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## Distributed National Burns Collections Project (Nov 2003-Mar 2005)

**David Hopes** and **Gordon Dunsire** brief WIDWISAWN readers on the Distributed National Burns project

The [Distributed National Burns Collections](#) (DNBC) Project is a 16 month [Strategic Change Fund](#) (SCF) initiative to survey Scotland's Burns collections and to work in partnership with the many museums, libraries, archives and private organisations which hold significant material to improve stewardship of, and access to, Scotland's distributed Burns collections. The SCF is funded by the [Scottish Executive](#) and managed by the [Scottish Museums Council](#) (SMC).

In anticipation of a deluge of information on thousands of objects dispersed around the country, the project devised a significance scheme to prioritise artefacts according to their intrinsic connection with Burns himself. Categories 1-3 have put into perspective over 36,000 objects identified in 25 of the most significant collections. This is important both from a conservation point of view (to suggest areas which require assistance as a matter of priority) and also to delineate parts of the National Burns Collection for which adequate documentation is needed. In tandem with a scoping study of these 25 separate collections, object lists were gathered in a variety of formats. MS Access was chosen as a database system compatible with most museum and library collections documentation and fields chosen which would be most relevant to a wide range of interests. For the 30 percent of the DNBC recorded in paper lists only, the signification system acted as a grading system for retrospective documentation. Some 8000 objects, including all Category 1 and 2 objects in Scotland, have now been added to an MS Access database formed from a refined version of the database at Burns Cottage and Museum, Alloway.

Important assistance from the [Centre for Digital Library Research](#) (CDLR) at the [University of Strathclyde](#), supported by the Scottish Library and Information Council, has enabled this simple 9-field database to be web-based and searchable. The National Burns Collection website and National Burns Collection catalogue were launched at the National Library of Scotland on St Andrew's Day 2004.

National Burns Collection - Mozilla Firefox

http://www.scotlands.culture.org/nbc/index.cfm

national burns collection  
heritage held in partnership

Explore the National Burns Collection of Scotland for manuscripts, books, art and artefacts associated with Robert Burns

NBC catalogue:

Search term: haggis

Collection title: Ayrshire Archives Centre

Simple name: agreement

Search

Enter a search term, then click the Search button. To restrict the search to items from a specific Collection and/or with from the drop-down list and check the corresponding boxes.

Limit search to Collection title

Limit search to Simple name

All item descriptions containing words starting with the search term will be found. Example: Burn finds descriptions containing the words Burns, Burnes, burnt, et. If you want to find only the whole word, add an end-square-bracket (]) to the end of the search term. Example: Burns] finds descriptions containing the word Burns. If you want to find words containing, but not necessarily starting with, the search term, use an asterisk (\*). Example: \*urn finds Burns, turning, etc. You can use both of the punctuation marks to find words ending with the search term. Example: \*urns] finds Burns, turns, etc. Two or more words are treated as a phrase. To display all items, leave the search term blank.

Clear

To erase the search term, click the Clear button.

Other catalogues:

Scottish Collections Network: Collections associated with Robert Burns recorded in SCONE: the Scottish Collections Network.

Scotland's Culture: Electronic resources associated with Robert Burns recorded in Scotland's Culture: the Scottish cultural portal.

CAIRNS: Items associated with Robert Burns recorded in CAIRNS: the Cooperative Information Retrieval Network for Scotland.

© National Burns Collection 2004

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start

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National Burns Collect...

Windows Media Player

14:19

Above: Screen shot of the Distributed National Burns Collection database search interface.

Since the launch, an additional sum of money has been released from the SMC's Contingency Fund to enable further development of the database by CDLR. This will allow objects to be categorised using a modified version of the [British Museum Object Names Thesaurus](#) and subsequently retrieved by browsing the thesaurus or searching for an object term. The work will also develop a web-based maintenance interface for the database to allow the addition of Category 3 objects and updating of existing object descriptions.

The fruits of the project have been integrated into the emerging Scottish Common Information Environment. The webpage for accessing the catalogue database includes "point-and-click" preset searches for Burns material outside of the immediate scope of the project. These include a search for other Burns collections recorded in the [Scottish Collections Network](#) (SCONE), including significant collections held outside of Scotland. There is also a search for the 50-odd electronic resources, including online texts of virtually all of Burns' works and important biographical websites, identified in [Scotland's Culture](#), the Scottish cultural portal. Finally, there is a search for items by and about Burns held by selected libraries in the [Cooperative Information Retrieval Network for Scotland](#) (CAIRNS). In addition, the Burns collections identified by the project have been added to SCONE.

The DNBC Project runs until March 2005.

#### David Hopes

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#### Name

Gordon Dunsire

Centre for Digital Library Research

## Museums collections updated in SCONE

**Gordon Dunsire** updates readers on the latest SCONE developments

[SLIC](#) and [CDLR](#) have recently completed an update of Scottish museums information held in the [Scottish Collections Network](#) (SCONE). This was done by comparing SCONE collection-level descriptions with the 347 entries in database used by the [Scottish Museum Council](#) (SMC) for its directory.

The SMC data were extracted from the database in October 2004. Entries contain contact information including museum address, phone and fax numbers, and website URL. These were compared with a similar database extraction from 2003 which had been used in the [SPEIR](#) project to create many new museum collection descriptions in SCONE. Entries showing changed information were then checked against SCONE itself, and updates made where necessary. Some amendments had already been made because SCONE is updated ad hoc.

All updating was carried out manually because development work is required to map differences in structure and content standards between the SMC and SCONE databases.

The exercise has been valuable, resulting in amendments to 104 SCONE records and the addition of some 10 brand-new collection descriptions. As might be expected, and confirming a similar pattern noticed with library collections during the annual updating of [Scottish Library and Information Resources](#) (SLIR), most of the changes were to email and website addresses: libraries and museums tend to stay in the same place, so physical address changes are rare. With this degree of volatility in museum contact information, it would be well worthwhile continuing to share data on at least an annual basis.

### Name

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