



Carruthers, G. (2017) Introduction: new developments in Robert Burns bibliography. *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 43(2), pp. 301-302.

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Deposited on: 30 July 2018

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Robert Burns: New Adventures in Bibliography

A mini-symposium edited by Robert Betteridge and Gerard Carruthers

Introduction

On 16th March 2017, the University of Glasgow and the National Library of Scotland co-organised a symposium at the NLS on bibliographical matters concerning Robert Burns. The primary motivation for the symposium was to launch a new piece of pilot-research, undertaken by Dr Craig Lamont at Glasgow: a new online and free resource *A Bibliography of Robert Burns for the 21st Century: 1786-1802*. This work had been primed by the passing of the half-centenary since J. W. Egerer's *A Bibliography of Robert Burns* (1964) and also by the labours of the Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded research for 'Editing Robert Burns for the Twenty First Century' underpinning the first phase of the new Oxford University Press edition of the collected works of Robert Burns. During the course of this latter work, it became more and more evident that excellent though Egerer often was, it was a not a fully turned tool for Burnsian bibliographical research. Craig Lamont's paper here explains the new methodology of *A Bibliography of Robert Burns for the 21st Century: 1786-1802*, and its potential for more fully opening up the Burns canon. This opening up of the canon has potential critical implications well beyond 'mere' print history.

Patrick Scott contributed to the symposium a paper explaining both how useful and how limited Egerer was as a starting point for both the print-history and the precise publication-dating of Burns texts, as well as how variants and revised texts need a much richer bibliographical description. Iain Beavan provided insight into Burns in Chapbook, providing an initial survey of frequency of publication by place and year, as well as posing problems and being suggestive of the research opportunities within a corpus of at least 358 items. At the symposium, Robert Betteridge tracked the Burns print-holdings at the National Library of Scotland revealing the contingencies of collections policy and glimpses of the many NLS individual items that need proper accounting for in future detailed bibliographical work. Every bit as much as literary criticism or textual editing, bibliographical studies need generational renewal and it is hoped that in future *A Bibliography of Robert Burns for the 21st Century: 1786-1802* might be expanded and extended as part of the new exhilarated state of Burns Studies in general.