

# Scottish **Poetry** Library

**External  
Communications  
Strategy  
2018-20**

## **Scottish Poetry Library Communications Strategy 2018**

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## **1. Introduction**

Now in its fourth decade, the Scottish Poetry Library remains a national resource for poetry from Scotland and abroad. Communications has a central role to play in realising the Library's primary objective: making poetry accessible to the public through its unique collection and wide range of activities.

The purpose of this Communications Strategy is to assess how communications can help the Library achieve our strategic aims and promote our values. Specifically, to:

- 1) Promote our collection, events and resources**
- 2) Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders**
- 3) Advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country**
- 4) Raise awareness of the contribution of the Library and poetry to national policies and frameworks**

The Strategy will assess where, communications-wise, the Library is currently and what it will do next, specifically over the following year. It is based on our Stakeholder Analysis (see Appendix Four) and complements our Digital Strategy 2018-2021. It covers the period 2018-20; with technology and social attitudes changing rapidly, we should reassess our Communications Strategy every two years to ensure it is up-to-date.

This document sets out the following key areas of work for the year ahead:

- Internal and external communications
- How communications support the Business Plan
- How communications support colleagues' projects and the day-to-day work of the Library
- Digital communications
- EDI (including Scottish Gaelic, Scots and BSL)

To deliver these key areas of work, our communications priorities for 2018-20 are:

- Allocating a budget for targeted social media advertising (see section 6)
- Developing audiences for audio and video through staff training
- Delivering more of our public-facing communications in Scottish Gaelic, Scots and BSL
- Researching new technologies, apps, etc, that will deliver our Communications objectives

We've invested in a new website that will help us deliver our Communications Strategy; the design and content will promote our status as the authoritative source of information about Scottish poetry.

Although detailed, please note that the Communications Strategy is a summary of key areas; it isn't a comprehensive list of every project or task undertaken by the Library, which is still evolving. Indeed, management of communications is only ever partly about planned activity; given the mercurial media environment within which the Library operates, there remains a degree of activity that is reactive, responding to events as they occur.

## **2. Our Current Situation**

According to Nielsen BookScan, poetry book sales have seen a 66 per cent increase in the past five years in the UK, which saw over a million poetry books sold at a value of £11.1m. With poetry more popular than it has been for decades, particularly with the young, communications can help

promote this phenomenon and with it, the SPL itself. It is a good moment to reassess our Communications Strategy.

By what means do we communicate?

*External*

Digital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website (blog, Poem of the Moment, projects pages, learning resources)</li> <li>• Social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)</li> <li>• Press releases (and ongoing contacts with the press; list of press contacts recently refreshed)</li> <li>• Podcasts (monthly interviews and readings with poets based in the UK and around the world; podcasts hosted on Podomatic); recordings of individual poems (hosted on Soundcloud)</li> <li>• Video (channels on YouTube and Vimeo hosting original content)</li> <li>• Digital signage</li> <li>• Job adverts</li> </ul>
Print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Poetry Reader</i> (bi-annual, free to pick-up within the Library and sent to Friends of the SPL; also available as PDF for those who prefer to have it emailed to them)</li> <li>• Annual Report (also available online)</li> <li>• Events sheet</li> <li>• Poem of the Week and monthly advertorial in the <i>Saturday Scotsman</i></li> <li>• NPD postcards</li> <li>• Publications</li> </ul>
<i>Internal</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Weekly staff bulletin</li> <li>• Staff meetings</li> <li>• Board reports</li> </ul>
<i>In person</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Membership of committees / Partnerships</li> <li>Public speaking</li> <li>Events</li> <li>Networking opportunities</li> </ul>

### 3. Stakeholders

In order to nuance our messages, it's vital to understand our various audiences and what our messages to each is. Appendix Four is a Stakeholders Analysis. The table below builds on it, pairing each audience with our key messages to them.

