

ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2013 IRELAND

National Library of Ireland Fiona Ross – Director

Mailing address: National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone: +353 (0)1 6030200 Fax: +353 (0)1 6766690
Web address to Library: www.nli.ie Email contact for library: fross@nli.ie

Overview

Established in 1877, the National Library of Ireland's holdings constitute the most comprehensive collection of Irish documentary material in the world and offer an invaluable representation of Ireland's history and heritage. This year the NLI continued to develop its collections, to expand services and improve access to its rich collections through its exhibition and outreach activities, and through its ongoing programme of digitization.

Constitution and Function

The NLI is an autonomous State body, governed by a Board that reports to government through the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997 sets out its functions as follows:

*"The principal functions of the Board of the Library shall be to conserve, restore, maintain and enlarge the library material in the collection of the Library for the benefit of the public and to establish and maintain a record of library material (including material relating to the Irish language) in relation to Ireland and to contribute to the provision of access by members of the public to material relating to other countries."*¹

The NLI is a legal deposit library for Ireland and is entitled to receive a copy of all books, pamphlets, newspapers and periodicals first published in the State. The National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997 as amended by the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 provides for the extension of legal deposit to material in non-printed formats including electronic material; however not all of the relevant provisions of the Act have commenced. Copyright legislation in Ireland, including provision for legal deposit, is currently under review. In 2012, the NLI's views and recommendations in relation to the extension of legal deposit in Ireland were formally submitted to the Copyright Review Committee.

The NLI current strategic plan 'Building a Future for our Past' sets out the Library's key objectives as:

- Collecting and preserving for future generations: Our goal is to collect and preserve for current and future users the documentary and intellectual heritage of Ireland in all formats from digital media to historic manuscripts.
- Facilitating access: Our goal is to maximise the availability of the Library's collections by providing the full choice of access from personal visits to digital platforms.
- Transforming: Our goal is to bring together our founding ideals with the potential offered by technology to transform the 21st century National Library of Ireland into an organisation driven by the pursuit of excellence as it meets the needs of the broadest spectrum of users.

Under proposed new legislative arrangements, the governance of the NLI will change and a single statutory National Museum and Library Advisory Council will be established in place of the existing boards at both institutions. The new Advisory Council will have a specific role in relation to promoting fundraising and philanthropic opportunities in respect of capital and development projects, international linkages and partnerships. The Irish Manuscripts Commission, while retaining its existing functions, will be re-constituted as a *pro bono* committee of academic experts with its staff and funding being brought within the administrative remit of the NLI.

Key facts and figures

¹ Section 12(1) of National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997

The NLI currently has 84.6 full-time equivalent staff. The Government's Employment Control Framework has set a figure of 76 staff for the Library to be reached by the end of this year (2013). This will result in a 34% reduction in the Library's core staff since the moratorium on recruitment in 2009. The NLI's funding from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht including pay, current and capital expenses is €6.605m for 2013. This represents a 7% reduction on the Library's 2012 allocation and a 44% decrease in funding since 2008.

The total holdings in the collection amount to over 10 million items. Over 180,000 people visited the Library in person in 2012. These visits ranged from research visits to our reading rooms and family history service, through families attending workshops, to national and international visitors to our exhibitions. Virtual visitors to all platforms grew from 1.2 million in 2011 to almost 3 million in 2012, reflecting the increasing demand for online access to our collections and services, and our enhanced ability to deliver the resources of the Library throughout Ireland and internationally.

New developments in creating and building collections

The NLI acquires material through purchase, donation and legal deposit. The Library's collection focus is on material on or relating to Ireland with a view to providing a record of Ireland's output in print, manuscript and other media for present and future users and also to collect reference material to support use of the collections.

Among key acquisitions in 2012 was the donation of their archive by the Irish Labour Party. Presented to the Library in October by party leader and Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister), Eamon Gilmore, TD, the archive greatly complements other collections in the Library including 20th century political papers and collections relating to the history of the Irish labour movement, such as the Jim Larkin and William O'Brien papers, and the archive of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. As well as donating 50 boxes of material, the Labour Party has engaged a full-time archivist to catalogue the archive. Other significant donations included correspondence and other material relating to Arthur Griffith, one of the founding figures of modern Ireland, and a collection of papers of Maud Gonne McBride (bequeathed by her daughter Anna MacBride White). An important collection of coloured negatives of Bloody Sunday 1972 and the weeks that followed was donated by the photographer William L. Rukeyser.

