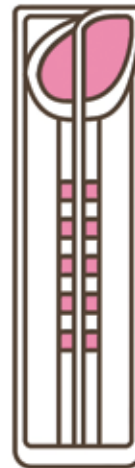


Mackintosh Library at Glasgow School of Art destroyed by fire



Glasgow School of Art's stunning Art Nouveau library designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh has been destroyed by fire, and along with it important historical collections. **Duncan Chappell** outlines what libraries can do to help build a highly targeted new collection.



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ON 23 May, a devastating fire at the Glasgow School of Art totally destroyed the world-famous Mackintosh Library and its important historical collections. One of the most important and widely-recognised library spaces in the world, it was designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh between 1897 and 1909 and was accepted as one of the finest Art Nouveau interiors internationally. Any visitor to the space could not help but be moved by its architectural and aesthetic beauty, from its hand-painted balusters to its pierced wooden pendants, and from its coloured-glass hanging lamps, to its original tables, Windsor chairs and periodicals desk. Its vast west windows, rising up through three levels of the building, had been compared to those at York Minster.

More than just a space

But of course any library is more than just an architectural space. The significance and potential of the historical collections it held were widely known and respected across the art and design research community.

May's fire destroyed not only Mackintosh's interior, but also important historical collections that had been developed since the School's foundation in 1845. These included: rare engraved folios from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries; full runs of seminal 19th and 20th century art and architecture periodicals; rare continental Art Nouveau journals such as *Dekorative Kunst* and *Jugend*; 19th century illustrated books; and significant parts of the School's foundation collection of instructional books and treatises.

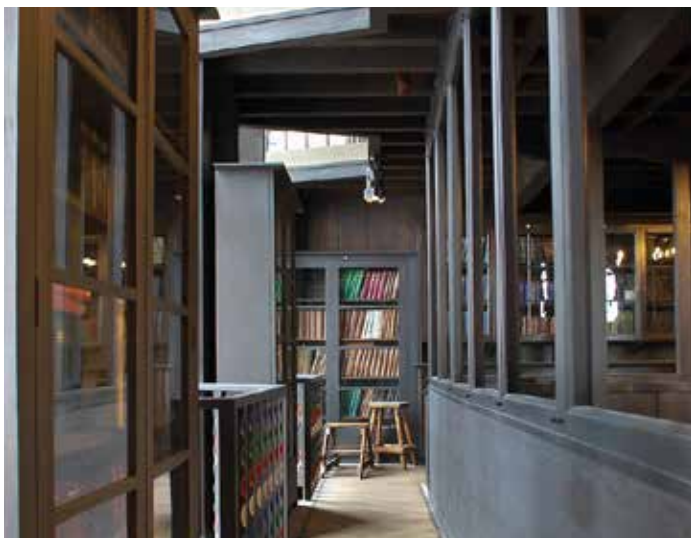
In a preservation assessment survey of 2012-2013, 16 per cent of the collection was identified as probably unique and therefore of national importance.

Identifying what was lost

The School's librarians have now completed the sobering task of identifying the volumes that were lost in the fire, and of updating the online catalogue and some external union catalogues such as ESTC. The data in other catalogues such as Suncat and Salser may take slightly longer to update, but this too is being worked on. The Main Library, which holds the majority of lending collections, is unaffected and operates as normal. The School's archives and collections are also, for the most part, safe, though they have suffered some water and smoke damage and



From the archives: an early image of the library Picture © GSA.



The lobby area holding further collections. Picture © GSA.



Interior of the library before the devastation. Picture © GSA.

The gutted remains after the fire. Picture © Duncan Chappell.



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The library has been considerably touched by all the good wishes, kind thoughts and donations that it has already received from friends, colleagues and institutions across the world.

have been removed off-site for storage and conservation. It is important to stress that no-one was injured in the fire, due in no small part to the professionalism and dedication of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Glasgow School of Art staff.

Help to build a new collection

The rebuilding of the lost collections will of course take many years. Their loss, though tragic, has provided the opportunity to revisit collecting strategies and to rebuild in a highly targeted way. In the long-term, the library intends to pursue a targeted approach, tightly aligned to both the illustrious history and future direction of the Glasgow School of Art.

In the short term, the library is seeking to replace those volumes that complement the school's archives and collections, including the many treatises and illustrated books written, designed and made by its past directors, tutors, and alumni. The quick replacement of these volumes remains a priority for the Library. With this in mind, its librarians have compiled a wants list, available at bit.ly/1yEpnIR. If you hold any of the titles on the list and would like to donate them, please contact librarian Duncan Chappell at d.chappell@gsa.ac.uk.

Rising from the ashes

The library has been considerably touched by all the good wishes, kind thoughts and donations that it has already received from friends, colleagues and institutions across the world. The generosity and fortitude of the wider library community has once again been demonstrated by its response to the fire, and there is no doubt that, with your help, the Mackintosh Library will rise again from the ashes. [1]

Help the GSA Library rise from the ashes

Keep informed about the fire affected library services, see the 'wants list' and find out what you can do to help at bit.ly/1yEpnIR
Contact Duncan Chappell if you have titles on the 'wants list' that you would like to donate: d.chappell@gsa.ac.uk

● Follow the GSA Library and Archives at @GSALibrary