

CENL

Report of the National Library of Ireland 2004/2005

Summary

1. The year 2004/05 has marked a further period of development for the National Library of Ireland. The most important development during the period was the establishment of a new statutory board for the institution. The Library's much-praised exhibition *James Joyce and Ulysses at the National Library of Ireland* continues to attract significant numbers of visitors. The period saw further developments in relation to retrospective conversion, cataloguing and collection development generally.

Constitution, etc

- 2.1 The National Library of Ireland was established by act of parliament in 1877. The legislation provided that the Library would operate under the supervision of a Council of twelve Trustees, eight of whom would be appointed by the Royal Dublin Society and four by the Government. The Library was in effect a unit of the relevant government department and staff were civil servants.
- 2.2 In 1997 new legislation was enacted to establish the Library as an independent state body with a new Board being appointed with executive responsibility for the Library. The Board provided for in this legislation was established on May 3rd 2005. The Library now operates as a state body with staff moving from the civil service to become employees of the Board.
- 2.3 Certain sections of the 1997 Act have yet to come into effect. These include provisions relating to the extension of mandatory legal deposit.

Funding

3. Funds allocated to meet the operating costs of the Library have increased steadily in recent years. The funds allocated in 2004 amounted to €9.69m. The increased funding has allowed for further development of the Library's collections, the expansion of its ICT services, and the reduction of arrears of cataloguing and other work that had built up in various areas. Resources generated by the Library from sales of goods, reprographic and other services amounted to almost 3.5% of total income in 2004.

¹ See www.aichtanna.ie/zza11y1997.1.html for the full text of this legislation.

Buildings

- 4.1 The annual report to CENL for 2003/04 provided a comprehensive summary of developments in relation to the National Library's Building Development Programme.
- 4.2 Regrettably there has been little progress with regard to the completion of the remaining phases of the building development programme.
- 4.3 The National Library has a particular need for additional storage space as existing space is now fully occupied and is of a standard that does not meet international requirements. While plans have been drawn up and planning permission obtained this permission has lapsed. It remains to be seen if the money required to fund the development will be made available in the next few years.

Staffing matters

- 5.1 The Annual Report to CENL for 2003/04 gave a comprehensive summary of improvements in staffing numbers that had taken place over the previous few years. Staffing numbers in the Library have risen steadily in recent years and stood at 112 at the end of 2004.
- 5.2 Mr Aongus Ó hAonghusa, who had been the Library's Head of Administration and subsequently Acting Director was appointed to the position of Director in February 2005.

Information technology and networks

- 6.1 The development of information technology systems is of key importance to the Library. Emphasis is being placed on improving service through the Library's web site. Access is now available on the site to catalogues and lists of books, manuscripts, prints, and photographs.
- 6.2 A project to digitise some 40,000 photographs from the Library's collections is in progress and will result in high quality files that can be supplied to customers as well as images that will be accessible through the Library's website. The feasibility of a similar project involving the Library's collections of portraits and topographical prints is being examined.
- 6.5 Among the cooperative digitization projects in which the National Library has participated is the ISOS (Irish Script on Screen) project organised by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. Some 30 of the Library's Gaelic manuscripts were digitised in the ISOS (Irish Script on Screen) project

Legal deposit of materials

- 7.1 Under existing copyright legislation the Library is entitled to receive, without charge, a copy of every book first published in the Irish State. By virtue of this provision, 1,870 books were received in 2004. New copyright legislation has been enacted in Ireland: the *Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000*. However, the sections containing revised legal deposit provision (sections 198 and 199) have not yet been commenced. Pending the commencement of these sections, the Library is entitled only to printed items, under the terms of the *Copyright Act, 1963*.
- 7.2 The National Library produces monthly lists of material received by it under legal deposit legislation (and some items from other sources). For the main part, these lists give details of new and recent publications, with an occasional older item. These lists are produced in PDF format, and are distributed by e-mail to libraries and the book trade. The lists from January 2005 onwards are also accessible on the Library's website.

