



Library & University Collections: Sustainability Plan

2026 - 2028

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1. Introduction

Library and University Collections (L&UC) is responsible for the University of Edinburgh's digital and physical collections. We work in partnership with colleagues across our parent group, Information Services, to bring our collections to the University community and global audiences.

Our collections are diverse and include General and Special Collections, Museum and Art Collections and are available in both analogue and digital formats. They support learners and researchers across a wide range of disciplines. Our Heritage Collections help evidence changing climate of Edinburgh and the wider Lothian region and the effect on animals, people and communities over time. As custodians of the University's long history, our collections also offer insight into the University's role over time in both environmental impact and in its preservation, whilst our archives can tell the story of the University in relation to extraction as well as pioneering climate research.

Library & University Collections at the University of Edinburgh believes we are in a state of climate crisis, and we must all take action now to prevent further damage to our planet.

This strategy outlines our approach to taking action across our collections and for all our sites; in our day-to-day operations, in our forward plans, and in the stories we tell and the way we provide access to and interpret our collections for our visitors, both on-site and online.

2. Our Current Situation

Wider context

This Sustainability Plan supports the University of Edinburgh to fulfil its mission and is one of a suite of plans that operate in the context of the University's [Regenerative Sustainability Strategy](#) and the [Community Plan](#).

Our Sustainability Plan supports the [Library & University Collections' Strategic Plan](#) by:

- Focusing on both environmental and financial sustainability in the decisions we make.
- Applying an 'as open as possible and as closed as necessary' policy to collections and spaces.
- Building collections and resources that reflect the diversity of the University, local and wider communities and the diverse viewpoints contained within them.
- Preserving our collections, digital and print, for future users.
- Reviewing our collections, services and spaces to ensure they are sustainable.

The UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals address global challenges including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice to promote a more sustainable and equitable future for all by 2030.

The Library & University Collections Sustainability Plan aligns most closely with 3,4,5,8,10,12,13 and 15 of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Our sites

The University of Edinburgh has 12 libraries spread across its campuses. The Main Library houses the Library's general collections of books and periodicals, older books in all subjects, most of the special collections of rare books and manuscripts, the University archives and the Lothian Health Services Archive. It is the largest of the University's libraries, holds the University's primary print collections in arts, humanities, social sciences, medicine and informatics. It also

For more information on the libraries, opening hours and subject areas, please visit our [webpages](#).

Most of the libraries are situated in and around central Edinburgh but benefit from access to some of Edinburgh's best green spaces. The Main Library is sited in leafy George Square, very close to The Meadows and the Moray House campus is close to the ancient Holyrood Park. The Lady Smith of Kelvin Veterinary Library, based on the Easter Bush campus is on the outskirts of the City in Roslin, not far from the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

Buildings:

Library & University Collections occupies a variety of buildings and sites; from relatively modern to Victorian and several have listed status. Some of the buildings include:

- The Main Library building on the south side of George Square was designed by Sir Basil Spence and is regarded as one of the finest buildings of its type in Europe. It is an A listed building, constructed in 1970.
- New College Library, housed in the New College, is part of a group of buildings of various ages located between Mound Place and the Royal Mile. It was originally designed by William H. Playfair as a church and theological college for the Free Church of Scotland. The building dates from c.1846 and is A listed.
- Noreen & Kenneth Murray Library, on the Kings Buildings site, was built in 2010 and houses the University's principal printed book collections in biology, chemistry, engineering, geosciences, mathematics, physics and statistics as well as the Edinburgh Mathematical Society's book collection.

- The Lady Smith of Kelvin Veterinary Library holds the University's current veterinary collections and also collections to support the Roslin Institute and the Global Academy of Agriculture and Food Systems. It is located within the Teaching Building of the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies at the Easter Bush campus. Easter Bush is located eight miles to the south of Edinburgh city centre, near Penicuik. It was constructed in c.2010.
- Moray House Library is situated at the east side of the city, at the head of St John's Street, the building was reconstructed as a Library in 1996. The Library holds books, journals and other resources in subject areas relevant to the School of Education and Sport. It also houses a collection of children's books and Special Collections relating to the history of Scottish education.
- The Law Library, based in the University's Old College, holds the majority of the University's law collections, specialising in Scots, UK, European and International law. Built around a central quadrangle, the building itself is mixed-use. Designed by Robert Adam in 1789 with interiors by William H. Playfair, this building was originally intended to house the whole of the University. It is also an A listed building.

The nature of our buildings, their age and condition have an impact on how quickly we can initiate and implement change.

3. Our Goals

The goals of the Sustainability Plan for Library & University Collections 2026 – 2028 are:

1. Leadership and Governance
 - We will integrate sustainability into decision making processes across Library & University Collections.
2. Student and Staff Engagement
 - We will ensure that our staff and students are well informed about sustainability efforts and opportunities across the Library and University.
3. Student Curriculum and Experience
 - Will provide and embed opportunities to explore sustainability related issues into curricular projects and extra-curricular activities.
4. Research and Partnerships
 - We will ensure our labs and lab practices are as sustainable as possible and explore partnerships that could help us support our current sustainability goals as well as shape future goals.
5. Operations
 - We will be more efficient in our use of energy, reduce waste and be more efficient in our use of resources, embed responsible purchasing and procurement and make a positive impact on biodiversity.

6. Community Engagement

- We will contribute to the University's Community Plan.

