

ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2012

IRELAND

National Library of Ireland

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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 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.

The NLI published its Strategic Plan 2012-2014 'Building a Future for our Past' in which it sets out its 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.

The Strategic Plan 2012-2014 is available at <http://www.nli.ie/en/udlist/reports-and-policy-documents.aspx>

On 17 November 2011, the Government published its 'Public Service Reform Plan' in which it reaffirmed its commitment to merge the National Archives of Ireland and the Irish Manuscripts

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

Commission into the National Library while maintaining separate identities (announced on 14 October 2008). The Government also seeks to examine the issue of shared services and Board structure of both the National Library of Ireland and National Museum of Ireland.

Key Facts and Figures

The NLI has 88.7 full time equivalent staff at 30 June 2012. The Government's Employment Control Framework (ECF) has set a figure of 75 staff for the Library to be reached by 2015. This will result in a 32% reduction in the Library's core staff since the moratorium on recruitment in 2009. Its funding from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht including pay, current and capital expenses is €7.12m for 2012. This represents a 12% reduction on the Library's 2011 allocation. The total holdings in the collection amount to over 8 million items. Visitor/user numbers increase year on year and in 2011 amounted to 206,000. Virtual visitors to all platforms grew to 1.2 million in 2011.

Collection Development

The NLI collects 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.

One of the key acquisitions of 2011 was the literary archive of Irish Nobel laureate Dr Seamus Heaney. This collection illuminates Dr Heaney's extensive career as a teacher, academic, broadcaster, literary critic and man of letters. At the heart of the archive are the manuscripts of Seamus Heaney's poetry including loose-leaf, typescript and manuscript worksheets, and bound notebooks that span his literary career from the publication of his first major collection *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) to the recently published *Human Chain* (2010).

In 2011, the NLI was the first institution in Ireland to undertake the systematic collecting of websites. This collection initiative coincided with the General Election & Presidential Election. As a consequence, the NLI has a rich web archive including candidate sites, political party sites and political commentary sites.

Also in 2011 the NLI was honoured to accept the donation of the personal and political archive of Michael D. Higgins who, in October, was elected the ninth President of Ireland.

Managing Collections

The main challenge the Library faces in terms of collection care is one of inadequate and unsuitable storage. In August, along with the libraries of Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin, the NLI announced the commencement of a 4-month project to examine the feasibility of developing a shared facility to meet the urgent storage needs of their 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 continue to be addressed as effectively as possible.

In September 2011, the NLI launched 'The Clean Sweep' project. The first-phase, which lasted four months, involved the cleaning and preserving of more than 50,000 rare and iconic books dating from the early 1600s onwards. We are currently undertaking the second-phase in which the rare books will be housed in another area of the Library with a more controlled environment and with clean, modern shelving.

In 2011 and 2012, the NLI engaged in rapid conversion of its legacy data including the conversion of 50,000 photographic descriptions, 15,000 records related to Irish music and the conversion of its foundation catalogue which, when completed in July 2012, will increase the number of items in the catalogue by approx. 33% and for the first time allow users to search across all of the Library's printed material.

Accessibility

In response to falling staff numbers and changing access patterns, the NLI introduced an advance ordering facility to all its reading rooms on the 3 May 2011. The system is under constant review and in February 2012, the services were enhanced to make it easier to order material. New self-service copying equipment and new online services facilities were also introduced.

In 2012, the NLI conducted a survey of its users: the results showed that the majority of users ranked online access to collections and services as their preferred method of access. In line with this trend, the NLI recently rolled out its digital repository to store and manage its digital content. Over 10,000 new items digitised in 2011 are to be made available through the digital repository through 2012.

The NLI is also undertaking plans to provide the widest possible access to a number of James Joyce manuscripts. As of 16 June 2012, to coincide with Bloomsday (the NLI had 900 visitors that day) and the XXIII International James Joyce Symposium, James Joyce manuscripts acquired by the NLI since 2000 are available on the NLI website in very high-resolution formats.

NLI exhibitions continue to provide an important means of making the collections accessible. Exhibitions include 'Life & Works of William Butler Yeats' (2006-present); 'Discover Alice Milligan' (2010-2011); 'Tall Tales and Deadly Drawings' (2011); 'Particles of the Past' (2012); 'Power & Privilege: Photographs of the Big House in Ireland' (2010-2011); 'Small Lives: Portraits of Irish Childhood' (2011-2012). A number of exhibitions travel both nationally and internationally. The NLI Outreach and Learning Department hosts a large number of activities to compliment the exhibition programme and enhance people's awareness of the collections.

From 2011, the NLI has used social media such as Flickr, Facebook and Twitter, and a locally hosted blog, to inform the public of Library's collections and services. In 2012, the NLI received the first e-government social media award and another Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Award.

Collaboration with other collecting institutions

The Library plays an active role in collaborating with other collecting institutions. The principal and ongoing collaborations are with the Consortium of National and University Libraries (CONUL), the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) and the Committee on Library Co-operation in Ireland (COLICO).

The NLI also continues to strengthen its links with third level colleges and universities. The Collaborative Storage project described earlier is just one of a number of joint projects underway during the period 2010-12. In 2010, the NLI and Trinity College Dublin appointed a Cultural Co-ordinator to advance a two-year blueprint for strategic partnership projects that link third level education with culture and arts at a local and international level. In 2011, the NLI supported the MPhils in Digital Humanities and Culture and in Public History in Trinity College Dublin through the provision of bursaries and internship opportunities. Collaborative projects are also in train with the National University of Ireland Maynooth (18-month Fellowship in History), Notre Dame University (1916 sources project) and University of New South Wales (William Smith O'Brien and the Young Ireland movement).

On 21 March 2012, the NLI held its first every World War I Family History Roadshow day in which 600 people visited the Library to have their personal items digitally photographed, catalogued and placed on the Europeana 1914-1918 virtual archive. It was one of the largest attendances ever experienced at a Europeana roadshow.

Finally, a National Archive of Irish Composers has also been developed through the collaboration of the NLI, Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) Conservatory of Music and Drama, DIT Digital Media Centre and Heritage Music Productions Ltd. Sheet music for largely forgotten 18th century Irish composers'