New developments in managing collections

The main challenge the Library faces in terms of collection care is one of inadequate and unsuitable storage. In 2012, the NLI developed its business case for the development of a shared facility with the libraries of Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin. It is envisaged that the facility will meet the urgent storage needs of the three library collections, as well as the longer-term needs of Irish research libraries in general. While these longer-term storage requirements continue to be of significant concern, the NLI's immediate and medium-term requirements continue to be addressed as effectively as possible.

Several major cataloguing projects have been initiated and carried out in 2012 and 2013 in order to facilitate digitisation projects. These include manuscript, print and ephemeral material from 1912-22, the so-called 'decade of commemorations', a decade of huge social and political change in Ireland; upwards of 1,100 portraits of Irish persons from the 17th through to the 20th century in the Prints and Drawings department have been catalogued. In preparation for the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo more than 200 prints from our extensive collection of French prints were catalogued – digital images of these items will be made available on our online catalogue in the near future. In 2013 a project to catalogue 2,400 topographical prints, 1,741 historical ephemera and 2,800 autograph letters and other manuscript material has been commenced.

New developments in providing access to the collections

Research Support & Facilities

Research Support & Facilities: The microfilms of *The Irish Times*, one of our most heavily used resources, were made accessible in the main reading room on a self-service basis, and we intend to make further newspaper titles available in this way in 2013.

WiFi: Free access to WiFi was rolled out in the reading rooms during 2012, to everyone holding a reader's ticket. This enables researchers to combine research on original material in our collections with access to our online subscription services, and with additional research materials to which they may have digital access elsewhere.

Family History: Throughout 2012, Library staff were assisted by 8 volunteers and in the busy summer months by professional genealogists. We hosted a series of lunchtime lectures on aspects of Irish genealogy every lunchtime during August 2012 and a similar series is also underway during July/August 2013. In addition, we produced a new genealogy booklet *Family History Research: Sources at the National Library of Ireland* in anticipation of The Gathering in 2013.

Exhibitions

NLI exhibitions continue to provide an important means of making the collections accessible. Exhibitions include 'Life & Works of William Butler Yeats' (2006-present); 'Discover Your National Library: Particles of the Past' (2012-2013) and 'Homecoming: JFK in Ireland' (2013). In the National Photographic Archive exhibitions included the Dublin Institute of Technology Graduate School of Photography end of year show (2012); Photolreland Festival exhibitions 'Living-Leaving' and 'Sean Hillen: Photographs from the North of Ireland 1979 – 1990' (2012); and 'Taking Stock: the National Photographic Archive from 1998' (2012-2013). A number of exhibitions travel both nationally and internationally. The NLI Learning and Outreach Department hosts a large number of activities to complement the exhibition programme and enhance people's awareness of the collections.

Digital Library

In the first six months of this year, we have added 12,000 digital items to the Library's online catalogue. Consequently, there are now 54,430 items or 11% of the Library's catalogued materials are available to view online. You can see the full detail of any of these images by using our Mega Zoomifier (patent pending) image viewers; this allows you to zoom in and move around the image in great detail.

Collaboration with other national collecting institutions

The Library plays an active role in collaborating with other collecting institutions. The principal and ongoing collaborations are with the Council of National Cultural Institutions (CNCI), Consortium of National and University Libraries (CONUL) and the Library Association of Ireland (LAI).

The NLI also continues to strengthen its links with third level colleges and universities. In 2012, an art history project was commissioned by the University College Dublin School of Art History and Cultural Policy to interpret the Library's Large Book Room Collection and provide access for students of the UCD MA in Art History and the National College of Art and Design MA in Design History and Material Culture. These large illustrated books include volumes on science, agriculture, zoology, botany, art, architecture and antiquity. In cooperation with the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, work continued on a project which focuses on 18th and 19th century rentals and valuation surveys in the papers of landed estates. Working in cooperation with Notre Dame University, a cataloguing project focusing on the papers of Irish political leaders of the early 20th century commenced.

A scoping study of the NLI's uncatalogued music collection was carried out by Répertoire International des Sources Musicales Ireland and Dublin Institute of Technology which has enabled us to have a better understanding of one of the finest music collections in Ireland. As part of this study the team discovered the first symphony ever composed in Ireland – sections of which were previously thought to have been lost forever.

On 5 November 2012, the NLI in partnership with the Hunt Museum held its second World War I Family History Roadshow day in Limerick. The public visited the Hunt Museum to have their personal items digitally photographed, catalogued and placed on the Europeana 1914-1918 virtual archive.

The NLI partnered with the National Archives of Ireland, the John F Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum and the US Embassy in Dublin in developing the 'Homecoming: JFK in Ireland' exhibition. This exhibition marks the 50th anniversary of US President John F Kennedy's historic visit to Ireland in June 1963.