

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND ACT 2012

EXPLANATORY NOTES

THE ACT

Functions of NLS

Section 2 – Functions of NLS

8. This section continues as the general function of NLS the function of managing the library known as the National Library of Scotland. This function was first established in section 1(1) of the 1925 Act. The institution of the National Library of Scotland is a reference and research library, as distinct from a lending library, acting as a national resource for amongst other things bibliography (the study of books). The reference to particular regard to Scotland reflects that the institution of the National Library of Scotland is an international centre for the study of Scotland and the Scots and a resource for Scotland's research community.
9. Subsection (2) lists specific functions of NLS to expand on the general function.
10. Subsection (2)(a) gives NLS the function of preserving, conserving and developing its collections. The collections are the sum-total of objects held by NLS. NLS acquires objects through the means referred to in section 3 and also by means of legal deposit under the 2003 Act. NLS might, for example, exercise these functions by engaging specialist conservator-restorers to maintain or bring objects in the collections to a good condition, and by maintaining a collecting strategy for the future development of the collections.
11. Subsection (2)(b) gives NLS the function of making the collections accessible to the public, and also to students and researchers for their special interests. NLS might, for example, exercise these functions by making reading rooms available so that objects in the collections can be brought to persons wishing to consult them¹. Accessibility is not restricted to physical access and includes making the collections available on line to users.
12. Subsection (2)(c) gives NLS the function of exhibiting and interpreting objects in the collections. NLS might, for example, exercise these functions by organising a public display of objects on a particular theme or topic, and developing audio, visual or audiovisual aids to support those wishing to understand the context and cultural significance of an exhibition. NLS might seek the loan of objects in another body's collections to support a particular exhibition (see section 4). This function may also be delivered through on line means.
13. Subsection (2)(d) gives NLS the function of promoting collaboration and the sharing of good practice with and between other persons providing library and information services, such as local authorities. NLS must also promote the adoption of good practice

¹ The National Library of Scotland is generally "closed-stack", which means that objects must be requested from staff and taken by those staff from secure storage areas.

*These notes relate to the National Library of Scotland Act
2012 (asp 3) which received Royal Assent on 21 June 2012*

by those persons. NLS might, for example, exercise these functions by offering advice on the conservation of delicate objects.

14. Subsection (3) lists objectives that NLS must seek to achieve in exercising its general and specific functions.
15. Subsection (3)(a) gives NLS the objective of encouraging education and research. In pursuit of this objective NLS might, for example, make arrangements with universities and colleges so that students are aware of the unique resources within NLS's collections.
16. Subsection (3)(b) gives NLS the objective of promoting understanding and enjoyment of the collections. An example of this might be using on line services as a way to inform new audiences about the range of its collections and, through display and interpretation, promoting greater engagement with the public.
17. Subsection (3)(c) gives NLS the objective of promoting the diversity of persons accessing the collections, for example, by digitising paper resources so that they can be accessed outwith NLS's properties.
18. Subsection (3)(d) gives NLS the objective of contributing to understanding of Scotland's national culture. Scotland's national culture in this paragraph means Scotland's distinctive way of life as a whole, and not only artistic and cultural output. NLS might, for example, hold public lectures and promote new publications on specific aspects of Scottish culture.
19. NLS also exercises functions separately to the Act. NLS claims and receives publications under the 2003 Act, receives copies of registers of electors and makes them available for inspection² and receives print copies of Scottish Statutory Instruments³.
20. Subsections (4) and (5) require NLS to provide the Scottish Ministers with any advice, information and assistance they require (and in the manner they require it) in relation to NLS's functions. NLS may at any other time provide such advice as it considers appropriate.

² Under the Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (S.I. 2001/497 (S. 2) as amended by S.I. 2006/834 (S. 9)) and the Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (S.I. 2001/341 as amended by S.I. 2006/752).

³ Under the Scottish Statutory Instrument Regulations 2011 (S.S.I. 2011/195).