

ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2010

IRELAND

National Library of Ireland
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Overview

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 National Library of Ireland continued to expand services and improve access to its rich collections through its exhibition and outreach activities, and through its ongoing programme of digitisation. This is the first report to the conference under the new directorship of Ms. Fiona Ross, having been appointed as Director of the National Library of Ireland in March.

Constitution and Function

The National Library of Ireland is an autonomous State body, governed by a Board that reports to government through the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport. 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 National Library of Ireland 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, although not all of the relevant provisions

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

of the Act have commenced. A key strategic objective for the Library is to plan for the extension of the legal deposit.

A recent significant development was the announcement in 2008 that the National Archives of Ireland and the Irish Manuscript Commission would be merged into the National Library of Ireland. This presents significant challenges as well opportunities for the National Library. Legislation is currently being prepared to enable this decision.

Key Facts and Figures

The National Library of Ireland had 101 full time equivalent staff at March 2010. Its funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport including pay, current and capital expenses is €10.46m for 2010. The total holdings in the collection amount to over 8 million items. Visitor/user numbers increase year on year and in 2009 amounted to 138,809. The Library's website received 444,783 visits in 2009.

Collection Development

The Library 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.

The National Library of Ireland's Collection Development Policy 2009-2011 may be seen at <http://www.nli.ie/en/udlist/reports-and-policy-documents.aspx> This sets out the general criteria governing the selection of material for acquisition as well as the specific collecting objectives by (a) curatorial area and (b) thematic collection. The Collection Development Policy underpins all of the collection development decisions made by Library staff in the various collection areas.

One of the key acquisitions during the period was a collection of original journals and trial papers of Irish Nationalist and leader of the Young Ireland Movement, William Smith O'Brien. The material relates to the trial of O'Brien following his arrest for his part in an ill-organised rising in Tipperary in 1848. These include his journals while imprisoned in Tasmania and also his impressions and experiences of travel throughout Europe and North America.

Managing Collections

The main challenge the Library faces in terms of collection care is one of inadequate and unsuitable storage. Notwithstanding these challenges the Library has continued to manage this risk with available resources. Increasing digital capacity is an important element in the management of this risk.

The Library is developing the digital library infrastructure needed to meet evolving collection management and delivery requirements, for both physical and digital materials,

and is currently engaged in the overall infrastructural design. Software components of this solution will include amongst others the standard ILS Virtua and a digital repository system built on the Fedora-based VITAL, both VTLS products. This solution will be underpinned by an ongoing assessment of storage requirements for digital content.

Accessibility

The Library is committed to improving access to its collections through exhibitions and through its online resources. During the period the Library launched the exhibition, *Discover your National Library: Explore, Reflect, Connect* which provides a unique opportunity for the public to view first-hand a representative selection of the Library's holdings. Among the artefacts on display are rare manuscripts such as the Book of Maguarian dating from the Middle Ages and a deed signed by Sir Walter Raleigh. The exhibition makes extensive use of digital media. One of the most popular features is an interactive table using Microsoft Silverlight technology, which enables the visitor to zoom in on images of objects from the collections which can be seen in amazing detail. The online version of the exhibition can be seen at <http://www.nli.ie/discover>

The delivery of two new online resources has significantly increased remote access to the Library's catalogues and collections. Digital Photographs Online makes 34,000 images from the Library's extensive collection of historic Irish photographs available to search and view, at www.nli.ie/digital-photographs.aspx. These images were digitised as part of a major project to scan rare and fragile glass plate negatives, preserving the originals while transforming access to the content.

Sources: A National Library Database for Irish Research consists of 180,000 records for core Irish manuscripts and periodical articles, at <http://sources.nli.ie/>. Based on original records digitised and encoded using the MODS standard from the Library of Congress, this is a key research resource for the Irish research community, local historians, and everybody interested in any aspect of Irish culture and studies. The online resource was fully designed and delivered inhouse, and is powered by the next generation library portal [VuFind](#), with records indexed using [Solr](#), a scalable enterprise search server. Users worldwide can now search for and identify records of materials housed in the Library or in hundreds of other universities and research institutions, and share their finds using social media tools.

A key strategic objective for the Library is the creation of a single discovery interface through which users can identify and access all our materials and resources, and will be a priority throughout 2010.

Collaboration with other collecting institutions

The Library plays an active role in collaborating with other national collecting institutions. The principal and ongoing collaborations are with the Consortium of National and University Libraries (CONUL) and the Library Association of Ireland. Major collaborations over the period included the Library's participation in the Dublin

City Council initiative Dublin One City One Book led by Dublin City Public Libraries. The programme is designed to encourage everyone in Dublin to read the same book during the month of April in each year. This year the choice of book was Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the Library displayed some of the earliest copies of the novel and a copy of the first illustrated edition published in 1908. The Library also hosted lectures by visiting experts on the featured book.