Audience	Key Communications Messages
Service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On poetry, we can provide useful, practical information and support</li> <li>- We are reliable and provide help within a timely period</li> <li>- We put services users first and value their opinions</li> </ul>
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We exist</li> <li>- We are the world's largest resource for Scottish poetry</li> <li>- Our lending library is available to all</li> <li>- It's easy to join</li> <li>- The SPL provides a wide range of services &amp; events in person &amp; on-line</li> <li>- We are / aren't recruiting</li> </ul>
Friends of the SPL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Becoming a Friend (and remaining one) has benefits</li> <li>- Friends can leave the SPL a gift in their wills</li> <li>- The SPL is open to receiving donations</li> <li>- Reminders of the date of the AGM and other significant events</li> </ul>
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We should share information</li> <li>- Communications can benefit your project</li> <li>- What the Senior Management Team's position on issues is</li> </ul>
Poets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We can help to promote your work</li> <li>- We have poetry you can read, enjoy and be inspired by</li> <li>- They should send us copies of their work</li> <li>- Our building can be hired for launches</li> </ul>
Creative Scotland / funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We are delivering the work we said we would when applying for funding</li> <li>- We are partnering with organisations that will help us realise our goals and share costs and expertise</li> </ul>
Scottish Government / MPs / MSPs / CEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poetry is Scotland's chief art and should be included as a matter of course at state events, etc</li> <li>- The SPL provides an invaluable 'shop window' on one of the country's most vibrant cultural sectors, within the UK and abroad</li> <li>- Given the range of our services and their use, we should continue to be funded even during times of austerity</li> </ul>
Media (print, broadcast, specialist)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We have a new project that the press should report on</li> <li>- We are relevant and poetry is more vital and popular than it has been for years</li> <li>- We can help journalists research an article with a poetry angle</li> <li>- We can suggest and put journalists in touch with poets appropriate to the feature they're working on</li> </ul>
Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Library is functioning well</li> <li>- Staff are working to take the Library in the directions suggested by the Board</li> <li>- The Board should have a good understanding of the work of the SPL and of individual members of staff</li> </ul>
Publishers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Send the Library copies of your new titles</li> <li>- The Library can help to promote your poets</li> <li>- The Library can be hired for launches</li> </ul>

Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The SPL is a reliable partner whose knowledge and contacts can enhance your projects</li> <li>- We have effective networks with which to promote the project</li> <li>- Association with the SPL will burnish your own reputation</li> </ul>
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#### 4. Communications Plan supporting the outcomes and outputs in our Business Plan

A communications strategy should reflect an organisation's overall organisational plan. Here, we examine how communications can help to deliver the Business Plan's Outcomes and Outputs (see Business Plan, Outcomes and Outputs, 7.1-8.4).

Outcomes	Communications Objectives	Strategic Aims
The public will gain increased opportunities to access and engage with our lending collection (BP, 7.1)	Ensuring the public are aware that the Library has a collection whose items can be borrowed by the public, and that joining the SPL as a borrower is relatively easy. Publicising the collection's new titles as well as the wealth of older ones.	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country; promote our collection, events and resources
The public will gain increased opportunities to use and engage with our digital content, accessed through our website and social media channels (BP, 7.1)	Providing content for the website (blogs, podcasts), as well as regularly posting on our social media platforms.	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country; promote our collection, events and resources
Poets will benefit from increased opportunities to share the future of Scotland's poetic identity and community and their influence nationally and internationally (BP, 7.2)	Promoting poets through podcasts, audio recordings, featuring their events on the SPL event calendar, on the Poem of the Moment, RTs, etc.	Advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country; promote our collection, events and resources; raise awareness of the contribution of the Library and poetry to national policies and frameworks.
Poets will benefit from developing their creative practice through experimental use of digital technology and platforms (BP, 7.2)	Supporting projects of this nature when approached.	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country
Poets will benefit from opportunities to collaborate with other art forms (BP, 7.2)	Collaborating with the Events Co-ordinator on content and promoting events where poets have collaborated with filmmakers, visual artists, theatre makers, etc.	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country; promote our collection, events and resources
Poets will benefit from having their work and events publicised on our events online calendar (BP, 7.2)	Uploading events onto the website, digital signage and events sheet in a timely manner.	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art

