The Knowledge for All Strategic Plan of the National Library of Wales 2014 - 2017

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The Knowledge for All Strategic Plan of the National Library of Wales 2014 – 2017

I am pleased to present to you the National Library of Wales Knowledge for All Strategic Plan for the period 2014-2017. The new Strategic Plan signals a significant strategic repositioning and comes at an important moment in the long and distinguished history of the National Library of Wales. Established in 1907, The Library’s origins lie in the period of far-reaching change at the end of the nineteenth century that Professor Kenneth O. Morgan has termed the ‘rebirth of a nation’. Today, as the devolution agenda intensifies, Wales is undergoing a further and equally intense process of institutional nation building. The National Library will play its full part in the making of that new Wales.

The ‘Knowledge for All’ Strategic Plan will enable the Library not only to continue to preserve the nation’s tangible documentary heritage in the collections, but also to make greater use of digital technologies to release new content online and provide greater access to resources. Whilst remaining true to our original objectives the Strategic Plan addresses the key issues of extending public accessibility and engagement, the enhancement of its skills base and its leadership role in conservation and information literacy.

To this end, the Strategic Plan establishes an ever closer connection between our astonishingly rich, varied and growing collections, and the creative social uses that can be made of them. Creativity, innovation, knowledge and sustainability being the keys to social and economic regeneration, the physical and intellectual resources of the National Library will be marshalled to enable it to make a real, measurable and beneficial difference to the lives of the people of Wales.

To be able to deliver this Strategic Plan we need to sustain and develop partnerships and collaborations. They will enable us to enhance the potential impact of what we do and help us to engage more effectively with our users. This is an exciting time for information institutions in Wales. The expansion of information and research data at previously unimaginable speed, and the proliferation of digital platforms, resources and usage combine to make possible the greater democratisation of knowledge. At the same time, there is a growing need for publicly-funded bodies to demonstrate the social, cultural and economic effects of their activities. Therefore, we will continue our established commitment to the development of such nation-wide digital initiatives as The People’s Collection, Cynefin, HWB and the Welsh First World War Programme, and support innovative digital programmes including our contribution to digital humanities at European and International level. At the same time, and in the light of devolution, we should embark on a national debate about the future of our historic archives and records created in Wales in relation to the current Public Records legislation, and leading the development in Wales of the digital humanities.

The ‘Knowledge for All’ Strategic Plan for 2014-17 will position the National Library of Wales at the heart of information planning in Wales. By 2017 the Library will have mobilised its skills and its collections to enhance its public service and further broaden its range of users. The progress of the Strategic Plan will be measured against targets agreed by the Library’s Board of Trustees and CyMAL. If there is one word that encapsulates the ambition of this Strategic Plan, that word is ‘impact’. The National Library, as a national institution, will make a significant difference to the culture, the society and the economy of Wales. We will be responsive to our users, both present and future. We will inspire our learners, of all ages, support our business sector and promote Wales’s image abroad. And we will make every effort to ensure that the collections of the National Library of Wales are increasingly accessible in every home in Wales.

In these ways, the National Library of Wales will reposition itself to deliver knowledge for all while holding true to its lasting purpose and values.

Aled Gruffydd Jones
Chief Executive and Librarian

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The National Library of Wales is committed to delivering maximum public benefit from its collections and services. The continued enhancement of our key services will enable future users in Wales from all walks of life, to enjoy improved forms of access to publicly-funded information and knowledge.

Providing access to quality Welsh and global knowledge resources will enable the National Library of Wales to make a significant contribution to building a productive, connected, skilled and literate Wales. We will play a crucial role in supporting the Welsh Government’s Programme for Government plan of action by working towards the goals of a ‘healthy people living productive lives in a more prosperous and innovative economy; safer and more cohesive communities, with lower levels of poverty and greater equality; a resilient environment with more sustainable use of our natural resources and a society with a vital sense of its own culture and heritage’.

This Knowledge for All Strategic Plan not only demonstrates that our vision aligns well with that which the public wants from the Library, but also that it is in line with our public policy and, moreover, is an inextricable and essential part of it.

The potential of the National Library of Wales and in particular its collections, to inspire and enrich the lives of its users, will continue to be extended during the period of this Strategic Plan.

The services provided by the National Library of Wales are relevant and important components of people’s lives and are integral to the life of Wales as a civil society. Its collections are also central to Welsh identity. Our chief challenge during the next three years will be to bring together as many people as possible to engage with our collections, and to do so in new ways for a wide variety of purposes.

Our mission

Since its establishment in 1907 the National Library of Wales has developed and maintained national collections relating to Wales, the people of Wales and other Celtic nations. Our ‘Object’, as defined in the Royal Charter, is: ‘to collect, preserve and give access to all kinds of forms of recorded knowledge, especially relating to Wales and the Welsh and other Celtic peoples, for the benefit of the public, including those engaged in research and learning’.

