

Submission of *Scottish Language Dictionaries* and *Faclair na Gàidhlig* to the Cultural Commission for Scotland

Language is at the very heart of culture. Without language, whether it be spoken or written or signed, there would be no poetry, no song, no drama, no storytelling, no novels, no debate. However you define culture, language is a fundamental part of an individual's cultural rights. Cultural rights include access to support and information on language. The language we speak is an integral part of who we are. Constantly in our outreach work we are reminded of the empowerment that pride in one's language can bring.

As the custodians and curators of many aspects of language in Scotland, Scottish Language Dictionaries (SLD) plays a central role in the culture of Scotland. Although our interest extends to all the languages of Scotland, we are best known for our Scots dictionaries: the *Scottish National Dictionary*, the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, the online *Dictionary of the Scots Language*, the *Concise Scots Dictionary* and a host of related publications.

The name of this organisation was chosen to include all the languages of Scotland and to bring the expertise in the lexicographical tradition of Scots to the benefit of other languages, including Sign Language, in our multi-cultural nation. Increasingly, our work is reaching out into the community, inviting community involvement in language matters and taking an active part in education at all levels.

With an eye to crossing linguistic boundaries, SLD has been proactive in the setting up of the embryonic *Faclair na Gàidhlig* project steered by the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Strathclyde and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI. The ultimate goal of this project is to produce an historical dictionary of Scottish Gaelic similar in structure to the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*. The early planning stages are concerned with the creation of a textual and editorial foundation for the dictionary project enabling the transference of skills from Scots to Gaelic. The project is closely linked to SLD. We look forward to seeing Scotland's two key indigenous languages sharing expertise and best practice in the years to come.

We are resolved to extend such examples of cooperation and resource sharing to include other language and literature bodies and other cultural organisations. This will increase the scope for the enhancement of opportunity for the Scottish people and visitors to Scotland to experience and enjoy Scots and Gaelic and to appreciate these languages as an essential part of Scottish life and culture.

Since its formation in 2002, SLD has been core funded by the SAC literature department who have been supportive and helpful in every possible way. If any restructuring is to take place, the future of language in Scotland has to be seen alongside the future of literature. Like literature, it is not universally perceived as being included in 'the arts', perhaps as a result of the integration of language and literature within the educational system and their consequent, often artificial, separation from the performing and visual arts. This results in language and literature being somewhat taken for granted so that their contribution to the cultural life of the Scots and the cultural prestige of Scotland abroad is hugely underrated.

One model for implementing the contribution that language has to make to the cultural well-being of Scotland is through an *Institute for the Languages of Scotland* (ILS) funded directly by the Scottish Executive. The ILS would be broadly based and inclusive, recognising that language belongs to the people who use it. While

maintaining the highest standards, the ILS should embrace as many language organisations as possible, establishing a network for the exchange of information and for mutual support and providing clear and easy routes of access to linguistic engagement for anyone in or furth of Scotland with an interest in the languages of Scotland, such as the North American diaspora.

A Feasibility Study, carried out in 2002, (funded by The Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland) showed that there is overwhelming support for such a body. The respondents to the questionnaire suggested that an ILS would have a number of areas of involvement including advising the general public on language; facilitating community group activities; developing electronic collections; engaging in education and lifelong learning; enabling public access to archives; maintaining national dictionaries, assisting with personal and placename studies, encouraging research into language with identifiable outcomes such as dictionaries; and advising public bodies. This forward-looking concept would

- increase the efficiency of language bodies and ensure best value;
- ensure that language is seen as central to the cultural and artistic well-being of Scotland;
- bring together a broad information base for consultation on linguistic matters;
- provide a more unified structure for the advancement of the languages of Scotland in line with national and international expectations.

Many of the aims of an ILS would parallel the aspirations voiced by the Literature Forum for Scotland and the two bodies have natural scope for extensive collaboration and cooperation. Together, these twin pillars of language and literature form the basis for much of Scotland's cultural heritage and future.

