

Successes & highlights from 2024

December 2024

Season's greetings from Oxford! As we approach the end of another busy year, this letter is an opportunity to thank you for your on-going support for Quill's mission to offer an in-depth, comparative study of the complex negotiations that underpin modern constitutional government.

In what has been described as “the biggest election year in human history,”¹ our mission could not be more critical. Democratic regimes around the world are facing a crisis of legitimacy: hard-won norms and understandings on which we rely to preserve basic rights and freedoms are being eroded, while identity wars and global protest movements played out on social media and the streets, have fuelled division and distrust in institutions. In this context, Quill has established itself as a mature, international project with a wide portfolio of research and a diverse user base, offering innovative technological and methodological solutions to confront these fundamental issues.

We want to share with you in this letter some of the ways our work has been recognized recently by the award of significant peer-reviewed research council and government grants.



The Attorney General of Arkansas, Tim Griffin, has launched a new project on the Arkansas constitution. Watch news coverage [here](#).

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission has enabled a new project in partnership with UVU to add seven further state constitutions to our study of state constitutional history. In addition to this federal funding, emerging collaborations with other universities are helping us to meet our ambition to be the most detailed repository of state constitutional texts available anywhere. The launch of an exciting new partnership with the University of Arkansas was captured at a press conference in November.



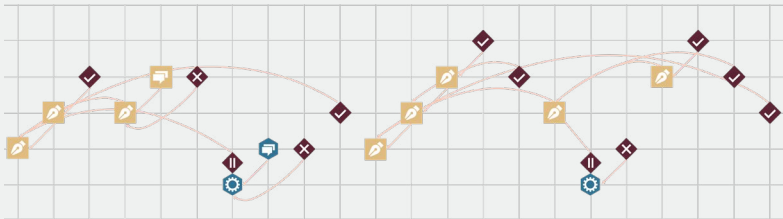
Indian Constitution 1950: Pluralist Agreement and Constitutional Transformation (PACT). The PACT project, funded by a UK research council, is making a ground-breaking contribution to the study of post-colonial constitution-making, shedding light on the negotiations of the Indian Constituent Assembly that took place against the backdrop of Partition, communal violence, and the largest mass migration in history. Two years of archival research has brought to light thousands of amendments tabled to the Constitution which have never been published. A full project launch is expected in July 2025.

¹ United Nations Development Programme

Challenges and Opportunities for 2025

As we look ahead to 2025, we are seeking support to build on our successes in two key areas:

Technical Developments and Impact. We want to ensure Quill remains at the forefront of technical developments and research around collaborative editing and information recovery. In particular, we recognise the importance of strengthening our core infrastructure to support a wider range of projects and enhance our value to the legal and educational communities. Funding to build a twenty-first century in-house software team to support new projects and users would ensure that future iterations of Quill could include an app for legal researchers and AI-enabled chat features for high school students. This level of redevelopment would require an annual investment of \$250,000 per year over a period of five years.



Establishment of a permanent research centre in Pembroke College, Oxford. Our current funding horizon is five years, but we believe a project of global significance that explains how systems of government have evolved over time, and informs contemporary debate around the implications for developing robust democratic systems and securing civil liberties today, deserves a permanent home in Pembroke, an institution that traces its study of jurisprudence back to Blackstone. At a critical moment in the history of democracy and at a time of dangerous polarization, we hope you will join with us in building a vibrant transatlantic community that will understand and rebuild trust in documents that guarantee our rights and freedoms and underpin liberal democracy within the US and beyond. A full case for support is available [on request](#).



We are deeply grateful for donations received in support of our ongoing research and collaborations as well as pledges towards our development plans. These can be made tax-efficiently through the Pembroke Foundation of North America: <https://pcfna.org>.

Digitizing the Drafting of the Australian Constitution. A recent referendum and discussions around leaving the British Commonwealth have ensured that the Australian Constitution has frequently featured in public discussion in recent years. Our digital edition, in collaboration with many of Australia’s leading academic lawyers, will make available for the first time the complete record of the drafting process, highlighting the issues that were most important to the drafters at the time, while offering academics and lawyers today access to a wealth of data when engaging in contemporary legal debate.



Writing Peace. Our work on the peace process in Northern Ireland continues to draw international attention. The launch of a digital edition of the Downing Street Declaration in Dublin in December 2023 was extremely well received and has led to new collaborations with a range of archives and institutions across Ireland, as well as an invitation for the team to meet Senator George J. Mitchell in May 2024. Funding for this work, which is of huge public import, is currently ending in July 2025.



Free Speech, Constitutional Texts and the Courts. A grant from the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) is allowing us to utilize the collections of both Quill and the Caselaw Access Project at Harvard to investigate the state of free speech protections in state constitutional law and in state and Federal courts, with a focus on how more recent court decisions have engaged with historical material, and the degree to which there is a convergence or disconnect between what is said about free speech in constitutional conventions and how it is interpreted in case law.

Our ambition is to grow the Quill Project, to open doors for new research, to influence public debate, and to make our resources accessible to a wide range of users.