From its inception the Library has been more than what is conventionally recognised as a ‘library’, that is, a collection of printed works. In addition to its 6.5 million books and periodicals (including newspapers and journals), most of which have been acquired through our status as Wales’s only Legal Deposit Library, the Library preserves and gives access to:

- Around 1,900 cubic metres of archival material;
- The most comprehensive collection of paintings and topographical prints in Wales, totalling over 60,000 works;
- Wales’s largest collection of portraits (c. 15,000 paintings and portrait pictures);
- Around 40,000 manuscripts;
- The largest collection of photographic images in Wales (c. 1,000,000);
- Wales’s largest cartographic collection (c. 1,000,000 maps);
- The National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales, which contains over 5.5 million feet of film, more than 250,000 hours of video, and over 200,000 hours of sound recordings.

These wide-ranging collections which span many centuries, define the Library’s nature, activities and users, and guide its collecting policies for the future including rapidly increasing collections in digital formats.

Much has changed over the years and we have consistently adapted and evolved to deliver services that best meet the needs of the people of Wales.

The National Library of Wales is at the centre of the transformations in digital content and delivery, and at the same time continues to collect and conserve our nation’s tangible documentary heritage. The democratising power of digital technologies has enhanced the capacity of the National Library to manage powerful information networks across Wales and globally, so that a student in Cardiff, a
farmer in Eryri, an academic in one of our universities, a young person in Merthyr, or a multi-national organisation considering relocation to Wales, all have equitable access to information important to their learning, research, employment opportunities or business planning. During recent years considerable progress has been made towards realising the **Theatre of Memory: Welsh Print On-line** objective to make the printed record of Wales and its people available free of charge in digital formats. The National Library of Wales is the only library in Wales that provides access to the UK’s and Ireland’s non-print Legal Deposit. The Library has earned a reputation for being an agile, innovative, and responsive organisation particularly in the digital environment. Our digital collections form the basis of a public digital library for Wales which is available to all users across the world free of charge. These collections include:

- 1.1 million pages of newspapers
- 1.3 million pages of journals
- 1.1 million pages of archives
- 200,000 photographs
- 50,000 items of graphic collections
- 10,000 pages of manuscript
- 400,000 hours of sound and moving images
- 7,000,000 feet of film
- 200,000 items from the ITV Cymru Archive
- 1,500 websites

The Library is committed to the further development of its digital collections both by pursuing its Digitisation Programme and by collecting born digital materials.

**Our Vision**

Our vision is for Welsh people everywhere to be connected with knowledge important to all aspects of their lives. We believe that knowledge is at the core of human progress, endeavour and well-being. Access to new information and knowledge will contribute to the nation’s economic performance and social development, and enable greater democratic participation in community life. The Library will thus position itself at the heart of information management and provision in Wales; no other institution or organisation in Wales is better placed to lead in this field. The challenges and opportunities of digital technology, even in the current period of austerity, mean that the long-term preservation of information, and public access to it, remain issues of immense importance to the further development of a devolved Wales.

**Our Users**

The Library’s online audience will continue to grow, widening still further the existing disparity between physical and virtual users. During the period of this strategic plan, more people will access our services ‘on the move’, directly from our website or indirectly from other sources. Unique, undigitised materials, will of course remain important, and will continue to attract users to the Library’s reading rooms. Access to physical objects in its collections will remain a significant element in the services it provides, as well as the inimitable experience of visiting such an iconic building for the purposes of research and attending conferences. However, we expect significant increases in the number of online users, far in excess of those of physical users. The challenge for the National Library of Wales now is to ensure that the nation’s information and knowledge is easily accessible to our users in an increasingly digital and globalised world, and that it continues to be protected and preserved for future generations. The Library’s Strategic Plan and its five key priorities reflect this challenge.

**The public economy**

Reductions in UK public expenditure are likely to continue throughout the period of this Strategic Plan. Since the Library does not undertake activities that are marginal to its purposes, it follows that it must respond either by finding more cost-efficient ways of carrying out its core functions, or by reducing its range of services. It is highly likely that it will need to do both. Since more than 70% of the Library’s budget is expended on staffing costs, the reduction of expenditure will inevitably incur reductions in current staffing levels.

In recent years the Library has been successful in attracting external funds, especially from public and research sources, often in partnership with other organisations. Although these sources will themselves be under greater pressure in future they remain an important target for achieving some of the Library’s development aims and avoiding stagnation. It is clear, therefore, that in order to achieve the objectives of this strategic plan, the diversification of funding streams will need to be at the core of our planning. Certainly methods
of fund raising will need to be transformed to suit to present circumstances.