4. Our Sustainability Plan

Goal 1.

We will integrate sustainability into decision making processes across Library & University Collections.

Objectives:

| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Timeline | SDG/s |
|---|--|--|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Establish regular reporting from Library Sustainability Group to SMT | Assign minute taker for meetings using standard template | Library Sustainability Group Chair | May 2026 | N/A |
| Include sustainability as a standing agenda item on all key Library groups/committees | Paper to SMT to request addition of sustainability as a standing item | Library Sustainability Group Chair and Associate Director, Digital Library | September 2026 (new academic year) | N/A |
| Connect with sustainability groups and initiatives in other parts of the University | Work in collaboration with the L&UC EDI group to address climate and social justice. | Library Sustainability Group chair to meet regularly with EDI group | September 2026 (new academic year) | 3, 5, 10, 16 |



Goal 2:

We will ensure that our staff and students are well informed about sustainability efforts and opportunities across the Library and University.

Objectives

| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Timeline | SDG/s |
|---|---|--|------------------------------|--------------|
| Communicate sustainability initiatives and achievements to staff and students | Establish Sustainability webpages Regularly promote Sustainability activity via the Library Newsletter and social media channels | Library Sustainability Group Chair and volunteers from group | End of 2025/26 Academic year | N/A |
| Encourage staff to undertake Sustainability training | 70% L&UC staff have completed Introduction to Sustainability training | Business Admin team to report. | End of 2026 | 13 |

| | | | | |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|----|
| Provide opportunity for staff to complete Carbon Literacy training | As many staff as can be accommodated have completed bespoke Library/Archives/records /special collections Carbon Literacy training | Library Sustainability Group Chair working with SRS | End of 2026 | 13 |
| Support our Sustainability Champions to engage with the rest of the Department community | Identify L&UC Sustainability Champions. Provide regular meetups for L&UC Sustainability Champions | Library Sustainability Group | End of Academic year 2026/27 | 13 |

Goal 3:

We will provide and embed sustainability into curricular projects and extra-curricular activities.

Objectives

| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Timeline | SDG/s |
|---|--|--|------------------------------|----------|
| Support University's Teaching Climate & Sustainability community of Practice | Finds ways to support embedding of climate and sustainability in the academic curriculum | Library staff involved in teaching | End of Academic year 2027/28 | 4,13 |
| Activate collections that support engagement with issues related to climate, regeneration and sustainability. | Develop Library Resource guide(s) Develop Heritage Collections case studies | Volunteers from Library and Heritage Collections | End of 2026/27 Academic year | 4, 13 |
| Signpost resources that support wellbeing | Suggest/purchase resources for Library Wellbeing collection e.g. on eco-anxiety Establish Jigsaw swap | Library Sustainability Group | End of 2026/27 Academic year | 3,12, 15 |

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|--|--|
| | Trial seed bank/swap | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|--|--|

Goal 4:

We will ensure our labs and lab practices are as sustainable as possible.

Objectives

| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Timeline | SDG/s |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Participate in the Sustainable Lab Awards | Conservation and Culture Lab will work towards bronze level lab sustainability awards (or equivalent) | Conservation & Collections Care Manager | By end of 2026/27 Academic year | 12 |

Goal 5:

We will be more efficient in our use of energy, reduce waste and be more efficient in our use of resources, embed responsible purchasing and procurement and make a positive impact on biodiversity.

Objectives

| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Timeline | SDG/s |
|--|--|--|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Encourage staff to be more efficient in their use of energy | Campaign to turn off equipment when not in use | Library Sustainability Group Energy Manager | Throughout Academic year 2026/27 | 12 |
| Promote better waste reduction and encourage more efficient use of resources | Campaign to promote more recycling. Initiate Book Swap on mezzanine staff area. Advertise unwanted items on the Sustainability Champions channel | Library Sustainability Group | Ongoing | 12 |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--------------|
| <p>Consider how we can make a positive impact on biodiversity</p> | <p>Develop roof terrace as an area for nature and a pollinator corridor.</p> <p>Work towards creating a wildlife garden in 29 George Square.</p> <p>Trial a seed bank/seed takeaway in Wellbeing Collection area on 1st floor of Library.</p> <p>Encourage opportunities for staff to improve natural environments locally, e.g. organised litter picking and beach cleans and participating in on-campus events such as The Big Dig.</p> | <p>Library Sustainability Group and volunteers</p> | <p>By end of Academic year 2026/27 and beyond</p> | <p>15</p> |
| <p>Improve the sustainability of our events</p> | <p>Use the University's Sustainable Events Guidance to embed sustainability considerations into the design and delivery of events</p> | <p>Library Sustainability Group to work with any L&UC staff who run events</p> | <p>By end of Academic year 2026/27 and beyond</p> | <p>12,13</p> |

Goal 6:

We will contribute to the University's Community Plan.

Objectives

| Objective | Action | Responsibility | Timeline | SDG/s |
|---|---|------------------------------|--|-------|
| Encourage staff to volunteer, as part of the University's A Day to Make a Difference initiative | Promote opportunities for staff to use 'Day to make a difference' via Sustainability web pages and Library Newsletter | Library Sustainability Group | By end of Academic year 2026/27 and beyond | |

5. Monitoring & Review

The Library Sustainability Group is responsible for putting our Sustainability Plan into effect, monitoring its impact, reporting on its progress, and its review every **2 years**.

Our Sustainability Plan will be made available on the Library webpages.