

### **4.1.1 Mission Statement: Library Services at Gladstone’s Library**

The Reading Rooms are the heart and founding principle of Gladstone’s Library. A residential library from its inception, the collections have never been intended to provide silent reading at home but to foster a scholarly community filled with debate. The original corrugated-iron structure was little more than two silent Reading Rooms; when this was replaced the Reading Rooms were the starting point of the John Douglas-designed, neo-Gothic building that has stood since 1902 as the national memorial to one of the UK’s most significant statesmen.

Open to the public since the 1880s, the mission of the collection is to encourage ‘divine learning’. William Gladstone’s original collection of 32,000 books founded the Library; today it stands as a central heritage collection, informing the collection policy of both books and archives. We can no longer collect in all of the twenty-one original Gladstonian areas, but since 2010 the Library actively collects in the three great Gladstonian interests: theology and religion; history and politics; literature and literary culture. We are committed to the conservation and preservation of the Gladstone Foundation Collection, and to the maintenance of a contemporary collection which echoes our founder’s interests.

In many ways, this means the collections today can look very different to that which Gladstone collected. Readers may find books on topics which they feel are not ‘Gladstonian’ and which Gladstone would not have read. This is to miss the central tenet of what it is to be Gladstonian, which is to seek knowledge even if – perhaps especially if – it challenges your own.

The Reading Rooms remain as they have always been: a silent space for study. They offer readers from across the world a haven in which to read and write. We are proud to say hundreds of publications – fiction and non-fiction, academic and creative – have been written or researched here. Gladstone’s Library is committed to contributing to international scholarship, and we work to make much of our collections available online.

#### **Document Control**

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#### **Revision History**

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1.0	2012	Created
2	2018	Digital Gladstone
3	2020	Revised