News Release

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PRESS CALL

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TREASURES ROOM, MAIN LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,
GEORGE SQUARE EH8 9LJ

Online resource puts people in touch with capital's literary past

An interactive resource that brings Edinburgh's rich literary heritage to life will be showcased at a media preview event on Monday (March 30).

The novelists Sir Walter Scott and Mrs Margaret Oliphant – brought to back to life by *Artemis Scotland* heritage interpretation services – will be at the University of Edinburgh's Main Library to help launch the new digital tool.

Rare works from the University's collections – including early editions of Scott's celebrated novel *The Heart of Midlothian* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Edinburgh Picturesque Notes* – will also be on display at the launch.

The interactive website allows book lovers to take a virtual literary tour of Scotland's capital. Users of the *Lit Long: Edinburgh* site can click on a map featuring more than 1,600 sites in the city, and call up extracts of literature that have links to the landmarks.

The resource, which will be developed into a mobile phone app later this year, enables users to interact with Edinburgh's literature in a variety of ways. It will be possible to follow trails linked to specific authors, specific works and eras of literature.

Literary experts and computer scientists at the University of Edinburgh and the University of St Andrews have matched satellite maps with more than 47,000 literary excerpts to create the site.

For the past fifteen months researchers have created a data set of literature by mining the text of more than 550 books, including work by acclaimed writers such as Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Irvine Welsh and Alexander McCall Smith.

Commenting on *Lit Long: Edinburgh*, Alexander McCall Smith said: "Edinburgh's literary heritage is evident in the very fabric of the city. Many of the buildings that were familiar to Scottish writers of the past are still here - this means we can stand where Burns, Scott and Stevenson stood. This means we can inhabit the same world lived in by the poets of the 20th century Scottish literary renaissance. It is all still here."

Ranked among the top universities in the world

The fifteen-month project has been funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as part of their investment in Big Data, announced by the then-Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts in 2014. It is supported by The Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust.

The researchers accessed digital collections from all over the world for the projects – including works held by The British Library, The National Library of Scotland, and Project Gutenberg – an archive of digital and cultural works.

Project Director Professor James Loxley, of the University of Edinburgh's School of Literatures, Languages, and Cultures, said: "*Lit Long: Edinburgh* offers readers a genuinely new way to get inside literary Edinburgh.

"It has the potential to shape the experience and understanding of critics and editors, residents and visitors, readers and writers. We believe the Lit Long concept is a fantastic resource for literary tourism, which could readily be adopted by other cities around the world with a rich literary heritage."

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