We welcome the opportunity that the work of the Cultural Commission will bring to review the arts in Scotland. We would appreciate an opportunity to meet you and discuss these matters in person.

Additional Information

- a) Further information on *Scottish Language Dictionaries* and *Faclair na Gàidhlig*
- b) Key points in the setting up of an ILS
- c) *An Institute for the Languages of Scotland: a Feasibility Study*

Key Points in the setting up of an ILS

- An ILS should address the needs and wishes of speakers of the languages of Scotland inclusively, putting language in its rightful place at the heart of culture and national identity.
- The partner organisations which would come under the umbrella of an ILS are at present funded from a variety of sources including the SAC. Many of them are seriously under-resourced and an ILS would be a strong advocate for projects which deserve funding.
- An ILS would maximise efficiency in the use of funding from all and any sources by preventing reduplication of effort; facilitating resource-sharing; encouraging best practice and upholding standards.
- An ILS would establish Scots and Gaelic in an international setting by benchmarking with international comparators; by building on the widespread interest in Scots and Gaelic that exists abroad among academics, the Scottish diaspora and potential visitors and investors; and by signalling to the international community that Scots and Gaelic are properly valued by the Scottish Executive and the people of Scotland.
- The 'Scottish Cringe' has its origins in linguistic discrimination. The establishment of an ILS would recognise that the speech of the majority of Scots, whether it be Scottish Standard English, Scots or a mixture of both, is in no way inferior to Southern Standard English.
- An ILS would be ideally placed to engage with other agencies such as Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Scottish Development International, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, British Council Scotland, the Scottish Tourist Board and all organisations where the promotion of Scottish culture is advantageous.
- In order to have the stature and level of activity of similar bodies in other countries, an ILS must be funded directly by the Scottish Executive. Some of the potential constituent bodies of an ILS are at present core funded by the SAC and any forward planning must take into consideration the future of the SAC itself. However, if an ILS were properly funded itself, it could be used as an efficient way of channelling funding.

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FACLAIR NA GàIDHLIG

PROJECT SUMMARY

Faclair na Gàidhlig will be a dictionary, edited on historical principles, providing a resource for Scottish Gaelic in the tradition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED, 1933, 1989) and the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST, 2002). The dictionary will provide a full history of the Gaelic language and culture from the earliest manuscript material onwards, allowing Gaelic to be put in context with Irish and Scots.

Faclair na Gàidhlig will be the major language project for Scottish Gaelic, providing a sound nucleus and stimulus for future projects. It will encourage and inform academic research on all aspects of the language and culture. Smaller specialist dictionaries and word lists can be derived from it to meet the needs of Gaelic in the modern world. In particular, it will respond to the needs of Gaelic-medium Education by forming the basis for Gaelic-Gaelic, Gaelic-English and English-Gaelic dictionaries, meeting the needs of students, teachers and parents in this growing sector.

Faclair na Gàidhlig with its authoritative academic voice will touch the lives of all citizens wishing to access information about the language and culture of the Gael.

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIP

The institutional partnership supporting the project comprises the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Strathclyde and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI. Representatives of the institutions form the Strategy Committee for Faclair na Gàidhlig and bring extensive experience and expertise to the project. They are:

Professor D E Meek (Convener), Professor of Scottish and Gaelic Studies, University of Edinburgh.

Professor W Gillies (Vice-Convener), Professor of Celtic, University of Edinburgh.

Professor Elect Thomas Clancy, Department of Celtic, University of Glasgow.

Professor N Gillies, Director, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI.

Emeritus Professor C Ó Baoill, Department of Celtic, University of Aberdeen.

Mr A G B Robertson, Head of Division of Language Education, University of Strathclyde.

The project currently employs one member of staff, Ms L Pike, former Editor of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*.

