

## CENL

### Report of the National Library of Ireland 2003/2004

#### Summary

1. In recent years there have been continued developments in relations to the National Library of Ireland's collections, premises and resourcing (including staffing). Significant improvements have taken place in the physical infrastructure of the Library with additional space being provided to the Library by way of the refurbishment of older premises to make them suitable for modern purposes. Through the continued level of government support the Library has been able to pursue an active collection development policy with many significant collections being acquired. The Library has invested heavily in information and communications technology (ICT) and has pursued an active policy of retrospective conversion of manual records and the cataloguing of much of the significant backlog of uncatalogued material that had previously existed. The Library's staffing complement has increased steadily in recent years although it is still below the desirable level.

#### Introduction

2. This is the National Library of Ireland's first report to CENL for a number of years. Since the last report (covering 1999/2000) very significant progress has been made across a range of areas, particularly in relation to building development, collection development and ICT matters. These are dealt with below under the various headings.

#### Constitution, etc

- 3.1 The National Library of Ireland was established by act of parliament in 1877. The Library operates under the supervision of a Council of twelve Trustees, eight of whom are appointed by the Royal Dublin Society and four by the Government. The Library is in effect a unit of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and staff are civil servants of the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism.
- 3.2 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. To date that legislation has not been commenced but it appears that the new board will be established on 1 January 2005.

#### Funding

1. 1. Funds allocated to meet the operating costs of the Library have increased steadily in recent years. The funds allocated in 2003 amounted to €7.692 million. 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 4% of total income in 2003.

#### Buildings

- 5.1 5.1 Previous reports gave details of the major building development programme that had been agreed by for the Library. Significant progress has been made in relation to the implementation of that programme.
- 5.2 5.2 The former National College of Art and Design premises that adjoin the main Library building were refurbished and made available to the Library in 2001. A further project to develop a dedicated exhibition space within these premises was completed in 2004. This area is the venue for the Library's current exhibition **James Joyce and Ulysses at the National Library of Ireland**, which opened to critical acclaim in June 2004. As part of the programme of works relating to the development of the exhibition space, new facilities including a café, a bookshop and a seminar room were developed and have significantly improved the Library's public facilities.
- 5.3 In 2002 No. 4 Kildare Street, part of the Library's complex of buildings, was totally refurbished and was handed back to the Library in early 2003 and is now its administrative headquarters. Other minor projects have been undertaken, including the installation of sprinklers and the upgrading of security systems in various buildings. Low-grade off-site storage has also been developed.
- 5.4 Further phases of the building development programme remain to be completed. A considerable amount of planning work has been undertaken in relation to the development of a purpose built storage facility on the Library's campus in the center of Dublin. While final approval has not yet been given for this project, the Library is confident that when completed the new building will represent a very significant milestone in the development programme as it will provide much needed additional storage space at appropriate environmental conditions, thus safeguarding valuable collections and freeing other buildings and allowing them to be refurbished in due course.

### **Staffing matters**

- 6.1 6.1 Staffing numbers in the Library have risen steadily in recent years and stood at 111 at the end of 2003. This is a significant improvement although the number is still low by international comparison.
- 6.2 The outgoing Director, Mr Brendan O Donoghue retired in September 2003. Pending the recruitment of a new Director the Library's Council of Trustees appointed Mr Aongus Ó hAonghusa, the Library's Head of Administration to be Acting Director.
- 6.3 Two new posts as paper conservators were created replacing two temporary posts and as a result the Library has been able to undertake a significant programme of conservation works. The recruitment of temporary staff has enabled considerable progress to be made in relation to clearing the backlog of uncatalogued manuscripts and book collections. Other temporary staff have been recruited for various projects.
- 6.4 Other improvements in staffing included the creation and filling of a new senior post in the area of administration.
- 6.5 An exciting development in recent years has been the awarding of a number of studentships. These provide prospective librarians and archivists with valuable experience prior to their undertaking postgraduate studies in these disciplines. The

Library's Research Studentship in Irish History, awarded to a postgraduate student provides an opportunity for experienced researchers to undertake projects in the Library's Manuscripts Department.

- 6.6 Notwithstanding increases in staff numbers Library management continues to press for progressive increases in our staff numbers to meet identified needs. While the increase in the number of posts is to be welcomed it should be noted that many of these positions are temporary and their continuation cannot be guaranteed.

### **Information technology and networks**

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 The task of retrospective conversion of catalogues is challenging given the wide range of materials in the Library and it will be some years before it is completed.
- 7.3 A review of digitisation policy was commissioned from HEDS, the Higher Education Digitisation Service of the University of Hertfordshire and steps are being taken to implement the recommendations of this report.
- 7.4 7.4 A major project to digitise some 40,000 photographs from the Library's collections is in the advanced planning stage and it is hoped that these images will be available online in 2005.
- 7.5 Some 30 of the Library's Gaelic manuscripts were digitised in the ISOS (Irish Script on Screen) project organised by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.