The political context
Although policies relating to public debt and public spending are largely determined by the UK government, it is the Welsh Government that exercises most direct influence on the National Library.

Welsh governments to date have shared common characteristics: a defence of the public realm and a collectivist rather than an individual approach to service provision; a willingness to break from Westminster models; a preference for reducing social inequality by universal measures; reducing poverty; and, in our own area, support for culture, the arts and the promotion, development and use of the Welsh language.

Unless this policy consensus changes radically during the next decade, the National Library of Wales should be well-positioned to make a significant contribution to many Welsh Government priorities and targets. It is important to Wales and to the welfare of its people that the Library contributes strongly to educational, social, cultural and economic objectives, and its philosophy of access and impact are consistent with the Welsh Government’s social agenda.

Of the specific policy directions that might be taken by future governments (at all levels) during the period of this Strategic Plan, it is likely that environmental change will feature as strongly as ever. Taking appropriate action to control carbon emissions and reduce energy consumption in general will affect the National Library in several ways, including hastening the movement to online delivery modes (and thus reducing the need to travel), encouraging a low-maintenance building and the development of ‘green computing’ to save energy costs.

Resources
Resources, or the lack of them, will be a central concern during 2014-17. Revenue funding for core services and capital funding for new developments and building maintenance are likely to decrease. The search for diverse funding streams will become increasingly important, as will active fundraising and income generation. Projects funded externally on an individual basis will continue, especially as a means of improving and developing services.

Staff
Our staff will be central to how successfully the Library will deliver this strategic plan. It will become increasingly difficult to retain rare but relevant expertise. As the number of remote users continues to increase, staff will increasingly need to contribute to on-site services as well as online ones. There will also be an increasing role for volunteers, assisting within the building and remotely. Developing staff skills and knowledge – and sharing and exchanging those skills and knowledge with others outside the Library – has been identified as a strategic priority during 2014-17. The Library’s University of Wales Trinity St. David’s Chair in Digital Collections will continue to add a much-needed research capacity to the Library.

Consultation
We are grateful to all whose advice and constructive criticism have helped in the preparation of this Strategic Plan. Many staff members, individually and in groups, have provided comment, as have the Board of Trustees, the Advisory Body, CyMAL, partners and members of the public. A draft copy of the Library’s vision for 2014-17 was released to the public during November and December 2013, as a consequence of which the Library received a range of helpful and supportive responses.

It is pleasing to note that all the responses and suggestions that were received backed the strategic priorities. Whilst the greatest number of our readers wanted to see us remaining true to our original objectives, each respondent wanted us to widen access, improve our skills base and continue to lead in the fields of conservation and information literacy in Wales.
The Library will in future need to be more proactive than ever in order to meet the growing and changing needs of the people of Wales. The National Library of Wales will deliver its vision by adopting and implementing its Strategic Plan Knowledge for All during 2014–2017. We have identified five strategic priorities in order to focus our resources and activities.

This Strategic Plan focuses on the services of the National Library of Wales and the value that these give to our users. The means by which these services will be delivered stems from our engagement with our customer base, and our collective desire to see the Library’s activities leading to the enrichment of the lives of individuals and the expansion of their horizons. The challenge we face will be to ensure that our customers can take full advantage of our services, with as few obstacles as possible, and increasingly, within their own communities.

### Strategic Plan 2014–2017

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Spearheads will be agreed that will focus on achieving the objectives

Performance indicators will monitor the development of the Strategic Plan
The Five Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority 1

Access

The Library will assemble as complete a collection as possible, in all media, of material relating to Wales and our neighbours, including printed and electronic publications and sound and moving image material, to help ensure that Wales’s analogue and digital memory is accessible, we will provide free access to our core collections, and will further enhance the interfaces that make it possible for users to access and benefit from these materials. This will include opening new access points in strategic sites across Wales, enabling our learning, exhibitions and public engagement units to make a far greater contribution to a range of social targets, including economic and urban and rural regeneration, the alleviation of the effects of child poverty, health and well-being and educational support for schools, adult classes and community initiatives.

We will:

I. Facilitate access and use, and repurpose collections

II. Expand our presence across Wales

III. Develop and preserve collections to ease access

IV. Maintain, develop and provide access to the national collection including legal deposit material

V. Encourage and gather feedback from users

VI. Maintain and support research, increasing impact on the collections
Strategic Priority 2

Expertise

The Library is home to a range of highly-developed and scarce skills in a uniquely bilingual institution. It is essential that these skills and competencies are retained for Wales, and are mobilized to serve the country’s broader needs through training, consultancy and other means. We also recognise that skills evolve, and the Library’s strategic focus on digital conservation and preservation will further cement our leading role in this expanding field.