METHODOLOGY

Traditionally-conceived major dictionary projects cannot be sustained in the context of current funding possibilities. In order to meet this challenge, a radical rethink of earlier dictionary strategy was necessary and has resulted in

a phased approach, which maximises returns by producing a valuable output at each stage as a vital component of the overall goal. Component projects of Phase 1 of Faclair na Gàidhlig are:

Assessment of existing lexicographical resources

This will provide a guide to existing dictionaries of Scottish Gaelic indicating their value to present day users. This component of the project also includes scoping and preliminary work for all projects and for Phase 2. Currently underway, it is funded by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland and the Gaelic Language Promotion Trust and is due for completion early in 2005.

A Textual and Editorial Foundation for Faclair na Gàidhlig

This component, scheduled to begin early in 2005, will create the editorial and textual foundation of the dictionary project. It will consist of an Editorial Manual outlining editorial policy and methodology, and a Text Manual describing some 300 key texts in terms of their value to the dictionary. Funding over a three year period to assist with project development has been received from Bòrd na Gàidhlig. A bid for major funding for three years has been submitted to the Leverhulme Trust, September 2004.

Computer Corpus

This component will produce a computer corpus of the language, consisting of texts listed in the Text Manual, from which the dictionary will draw its raw materials. This will be a joint project by the University of Glasgow and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig UHI for which funding bids will be submitted early in 2005.

Digitisation of early manuscripts

The output from this component will feed into the corpus providing fingertip access to the earliest written evidence. The funding basis for this project is currently under consideration.

Word Collection

This component involves the creation of a system of Word Collection of modern Gaelic which will feed into the corpus and keep it up to date. This project will draw on and be compatible with that currently used by Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd, enabling comparison of data for Gaelic and Scots.

Phase 2, scheduled to begin in 2008, will be production of the dictionary itself, initially in electronic format. This too will be divided into discrete phases with each one producing the historical dictionary for a major period of the language. The dictionary of the modern period, for which there is most urgent demand, will be produced first. The project will then work backwards to the early period. Core-funding possibilities are being actively pursued by the Strategy Committee.

This new approach maximises the creation of significant resources for the language. The historical dictionary project, instead of being a single, end-loaded venture, acts as a catalyst for the creation of a range of resources which the language needs, while each of these in turn forms an essential part of the strategy for Faclair na Gàidhlig.

Lexicographical projects, which benefit all users of language in so many different ways, require secure core-funding to enable project development and dissemination. We work closely with our colleagues in Scots lexicography and other related fields to ensure the principles of best practice and best value are upheld at all times and reduplication of effort is avoided. We welcome the Cultural Commission and the opportunity it presents to review the funding basis for projects such as ours. It is our hope that in the Scotland of the 21st century the national importance of Scottish lexicography will be recognised.

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THE WORK OF SCOTTISH LANGUAGE DICTIONARIES

Dictionaries are fundamental to language. Historical dictionaries record the history and culture of a people, preserving national identity and providing accessibility to its collective memory and its language. These dictionaries provide the foundation for word books for children, schools dictionaries, learners' dictionaries, thesauri and concise dictionaries. They are used by the whole of society, young children in nurseries learning their first words, students in schools, colleges and universities reading the literature of their culture, writers searching for the exact words to express an idea and members of the general public who want to learn more about their own language or who are learning a new language.

Scottish Language Dictionaries Ltd (SLD) was set up in 2002 to develop Scottish lexicography, building on the achievements of the former Scottish National Dictionary Association (SNDA) and the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST). It plays a central role in the culture of Scotland. The name of this organisation was carefully chosen to include the languages of Scotland and to disseminate the expertise in the lexicographical tradition of Scots to the benefit of other languages in our multi-cultural nation.