		both within and outside the country
Poets will benefit from a more diverse audience as a result of our EDI action plan engagement and bring new audiences to our event programme (BP, 7.2)	Promoting events effectively, especially to groups targeted by our EDI action plan.	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; raise awareness of the contribution of the Library and poetry to national policies and frameworks
Communities who face barriers to engagement with poetry will benefit from the collection, where available, of new British Sign Language poetry and video resources incorporating BSL (BP, 7.3)	The co-creating and promoting of resources, developing contacts within the D/deaf community, taking part in training sessions where staff can learn more about the D/deaf community and BSL	Promote our collection, events and resources; raise awareness of the contribution of the Library and poetry to national policies and frameworks
Communities who face barriers to engagement with poetry will benefit from the promotion of incentivised SPL Friends scheme for key groups, e.g. students may join and renew as subscribed Friends after graduation (BP, 7.3)	Developing links with key groups, using social media (esp Facebook) to reach individuals within key groups, promoting the SPL Friends scheme online and in print, working with the Library Services Development and Retail Manager	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; promote our collection, events and resources
The SPL will benefit from a larger and more diverse community of in-person and digital visitors, borrowers and participants (BP, 7.4)	Raising the visibility of the SPL in the on- and off-line worlds. Partnering with organisations that can raise our profile (CHI, Filmhouse) and using our digital platforms in creative ways	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country; promote our collection, events and resources
The SPL will benefit from an increased connectivity with wider library and reading communities locally, nationally and internationally, through creative learning, community outreach and digital engagement (BP, 7.4)	Maintaining and expanding the SPL's digital platforms, researching new apps and digital innovation that can benefit the SPL. Supporting the Learning Co-ordinator by promoting creative learning resources.	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; promote our collection, events and resources
Being a proactive organisation supporting the reduction of carbon footprint through increased digital provision. (BP, 7.4)	Providing alternatives to paper-based forms of communication through online information provision	Raise awareness of the contribution of the Library and poetry to national policies and frameworks

<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Communications Objectives</b>	<b>Strategic Aims</b>
Continuing to build a unique resource of recognised excellence for poetry:	Uploading poems new and classic to the SPL when the occasion arises, for example, for Poem of the Moment. Negotiating with publishers for use of	Advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country; promote our collection, events and resources

maintain and build an online poem resource (BP, 8.1)	poem; research when an older poem is required; awareness of copyright	
Continuing to build a unique resource of recognised excellence for poetry: redevelop website (BP, 8.1)	Working with Deputy Director and Librarian with Eskimo Design to redesign website.	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country; promote our collection, events and resources
Enabling as wide an audience as possible to access the benefits of poetry: lead Scottish agency for National Poetry Day campaign (BP, 8.2)	Working with the Projects Co-ordinator; using knowledge and creativity to promote NPD.	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country; promote our collection, events and resources
Engaging with the national and international community: Scottish poets showcased throughout the SPL website, including featured poets, and as part of Best Scottish Poems annual selection (BP, 8.4)	Putting up Poems of the Moment; selecting the Saturday Scotsman poem; recording readings and podcasts; working on BSP (promotion, liaising with editor)	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country; promote our collection, events and resources
Engaging with the national and international community: podcast readings by and interviews with poets: Scottish, those visiting Scotland (BP, 8.4)	Recording and editing Scottish and visiting poets.	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country
Engaging with the national and international community: partnership with Edwin Morgan Trust and EIBF on biennial translation workshops	With the Library Services Development and Retail Manager, administering Edwin Morgan Poetry Award; promoting the EMPA and the EIBF prize-giving ceremony	Raise our visibility and reputation with stakeholders; advocate poetry as Scotland's national art both within and outside the country

## 5. Evaluating Success

What does success look like and how will you know when objectives have been met? Our investment in our new website will mean we can better evaluate our audiences. In the meantime, the list below is in no sense a complete and final list of areas that can be measured.

