

Summary

During 1999 a high level of expenditure on collection development was maintained, the arrears of cataloguing and processing work in some areas were further reduced and the programme of investment in information and communications technology (ICT) continued. Approval for some additional higher level and other posts was obtained and an overall development programme for the Library's buildings was adopted and began to be implemented.

Individual developments of note during the year include the following:

- The financial resources allocated to the Library increased by 13% on the 1998 figure.
- Expenditure on acquisitions was increased and the Library acquired important manuscript collections and other materials.
- Investment in ICT systems continued, with a view to introducing a new website and extended online catalogue in the first half of 2000.
- Successful and well-attended exhibitions were mounted in the main Library building and at the Library's Photographic Archive.
- Genealogical services were expanded, and additional source materials were provided, most importantly through a new programme of microfilming of parish registers.
- Arrears of cataloguing, binding and other processing work continued to be reduced.
- The authorised complement of full-time staff increased.
- A comprehensive building programme, estimated to cost about IR£50 million, was agreed with the Commissioners of Public Works and the first two phases were completed. Work on the refurbishment for Library purposes of the former National College of Art and Design (NCAD) building got underway. Planning permission was granted for the refurbishment of No 4 Kildare Street to provide a new administrative centre and a planning application was made for a major new storage building.

Management of the library: strategy/mission statement

A draft Statement of Strategy was prepared. Formal consultation with staff on its content will take place early in 2000. Following agreement of strategic objectives, business plans will be drawn up in each department of the Library. These will set out, in detail, departmental action programmes and objectives.

Funding

- Funds allocated to meet the operating costs of the Library increased by 13% on the 1998 figure.
- This increase allowed for further development of the collections, expansion of ICT services, and the reduction of arrears of cataloguing and other work which had built up in various areas.
- Resources generated by the Library from sales of goods and reprographic services amounted to almost 7% of total income.

Buildings

- Plans for a phased building programme to meet the Library's long-standing and now critical accommodation needs were completed by the Office of Public Works, in conjunction with Library management.
- Improved reader facilities will include an enhanced family history service, vastly upgraded microfilm reading facilities for which there is a strong demand, a catalogues and reference area, including better facilities for accessing electronic media, substantially improved consultation facilities for the Library's collection of prints and drawings and a new map library. There will be new cloakroom and toilet facilities, an improved reception area, and disabled access to all parts of the Library. The number of reader places will more than double and there will be provision for a substantial increase in the number of casual visitors, including tourists, who can make use of the Library's public facilities.
- The plan includes the following nine phases:
 1. Relocation from the main Library building of electrical and other ducts carrying services to and from adjoining premises.
 2. Installation of a state-of-the-art sprinkler system in Nos 2-3 Kildare Street (the Department of Manuscripts building)
 3. Refurbishment of the former National College of Art and Design Premises building to provide new facilities for Library users. These new facilities will include a café, a shop, a lecture theatre and much improved exhibition areas to cater for permanent exhibitions of the Library's treasures, as well as temporary exhibitions.
 4. Refurbishment of No 4 Kildare Street to serve as a new administrative centre
 5. Construction of a major storage building and energy centre linked to the Library's reader service areas. The new storage area will allow the Library to store its most valuable collections in modern purpose-built accommodation.
 6. Refurbishment of the East Wing of the headquarters building to provide new and extended public facilities.
 7. Refurbishment of the Central Block of the headquarters building.
 8. Refurbishment of the West Wing (Kildare Street frontage) to provide new reader service areas.
 9. Refurbishment of No 5 Kildare Street to provide additional accommodation for administrative and other services.
- Phase 1 - the relocation of the electrical and other service ducts in the main Library building - was completed in 1998 and Phase 2 - the installation of a sprinkler system in Nos 2-3 Kildare Street (the Department of Manuscripts building) - was substantially completed during 1999. Work commenced on Phase 3 in March 1999 and planning permission, with conditions, was obtained in December for Phase 4. Planning permission for the new storage building and the energy centre (Phase 5) has also been granted. Work on the plans for Phases 6 and 7 – the refurbishment of the East Wing and Central Block – was well advanced at the end of the year.
- An enabling element, ancillary to the overall development programme, is the provision of offsite storage to accommodate collections while the buildings in which

they are currently stored are being refurbished; this storage is expected to be available in July 2000.

- The masterplan is an ambitious and a complex one, and will present difficulties in execution and completion because of the interlinking nature of the Library's buildings and services and the confines of the site. Some disruption to services will be inevitable during the next four years. However, these temporary inconveniences will be entirely outweighed by the improvements that the building works will bring to the Library service provision.

Staffing matters

- In addition to the renewal of the appointment of the Director, the Library obtained approval for a package of other staffing measures including the creation of a number of additional posts at senior and middle management levels, as well as staff increases in technical services area.
- Notwithstanding increases in staff numbers in the last two years, shortage of staff at all levels continues to be a major constraint on the improvement of services in the Library, and on the development, processing and conservation of the collections. The level of staffing required for the day to day operation of the reading rooms and other services to the public leave some sections of the Library with virtually no staff at various times. Overall staff numbers are far fewer than in comparable institutions elsewhere. Library management continues to press for progressive increases in our staff numbers to meet identified needs.

