated and function-rich digital library and digital learning environment for Glasgow's citizens.

Quotable Quotes

"A new socially inclusive and digitally driven educational vision and strategy has begun to develop" - **Derek Law**, Librarian and Head of Information Resources Directorate, Strathclyde University

"The distributed information environment must grow as a single thing, and staff, user, and organisational cultures must grow with it if the end result is to be an integrated, user-responsive whole" - **Dennis Nicholson**, Director, Centre for Digital Library Research, Strathclyde University

"A clear sense of the nature and scope of the GDL is beginning to emerge and the potential of a city-wide digital library is increasingly evident" - **Jane Barton**, GDL Librarian and Project Officer January 2000 - October 2001

"If similar mechanisms and standards can be used to combine separate digital libraries into a regional or national service, then the GDL has demonstrated one route by which the path to a digital Scotland may be achieved" - **Alan Dawson**, GDL Manager, October 2001

Last (but not least) - nothing directly to do with digital libraries, museums, or archives, but a worthy motto for

co-operators everywhere (and a fitting end to the first issue of WIDWISAWN):

"I'll letcha be in my dream if I can be in yours" - **Bob Dylan**, Songwriter

*** St. Andrews and Napier Universities are also key players**

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