

Editorial

Applications of digital technology have figured large in recent research and publications in Scottish ethnology. The major digitisation projects initiated or completed during the past decade have involved both of the indigenous languages of Scotland, with the preponderance of Gaelic-based materials reflecting the contents of the School of Scottish Studies archive. Considerable work remains to be carried out in the digitisation of ethnology collections at the national level, while subsequent short-term projects have come on stream. The Carmichael Watson Project aims to develop one of Europe's foremost 19th century folklore collections into an effective modern research tool, at the same time making the materials accessible to communities throughout Scotland. Such social objectives for ethnology are further supported by 'Reconnecting with Gaelic Scotland's Community Traditions', a project launched last year to raise a wider awareness of the importance of the legacy of Scotland's most prolific folklore fieldworker, Calum Maclean. A recent edition of the Elizabeth Ross Manuscript, containing 150 Highland airs from the early 19th century, is now freely available online. Together such recent results form a unique and accessible resource for folklore research. A further major research initiative is the Walter Scott Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border Project, with an aim to produce a new critical edition, and research continues in the fields of calendar customs and community rituals, Scottish emigrant communities, place names, and traditional music (for above see <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/literatures-languages-cultures/celtic-scottish-studies/research-publications/overview>)

It is an encouraging sign for the future of the discipline that three of the six articles in the present volume are the work of a younger generation of scholars now coming into their own. No less heartening is the fact that their articles draw significantly on materials from the sound archive, or from their personal field collections. Research in Gaelic song is further advanced in an examination, likewise based on field recording transcriptions, of the performance by one of Scotland's foremost traditional singers of songs composed centuries ago and in some cases retained in the oral repertoire. Turning to the international context of high art, historical research reveals how a Gaelic version of an international folktale type came to be featured in a well-known European operatic work. Drawing largely on the traditions of Northeast Scotland, the historical strand is extended back many centuries in a study that sheds light on the distribution of a custom whose origins, as suggested by comparisons with related cultures, may well reflect a survival from Indo-European times, continuing a long-standing and active interest among Scottish ethnologists in the "deep" history of Scotland's traditions.

Following a decision taken last year by the Editorial Board, *Scottish Studies* will be available online (<http://journals.ed.ac.uk/scottishstudies>) as an open access journal beginning with the present volume, with a limited number of hard copies still available. In addition to providing universal access research that has been supported at least in part by public funds, the new format will bring to our discipline the advantages of wider dissemination of results and greater technical flexibility, including sound and video 'companions', to present and future publications.