

The NPS Library Today and Tomorrow

The National Philatelic Society Library (NPSL): A Society Library and a National Asset

"To maintain, preserve and conserve the Library as a major resource of philately; available and accessible to NPS members and to a wider public and to serve as an aid to scholarship"

The first time that there is reference to book or periodical holdings, or mention of a librarian in the list of society officers, is 1903. So, for more than 100 years the library has been serving JPS and, latterly, NPS members.

It is acknowledged that NPSL is the most easily accessible philatelic library in Britain. If you wish to undertake deep research, or simply browse through the latest magazine or catalogue, members can visit us without relatively little formality or fuss.

NPSL holdings comprise roughly 1,800 linear feet of shelving and cover all stamp collecting disciplines. The library caters for members at every level of experience within the hobby and for those with all types of philatelic interest, however obscure. There are an increasing number of multimedia titles, together with books, monographs, newspapers, catalogues and exhibition publications. Our periodical collections go back to the 1860s when the hobby - still in its infancy - was becoming organised and first written about.

There is an ongoing project to maintain a database of NPSL holdings of books, periodicals and exhibition catalogues – no small task considering its extent. These records are on our Internet site at www.ukphilately.org.uk/nps/db/database.htm enabling members to plan their visit in advance.

Black and white photocopying is available at 10p per single side of A4 (A3: 20p a side). As the library and photocopier are now sited on different floors, it is regretted that it is no longer possible to offer an instant service. The duty librarian may need to wait until cover can be provided and members are asked to be understanding of this constraint. In any event, copying is subject to the international laws of copyright and if there is any risk that material might be damaged by copying, then we regret that we will not allow reproduction. However, almost all requests can be met - just ask if in doubt.

The well documented fire brigade health and safety review of '107' resulted in the library moving from the ground floor to the first and second levels. Member access to the second floor periodical holdings is not feasible due to a lack of suitable volunteers. If you need to examine any periodicals going back more than circa five years, then please ring in advance if possible, or expect to wait until the duty librarian has the opportunity to gain access.

The first floor contains recent periodicals and newspapers, all books and monographs, current and recent auction catalogues, philatelic bureau literature, the Lambert Archive of worldwide article clippings, etc. Members are free to examine these holdings, as all are on open shelves.

The basement storage area has been made strictly off limits to almost everyone by our landlords and there is only Monday to Friday access by those who are authorised, so unfortunately weekend requests to bring something from downstairs must be declined. The basement holds the exhibition catalogues collection, the Stanley Gibbons archive of catalogues (which is more extensive than SGs own!), duplicate holdings and older materials that are rarely - if ever - consulted.

The generosity of individual collectors and organisations is always a source of amazement. The volume of donations in any year amounts to many feet of shelf space, representing thousands of pounds worth of financial support. We invite all members to 'think NPSL' when considering disposal of any philatelic literature, whether it is a single book or a whole library. Our largest continuous benefactors are you, the membership, paying your subscriptions each year - something that we do not take for granted.

So, the future is secured for NPSL, although there is one concern which centres around getting more people to take advantage of its facilities. The library contains a wealth of material not easily found

elsewhere and it is a great source of disappointment that more members do not visit.

Until the move-round at the Centre we used to get around 400 visitors each season. This is now seriously down and we would like to see this figure dramatically increase again in the coming years. Based on feedback, those who use our services are clearly satisfied. The scope of holdings improves daily and a publicity campaign has been instigated to put across our strengths to those yet to take advantage of this aspect of their annual subscription.

The library team are volunteers and work hard to enhance the status of this research facility – why not show your thanks by becoming a user, however infrequently you can make it? We revel in a challenge, being serious collectors ourselves, so see if we can help you solve where that strange postmark you've been pondering over came from, or where that local stamp may have been used. We are more than willing to share our knowledge with members and if you're a 'first timer', then ask the duty librarian for a quick tour to help you get your bearings.

Glenn H Morgan FRPSL, Honorary Librarian, NPSL