We will:

I. Share skills and knowledge

II. Lead by setting standards of good practice

III. Develop the Conservation and Digital Preservation Service for Wales’ Documentary Heritage Project

IV. Nurture and preserve competencies and skills
Strategic Priority 3
Collaboration

The Library will collaborate with the libraries, archives and museum sector in Wales, and other partners, to identify and implement sustainable and more effective ways of delivering Wales-wide services. In particular, we see significant opportunities both for diversifying our income streams and enhancing our social impact through joint research bids with HE and other institutions. The Digital Collections Research Programme has undertaken research in relation to the Library’s collections since 2011 in collaboration with higher education and heritage establishments across the world. This programme will play a central role in delivering many aspects of this Strategic Plan. We shall continue to strengthen our links with the Welsh cultural industries, and science and Research and Development initiatives in both public and private sectors.

We will:

I. Engage with users and allied groups
II. Collaborate with the private sector
III. Develop a Community Partnership Programme with partners in the public sector
IV. Collaborate with other bodies within and outside Wales
V. Contribute to international research
VI. Play a leading role in the culture and heritage sectors
Strategic Priority 4
Sustainability

We will place financial viability and the sourcing of diverse funding streams at the core of our planning, together with maintaining appropriate levels of Grant in Aid. We will as a matter of urgency undertake a study of the economic multiplier of the Library and its effect on the Welsh economy. At the same time we will actively seek to diversify our user base to reach more people and to meet our environmental targets.

We will:

I. Investigate new income streams

II. Encourage a culture of continuing improvement

III. Measure and monitor the value and impact of the Library

IV. Promote, develop and sustain environmental efficiency
Strategic Priority 5

Forward Thinking

The Library will continually scan the rapidly-changing information landscape to identify needs, the technologies required to deliver them and the skills needed to access them. We will position ourselves as the leading agency in the planning and development of the evolving national information infrastructure of Wales. We will initiate a national debate on the potential for a National Archive for Wales with Public Record functions, and will be a lead-collaborator in a series of high-level national initiatives (in addition to those previously noted) including the imminent anniversaries of the Devolution Referendum and the establishment of the NHS.

We shall play our full part in the development of the next stages in the devolution process in Wales, including acting as an ambassadorial window into Wales, its history, culture and potential, for the rest of the world. We hold material in some 300 world languages, and will shortly start work on an international strategic plan that aligns the collections and skills of the NLW with the broader cultural diplomacy and business development targets of Welsh Government.

We will:

I. Lead a national debate on the potential for establishing a National Archive for Wales

II. Lead and collaborate in developing an information base for Wales

III. Be proactive in developing commercial opportunities
Aligning with Welsh Government’s ‘Programme for Government’

The National Library of Wales, as a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, has a vital role to play in supporting the Welsh Government in achieving its Programme for Government targets, whilst at the same time continuing to meet the aims of its Charter. Fulfilling this Strategic Plan will help the Welsh Government in achieving some of its targets in the priority areas of (1) growth and sustainability of jobs; (2) public services in Wales; (3) education; (4) equality; (5) tackling poverty; (6) environment and sustainability and (7) the culture and heritage of Wales.

The Library is pleased to be able to identify itself with the vision and aspirations set out by the Welsh Government and the ‘Knowledge for All’ Strategic Plan supports the broader desired aim of seeing libraries inspire the lives of individuals living within our communities. The Library will contribute to delivery of the Libraries Inspire and Archives for the 21st Century strategies, as agreed in the delivery plans, and according to the relevant partnership agreements for individual projects.
The main Strategic Plan checkpoints will be the periodic production and publication of Performance Indicators (Key Performance Indicators and Service Performance Indicators) together with an annual performance report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan that will be presented to the Board of Trustees for consideration at their first meeting of the new financial year.

**Our commitment**

“To make a significant and beneficial impact on the lives of the people of Wales, based on our values as a national institution.”

Aled Gruffydd Jones
Chief Executive and Librarian

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### Checkpoints, performance indicators, outcomes and targets

**Primary Outcome**

*Knowledge for all: People of Wales connected with knowledge important to all aspects of their lives*

#### Outcomes

- **Collections are developed, cared for and preserved**
- **Wales’s documentary heritage is nurtured**
- **People of Wales can readily access knowledge**
- **People of Wales are creating new knowledge**
- **People of Wales are skilful and confident in using knowledge**
- **A wider range of knowledge is easily accessible to the people of Wales**
- **Users are finding the knowledge they need**

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**Knowledge for All outputs**

Our outputs: what we will do to achieve the Knowledge for All strategic plan.