### **Legal deposit of materials**

- 8 Since the last report to CENL 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.

### **Acquisitions**

- 9.1 Since the 1999/2000 report the most significant acquisitions for the Library were two collections of material relating to James Joyce acquired in 2000 and 2002. The 2002 acquisition was particularly important in that the collection was made up of previously unknown manuscript material that has added significantly to the level of understanding of Joyce's working style. The two acquisitions, together with other material in the Library's collection, have formed the core of the exhibition referred to above: **James Joyce and Ulysses at the National Library of Ireland**.
- 9.2 Other significant acquisitions in recent years include:
- ➤ The papers of the playwright Brian Friel,

- ➤ Collections relating to William Butler Yeats, including his personal library;
- ➤ The personal library of Sean O’Casey and correspondence
- ➤ Various collections of estate papers including those of Westport House and of the Leslies of Castle Leslie.
- ➤ An extensive collection of material by and relating to Harry Clarke (one of Ireland’s most outstanding stained glass artists).

9.3 A number of these collections were acquired under the provisions of Section 1003 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, 1997, which provides for tax credits for the donation of important material.

9.4 Many other collections have been acquired across a range of collection types including photographs, manuscripts, prints and drawings, etc.

### **Preservation and Conservation**

10.1 Considerable progress has been made in recent years in relation to preservation and conservation matters. A conservation laboratory in the Technical Services Building has been operational for a number of years and two permanent appointments have been made to posts as paper conservators.

10.2 10.2 Conservation projects have been undertaken across virtually every Library department and collection area. The staff in the Conservation Department have provided advice and assistance to other staff in relation to their particular needs and have been heavily involved in planning for the Library’s new storage facility.

10.3 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**

11.1 The Library has continued to develop its services to readers. Particular emphasis has been placed on the development of additional electronic facilities and resources. For example, in 2003 three very significant full-text databases were acquired and are accessible to readers in the Library. These are:

- • *Early English Books Online* contains images of the full text of some 100,000 books published between 1475 and 1700. The books can be found by means of keyword, author, title, and subject indexes.
- • *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* contains images of every page of some 150,000 books published in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Searching can be done by means of author, title, and keyword indexes. This database makes it possible to search the full text of some 33 million pages.
- • *The Times Digital Archive 1785–1985* provides images of every page of *The Times* newspaper over 200 years. All the text is fully searchable – including news, obituaries, and even advertisements. The user can also choose to browse a particular issue. *The Times* is a major source for Irish history and

this database will provide a means of accessing developments over a long period of time.

- 11.2 By acquiring *Early English Books Online* and *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, the Library can give immediate access to 250,000 additional books. Because of the huge scale of these projects and the new search facilities provided, these sources will have a major impact on research in a wide range of subjects.
- 11.3 11.3 The Library continues to deal with queries from users and visitors and its Duty Librarians respond to many telephone enquiries and emails. These enquiries related to various aspects of the Library's collections and services with the printed books collections, newspapers and genealogy figuring most prominently.
- 11.4 Family history researchers continue to constitute the single biggest user group in the Library. The Library's Genealogy Service is freely available to all personal callers and users of the service are given the opportunity to discuss their family history research with a professional genealogist or experienced staff member. Relevant finding aids are available on open access and a series of specially devised information panels may be consulted. Numbers using the service fluctuate on a year-to-year basis: recent years have seen a decrease in the number of visitors from the United States and an increase in the number of Irish visitors. At 36% American visitors constituted the largest national group with Irish residents accounting for some 29% of those using the Service in 2003.

### **Cultural events, exhibitions and publishing**

- 12.1 Building works on Library premises over recent years have militated against the holding of significant exhibitions. However a programme of small exhibitions has been undertaken each year.
- 12.2 The National Photographic Archive that forms part of the National Library had a programme of exhibitions.
- 12.3 With the opening of the new exhibition space referred to above the National Library will now be in a position to mount major exhibitions based on its collections.
- 12.4 The Library continues to have an active programme of publications. It produces a range of topical publications and supports other publications. The Library continues to produce its newsletter *NLI News*. The newsletter is designed to keep staff and readers up to date with all significant developments relating to the Library.
- 12.5 Despite the restrictions caused by the Library's building programme the Library endeavours to facilitate as many group tours as possible. Groups visiting the Library include education groups, genealogy and other special interest groups.

### **Library Co-Operation**

13. 13. The Library is represented on a range of national bodies including the Library Council (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna), the Council of National Cultural Institutions (CNCI), Consortium of National and University Librarians (CONUL) and the Committee on Library Co-operation in Ireland (COLICO).