<b>Areas which Communications can help increase participation in</b>	<b>Resources needed</b>
Footfall	Statistics gathered at the front desk
Events	Ticket sales
Podcasts / Soundcloud recordings of individual poems	Podomatic (the platform hosting our podcasts) and Soundcloud offer analytics
Website traffic	Google analytics
<i>Tools of the Trade / To Face The Future</i>	Sales; press attention
SPL bookshop	Sales
Press attention	Number and length of articles mentioning the SPL

National Poetry Day	Hits on website for poems chosen to illustrate the theme and learning resources; number of postcards taken over the course of the year; coverage in press
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At the end of each month, the Communications Manager compiles a report on digital statistics which is then passed on to the Senior Management Team. The statistics are compiled:

- For reporting back to Creative Scotland and making the case for SPL projects / activities to other funding bodies we approach.
- For the setting of targets for growth and the formulation of strategies to meet these targets.
- To see whether announcements of new projects, etc, have achieved the attention we wished them to.
- To study trends. Recognition of trends can help to hone our messaging. For example, with five years of digital statistics to draw upon, we know visits to the website and use of our social media platforms is lower than usual historically in June and July. With that in mind, we tend not to make major announcements in those months.

The channels we use to communicate with stakeholders and with which they communicate with us are:

- \_\_\_\_\_  
**Email / letter**
- \_\_\_\_\_  
**Social media**
- \_\_\_\_\_  
**In person (visit to Library, networking opportunity, committee, partnerships)**
- \_\_\_\_\_  
**Telephone**

## 6. Social Media

Our social media and digital communications effort has grown significantly in the past six years. In 2012, the Library had 7,500 Twitter followers, for example; today we have over 37,000. See Appendix Two for further figures.

The social media platforms we use, which are standard for arts organisations, are:

- Facebook (free to use AND paid advertising)
- Twitter (free to use)
- Instagram (free to use)
- YouTube (free to use) / Vimeo (subscription)
- Soundcloud (subscription) / Podomatic (subscription)

We have experimented in the past with Facebook advertising – for example, with the Edwin Morgan Poetry Award call-out for submissions; the EMPA received its highest number of submissions in 2018. A priority going forward is examining to what extent Facebook advertising can realise our strategic aims, particularly the first: ‘Promote our collection, events and resources’.

## **7. Crisis Communications**

In a fast-moving media environment, it's essential to have a plan in place in case of a crisis that threatens the reputation of the Library. In such situations, the Senior Management Team and Communications should meet to decide the Library's response. The Director may also wish to consult a lawyer, the Chair and / or any members of the Board whose experience touches on issues relating to the cause of the crisis.

Colin Waters  
Communications Manager  
November 2018

## Appendix One: SWOT analysis of SPL communications

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>Strong social media following well above what other small Scottish arts organisations have</p> <p>Our online resources are popular and well used</p> <p>We have status and are regarded as an important literary organisation by Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government</p> <p>We have a well-developed voice on social media, both conversational and authoritative</p> <p>Redesign of the SPL website should refresh our communications offer and attract new visitors</p> <p>Good contacts with Scottish media, especially journalists covering the arts</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>Website outdated (being addressed; in meantime website regularly going down, impacting on website visitor numbers)</p> <p>Lack of Gaelic speakers on staff</p> <p>Historically, a relatively small communications budget – can only get so far by using Twitter, Facebook (without a budget) and own website</p> <p>Part-time nature of many staff members makes it difficult to catch up with them and so to help with their projects</p> <p>Perceived as having a low public profile beyond the literature community</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Poetry well suited to new technological era (e.g. Rupi Kaur and Instagram poetry)</p> <p>Poetry’s resurgent popularity amongst young people</p> <p>Poetry as a vehicle for social change</p> <p>Gaelic-speaking intern</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>Budgetary pressures</p> <p>Researching and enacting communications strategy within time available is challenging</p> <p>May be hitting ceiling in terms of social media follower numbers</p>

## Appendix Two: Social Media Statistics

Recent statistics underline the importance of digital communications channels. For example:

- In 2017, on our website 2,813,588 pages were viewed by 975,521 users. The most popular page was Robert Burns entry on the Poets A to Z.
- Our fortnightly e-newsletter goes out to 1,004 subscribers. The newsletter records between 50 and 60 per cent opens; MailChimp (one of the major newsletter platforms) reports that the average open rate for companies in the marketing/advertising industry is 17.85 per cent.
- On Twitter, we issue, on average, up to 400 tweets per month, have 37,600 followers and we receive monthly impressions that range between 507K (June) at their lowest and 861K impressions (August) at their highest. (Impressions measure potential reach; it measures how many unique Twitter accounts your tweets could have reached. A potential impression means a tweet has been delivered to a Twitter account's timeline.)
- On Facebook, we issue up to 2 to 3 posts per day on average, have 7,527 followers and engagement rate on average of 5 per cent, which is low, which is itself unsurprising; the posts are almost all 'organic', i.e. unpaid for and so not prioritised by Facebook. Essentially, a user has to actively seek out the Library's Facebook page to find our posts.

### Appendix Three: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Accessibility of the collection has been key to the SPL's mission since its beginnings; unlike the majority of poetry libraries, it is not a research library; anyone with a card can borrow books and enjoy reading them at home, on the bus or on a lunchbreak.

In that spirit, the Library's Communications Strategy supports its commitment to promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We are aware that not all of the Library's audiences benefit from the same messages, presentation or communication channels. As such, we shall work to ensure that all of our communications are fully accessible and tailored to the needs of specific diverse audiences. Inclusion is about creating opportunities for people to work in, engage with, participate in, and experience arts and creativity. When addressing audiences, we should be communicating in a plurality of voices.

There are several areas in which Communications can help the Library to meet commitments to EDI (this list, which isn't comprehensive, is meant to give a sense of the way in which Communications can play its part).

- Making images on Twitter accessible to people whose vision is impaired by adding a description. People who are visually impaired will have access to the description via their assistive technology (e.g., screen readers and braille displays).
- Transcribing podcasts for the D/deaf community (a collaboration with volunteers).
- Interviewing a wider variety of people for the podcast series; recording poems by a wider variety of people for the Soundcloud page and website. See also: Poem of the Moment, Saturday poem in the Scotsman, subjects of blogs, and so on.
- Working with colleagues to promote projects, events and resources that address EDI (i.e. the *Stairs and Whispers* launch event; the WHALE arts poetry group; Second Wind and so on).
- Including magazines, periodicals and websites who provide information to EDI audiences on the media contacts database. Sending press releases and information of other opportunities to these magazines, periodicals and websites.
- Making different audiences aware of how we are changing our practice the better to serve them (including accessibility policy on copy provided for SPL events on the SPL events calendar; availability of hearing loop, etc).
- Audio recording of Event sheet, available via the website and on social media.

The restricted budget available to the Communications means certain methods of promoting EDI are not available. For example, advertising on Facebook offers the Library the ability to get granular with audiences; it provides advertisers with the opportunity to connect with very specific audiences. With it, one could deliver information to several audiences who are targeted by EDI. Consequently, it's important that the Library's Communications strategy leave room for explaining why certain approaches cannot be adopted.

The Library is committed to cataloguing and promoting work written in all the languages of Scotland, with a special emphasis on BSL, Scottish Gaelic and Scots. The Library faces a barrier in that no member of staff, including the Communications Manager, speaks these languages, although the Director has made efforts to address that language imbalance, starting with a Gaelic language intern who will work on translating copy on the website. During the period in which the intern is working with us, the Communications Manager will consult with him with regards to how better to communicate in Gaelic. Furthermore, the Communications Manager will endeavour to feature at least one Gaelic-language poet and one Scots-language poet per year as part of the podcast series and to record more poems in these languages for the Soundcloud page. The blog will be made

available for more Gaelic and Scots-language blogs. Events with a Gaelic or Scots-language basis will be promoted. Board members who can communicate in Scottish Gaelic, Scots and BSL will guide the SPL towards serving those communities better.

**Appendix Four: Stakeholder Analysis (attached as separate doc)**