Information technology and networks

- During the year, the Library changed its cataloguing format from UKMARC to USMARC, converting existing records to USMARC, and sourcing new bibliographic records from the OCLC Worldcat service. These changes required a considerable amount of staff training which inevitably affected output during the year. The new system is, however, already leading to greater efficiency and increased output. The hit rate on OCLC for new books is about 90%, and records for second-hand material are also numerous on OCLC, and of a high quality.
- The Library's main database server was changed during the year for Y2K compliance reasons.
- The creation of two new posts for ICT work was approved. This is a significant development that will allow better support of existing systems and more rapid development of the Library's programmes.
- Work on converting records in the card catalogue has been completed and work on converting the guard book catalogue to electronic form began during the year; this is a major undertaking and priority is being given to the major Irish collections.

- Work began late in the year on the development of a new Library website (www.nli.ie).
- Cataloguing of books published in Ireland is now up to date for the first time since 1994; a small backlog of titles received between 1990 and 1994 will be dealt with in 2000. Work on cataloguing the substantial backlog of second-hand material began following the introduction of the OCLC service. Cataloguers continue to be engaged on a contract basis in an effort to eliminate this backlog.

The digital library

- Work continued on the digitisation of selected imaged from the Library's collections of photographs and prints and drawings.

Legal deposit of materials

- The Library contributed to discussions relating to the passage of new copyright and related rights legislation through the Irish parliament. It is expected that the new legislation, which contains revised legal deposit provisions, will be enacted in 2000.

Acquisitions

- Expenditure on acquisitions increased by 12.6% over the 1998 figure.
- A valuable collection of 2,300 books, pamphlets, etc. documenting the Irish experience in America was donated by Mr. Stephen Griffin of Medford, Massachusetts. The collection contains many items of a rare or valuable nature.
- The Department of Manuscripts acquired collections of letters and papers of the Fitzgeralds, earls of Kildare and Dukes of Leinster. Among the more notable gifts was a collection of literary papers of the poet Denis Devlin.

Preservation and Conservation

- The installation of a state-of-the-art sprinkler system in the Department of Manuscripts building was completed.
- The conservation laboratory in the Technical Services Building was brought fully into service early in the year.
- It has become obvious that a comprehensive study of the conservation requirements of the map collection is desirable and a detailed survey is currently in progress.

- The "Withdrawn Newspaper Project" was initiated. Badly damaged hardcopy newspapers are withdrawn from Reading Room use to be replaced by microfilm as soon as possible. In recognition of the heavy research demand on the newspaper collection, the Project is a key preservation investment area.
- In the Library's National Photographic Archive, work continued on rehousing glass plate negatives. Also, the photographic preservation programme was resumed. This involves the creation of positive film copies of glass negatives from various collections.
- The Library's Microfilm Unit was one of the founding members of the Preservation Microfilm User Group (Ireland), along with Trinity College Dublin and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). The aim of the group is to share information and skills, and to promote training in order to improve the quality of preservation microfilming in Ireland. The inaugural meeting was held in April.

Services to readers

- Changes put in place in 1998 relating to admission procedures and the provision of a specialist family history service continued to enhance the effectiveness of library services.

Cultural events, exhibitions and publishing

- A joint National Library of Ireland/National Theatre Society exhibition on the life and work of the playwright Brian Friel was launched in the Library on 20 May by Seamus Heaney, longtime friend of Brian Friel. Entitled *Brian Friel – a celebration* - the exhibition formed part of the celebrations of the author's seventieth birthday year. In July, the exhibition *Fair Liberty was all his cry - Jonathan Swift and his contemporaries* opened. The opening was timed to coincide with the Tenth International Congress on the Enlightenment which took place in Dublin in July.
- Discussions, initiated in 1998, between the Library and the James Joyce Centre led to agreement on the framework for a co-operative education programme. Special financial provision was made for the recruitment of two staff to set the programme in place.
- The Library is participating in a research study on education provision in the national cultural institutions. The study, which was commissioned by the Education, Community and Outreach Working Group of the Council of National Cultural Institutions, will lead to the production of a report which will serve as a basis for future planning.
- The first issue of the Library's new newsletter – *NLI News* – appeared in September. The newsletter is designed to keep staff and readers up to date with all aspects of Library service at this time of major development and change in the NLI. Reader response to the newsletter has been extremely positive. Four Courts Press, in association with the Library, published *A Scottish Whig in Ireland 1835-1838: The Irish Journals of Robert Graham of Redgorton* edited by Henry Heaney. *If Ever You*

Go to Dublin Town, a selection of images from the Elinor Wiltshire photographic collection, was published by the Library in November, in conjunction the exhibition of her photographs in the National Photographic Archive.

Library Co-Operation

- The Library was represented on the Working Party established by the Library Council (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna) to develop a framework for a National Policy on Libraries and Information Services.
- The Library contributed to the EU-funded Socrates project which aims to develop open and distance learning to support the teaching and understanding of migration in Europe. The other participating countries are Portugal and Norway. The Library's role is to supply copies of documentary material relating to Irish emigration and migration.

Major celebrations (anniversaries and events)

- The year under review was the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Department of Manuscripts and the appointment of the Library's first Keeper of Manuscripts.