Core funded by the Scottish Arts Council, whose support has always been greatly appreciated, SLD has to rely heavily on project funding to undertake major and vital work, such as the Supplement to the *Scottish National Dictionary* (SND) made possible by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

SLD has been proactive in the setting up of the embryonic Faclair na Gàidhlig project steered by the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Strathclyde and the UHI Millennium Institute at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

The greatest part of the work of SLD focusses on the Scots language, maintaining and developing existing dictionaries such as the *Scottish National Dictionary* (1931-1976), the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (1937-2002), the online *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (2004) and the *Concise Scots Dictionary* (1985). An essential part of this work is recording the living language in order that our reference resources will accurately reflect everyday speech and current writing. We are also increasingly engaged in outreach work and education at all levels, promoting the Scots language at home and abroad. Our next major project is a revised Linguistic Survey of Scotland in which we hope to work closely with other scholars to obtain an up-to-date picture of the linguistic situation in Scotland today, including Scottish English, Highland English, Scots, Gaelic, newly established languages and how they interface with the indigenous languages, and Scottish dialects of British Sign Language. This ambitious project will involve language and linguistics specialists from a number of Scottish Universities and will attract considerable interest from the international academic community and, importantly, it will directly involve Scottish people of

all ages and from all walks of life who know how much their language means to them, whatever that language may be.

The Word Collection

We collect information on the Scots of today with the help of oral collectors and readers. Anyone who is interested in Scots can take part by gathering words and expressions from their own usage or from that of family and friends, or by marking the Scots words used in the flood of contemporary writing for excerption by SLD's editors. The results are stored in an electronic database which is being used to update our dictionaries and to provide information for researchers.

The New Supplement

Material from the word collection is now being added to the New Supplement to the *Scottish National Dictionary*. This includes new words as they make their way into the Scots lexicon and also extends the record of older words, keeping track of those that are still used and giving more precise information about their geographic distribution. This project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the New Supplement will be available on the Internet in 2005, alongside the online *Dictionary of the Scots Language* (DSL).

The Dictionary of the Scots Language

This exceptional achievement was launched in March 2004. It is an electronic version of the two great historical works of Scots Lexicography, the *Scottish National Dictionary* (10 vols) and the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (12 vols). A project involving the cooperation of six Scottish Universities and funded by a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board, DSL is now available free of charge on the Internet at www.dsl.ac.uk and the *New Supplement* will appear with it from 2005.

The revision of the Concise Scots Dictionary

The *Concise Scots Dictionary* is a distillation of SND and DOST and gives a picture of the whole of the Scots language in a succinct and widely accessible form. Originally published in 1985, when it was a best-seller, it is now in urgent need of updating and revision. As well as adding new material from the word collection, this project will involve the addition of material from the recently published later volumes of DOST (2002). After consultation with a wide range of potential users, a very attractive, user-friendly layout is being piloted with a view to making CSD2 the keystone volume on every Scots bookshelf for the next 20 years.

SLD's Website www.sldl.org.uk

SLD's main website can be regarded as the international face of Scots lexicography. Queries are received from all over the world, but particularly from North America. It is now in urgent need of updating and revision to bring it into line with current expectations in website design.

The *Scuilwab* www.scuilwab.org.uk

This is SLD's website for schools. It celebrates diversity of language and culture among Scots children and provides a resource for pupils and teachers from early years up to Advanced Higher level. This was funded by the Scottish Arts Council and they have just awarded us a further grant to develop the 14+ section of this website.

Linguistic Survey of Scotland Update

Funding has been secured from the British Academy for the initial stage of this project. A one year preliminary study will assess the scope of existing published and unpublished materials, consult with possible collaborators and seek to identify best practice in comparable projects. The lexical aspect of a large scale survey would constitute a major piece of research which SLD is uniquely qualified to undertake.

Outreach

SLD's outreach officer and other members of staff give talks to or chair discussions with schools, children's groups, writers groups, adult learning organisations and anyone with an interest, or potential interest, in Scots. Such two-way communication enables SLD to publicise and improve its services and to widen access to information on Scots language.

We do all this and more with one full time and seven part time members of staff, who also have to find the time to identify possible sources of funding and complete interminable forms in the uncertain hope of raising the resources to carry out projects of national importance. The continuing high morale of SLD's lexicographers is a testimony to the passion that they feel for the Scots language. A more secure source of income and the assured support of the Scottish Executive would guarantee the continuation of projects showing breadth of vision and resulting in tangible outcomes of the highest quality and professionalism with relevance to the cultural life of the Scottish nation.