Acquisitions

- 8.1 2004 was another active year for the National Library of Ireland in terms of acquisitions. Notable acquisitions were made across a range of collection categories including books, manuscripts and photographs.
- 8.2 The National Library's graphic collections were particularly enriched by a number of signal acquisitions, including:
- One of Ireland's major newspaper groups, **Independent Newspapers (Ireland)** donated its **entire photographic collection**, comprising more than 300,000 images and covering an 84-year span, to the Library. The material is of immense historical value. As well as providing a record of all aspects of 20th century Irish life, it will help to fill in gaps in the National Library's existing collection of photographs of politics and sport in Ireland.
 - The family of the prominent **photographer Fergus Bourke** (who died in October 2004) donated a large selection of his prints to the National Photographic Archive.
 - The donation of the **Connemara Album**, which is both an extremely beautiful item and a very important source for researchers interested in the socio-economic history of the west of Ireland at the end of the 19th century.

Preservation and Conservation

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- 9.1 NLI enjoys the services of two full-time paper conservators, who work in a purpose designed conservation laboratory. Their efforts are supplemented from time to time by a privately run conservation studio in Dublin.

- 9.2 The conservation staff are heavily involved in advising on preservation policy and priorities in the Library. New housing systems and conservation priorities have been agreed with curatorial staff in virtually all departments.
- 9.3 An increasingly important aspect of the work carried out by preservation staff is the preparation of materials for public display, either in the Library's own exhibition areas, or in exhibitions in other venues. Conservation staff also monitor materials on loan to NLI.
- 9.3 The Library continued its financial contribution to, and participation in the work of the National Preservation Office (NPO), formerly part of the British Library. The Library is one of a number of Irish bodies contributing to the NPO, including the National Archives, the Library of Trinity College Dublin, and the Consortium of National and University Librarians (CONUL).

Services to readers

- 10.1 The Library has continued to develop its services to readers. Emphasis will continue to be placed on giving access to further key electronic resources. Further improvements planned include an additional microfilm reading area and the introduction of self-service copying facilities.
- 10.2 Family history researchers continue to constitute the single biggest user group in the Library. The Library's Genealogy Advisory Service, which is available free of charge to all personal callers, continues to operate most successfully. At 37% American visitors constituted the largest national group with Irish residents accounting for some 28% of those using the Service in 2003.
- 10.3 The Library has cooperated with the Ordnance Survey Ireland in providing some of the source material for a major project involving the digitization of historical Ordnance Survey maps. The Library will shortly make available the resulting initial digital service, which includes the first edition of the Ordnance Survey, early 19th century.

Cultural events, exhibitions and publishing

- 11.1 The opening of the exhibition **James Joyce and *Ulysses* at the National Library of Ireland** was the signal cultural event of 2004 in the Library, marking as it did the centenary of Bloomsday, 16 June 1904, the date on which the fictional events described in *Ulysses* took place. For the NLI, it also marked the opening of a new exhibition area and seminar facility, and a café.
- 11.2 The regular programme of exhibitions at the Library's National Photographic Archive continued throughout 2004-2005. These exhibitions also formed the basis of a series of

traveling format exhibitions shown at venues throughout the country.

11.3 The opening of the new public areas in 2004 has allowed the Library to plan and present new education and outreach programmes, including:

- an ongoing series of lectures and films screenings associated with the Joyce exhibition;
- in Summer 2005, the Library's first ever series of children's events included storytelling and workshops;
- in cooperation with the Royal Danish Embassy in Dublin, the Library hosted the traveling format Hans Christian Andersen bi-centenary exhibition;
- a 16-lecture series on history and society in the city of Dublin, in cooperation with the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and Boston College's Centre for Irish Studies, begins in October 2005
- the Library Late sessions – a series of interview with established and emerging writers – which are scheduled to begin in November 2005.

11.4 In 2004, the Library's publishing programme was focused upon the publications associated with the Joyce exhibition. In addition to publishing a pamphlet series – James Joyce Studies 2004 – under the Library's own imprint, we cooperated most fruitfully with a number of leading Irish publishers in the production of a number of well-received joint publications.

Library Co-Operation

12 Internationally, Library staff participate in IFLA, including at Standing Committee level. Nationally, the Library is represented on a range of bodies including the Library Council (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna), the Council of National Cultural Institutions (CNCI), the Consortium of National and University Librarians (CONUL) and the Committee on Library Co-operation in Ireland (COLICO). Library staff members are supported in their active involvement in their representative professional associations including the Library Association of Ireland and the Society of Archivists – Ireland.