

An Leabharlann

THE IRISH LIBRARY

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- * CD-ROM – Introduction, problems and evaluation : a practical approach to their introduction and development
- * Policy statement on services to children and young people
- * Irish libraries – glimpses of the past
- * News
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THE IRISH LIBRARY

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CD-ROM – Introduction, Problems and Evaluation

A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO THEIR INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

HELEN FALLON

This article is based on a conference paper delivered to the annual conference of the Assistant Librarians Group of the Library Association. Many of the audience were at the initial stages of developing CD-ROM applications in their libraries. Over the past ten years Dublin City University (hereafter DCU) library has faced many of the issues and challenges public libraries are facing today. This paper provides the background against which decisions as to whether to purchase CD-ROMs are made. It then examines practical issues such as finance, management and promotion of CD-ROM databases. DCU's increasing use of the Internet as a gateway to commercial databases, is also briefly explored.

Background

Dublin City University (DCU) purchased its first CD-ROM title “Global Books in Print” in 1988. Ten years later, a campus wide network, supporting 22 networked CD-ROM titles, is operational. In addition some 53 standalone or non-networked titles are available in the library. These include multimedia products. Recently the library has begun to evaluate and purchase access to databases via the World Wide Web. A suite of approximately 40 pc's supporting CD-ROM and/or Internet access is now available within the library.

Why CD-ROM?

Among the advantages over printed copy which CD-ROM offered, the following were perceived as the most important, taking into account the needs of our user community:

Benefits

- (1) Access to Global holdings
- (2) Multiple Users
- (3) Multiple Access Points/Enhanced Search Features
- (4) Remote Access

- (5) Speed of Retrieval
- (6) Technological Infrastructure
- (7) Space
- (8) Innovative Approach to Learning

(1) Access to Global holdings

As a new university, Dublin City University does not have the large collections of journals, books, indexing and abstracting sources and other resources which older universities would generally have acquired in print format over many years. Therefore a policy of holding core journal and book titles necessary for the various courses on offer, while providing access to other information users require, regardless of where it is located, is in operation.

(2) Multiple Users

In the case of networked CD-ROMs, a number of users can access the same database simultaneously. On occasion lecturers design reading lists which incorporate references to journal articles which the library holds on CD-ROM. A number of students can simultaneously access and download/print the same journal article. Problems such as students tearing pages from the single issue of a journal which may be in heavy demand, do not occur in an electronic environment.

(3) Multiple Access Points/Enhanced Search Features Information can be retrieved from a variety of access points. For example by journal name, author's name, date of publication, keyword, title word, subject, country code, company name and combinations of these. Electronic encyclopaedias such as "Encyclopaedia Britannica" have features such as search engines, which allow a multiplicity of search and retrieval combinations. A printed publication could never offer such flexibility.

(4) Remote Access Members of the university community perceive being able to access information from their office pc's as a distinct advantage.

(5) Speed of Retrieval A large volume of information can be retrieved rapidly and printed or downloaded to disc.

(6) Technological Infrastructure The technological infrastructure campus wide was developing simultaneously with library developments. The Library, as a member of the *Information Technology Strategy Committee* had a very active role in driving developments.

(7) Space

Limited by space constraints, the library can now hold much longer backruns of newspapers in electronic form, than were previously held. In the case of printed newspapers, depending on the title, the policy has been to hold between three months and one year of back issues. On seven networked CD-ROM discs, seven years back issues of the "Financial Times", are available. In the case of "Encyclopaedia Britannica" two CD-ROM'S store the information that required two to three shelves previously. Of course they now also required a machine which takes up some space.

(8) Innovative Approach to Learning

While an innovative approach to learning might not have been the dominating factor in DCU library's decision to commit to developing electronic resources it is certainly worth bearing in mind. Some full text CD-ROM products offer interesting possibilities for teaching and learning. An interactive product such as Macbeth on CD-ROM can provide a range of information including the text, critical commentary, linguistic analysis and historical contextualisation.

Factors considered in the development of CD-ROM in DCU library

Developments did not take place on an ad hoc basis. Rather, careful planning which took a number of factors into account was necessary. The main factors were:

1. Technological considerations
2. Finance
3. Product considerations – Some questions to ask
4. Identification of what is available
5. Selection
6. Management
7. Training
8. Promotion
9. Quantifying use / MIS (Management Information Systems)

1. Technological considerations Careful planning in this area is crucial to the successful implementation of CD-ROMs, as early mistakes can be expensive and frustrating. CD-ROMs can be used in a standalone or networked environment. If a standalone environment is used then a computer with a CD-ROM drive is required. CD-ROM drives are available in a variety of speeds, for example, 8, 16 or 32. The retrieval and display of information from a CD-ROM is based on the speed of the CD-ROM drive and the performance capacity of the computer. Therefore it is a good idea, when purchasing new equipment, to buy the most powerful computer your organisation can afford. The computer industry estimate that the lifespan of a computer is between 3 and 5 years. Many organisations may not be able to afford to change machines that frequently so it is useful to check out if the machine can be upgraded later. As a minimum a 486 or Pentium machine is required. These numbers refer to the processing speed of the computer and therefore to its performance capacity. In the case of CD-ROMs, which allow the transmission of sound, a multimedia computer with an in-built sound card is required.

Always check the system requirements for each CD-ROM. In the case of CD-ROM titles, which can be purchased off the shelf in bookshops, this information can usually be found on the box the CD-ROM comes in. With more expensive products, system requirements should be checked with the supplier. Some CD-ROM products run on DOS or Windows while others run on both. If a networked environment has been chosen,

it is vital that the product is compatible with that network. DCU has a DOS CD-ROM network, so it cannot network the CD-ROM "Factfinder" (an Irish business database). This is a drawback in that this is one of the most heavily used CD-ROMs. More CD-ROMs are becoming Window based, and of those that come in both formats the Windows version is generally more sophisticated in its structure and organisation.

In a networked environment, a file server is necessary. This is a powerful computer that allows multiple users the facility to access its hard disk simultaneously. The retrieval of information from a hard disk is considerably faster than retrieval from a CD-ROM drive and in the case of DCU the more frequently accessed CD-ROMs are stored on the file server's hard disk. Because of space constraints it is not always possible to store the contents of all CD-ROMs on hard disk, therefore CD-ROM towers connected to the file server are also in use in the DCU Library. These towers, which come in units of nine, allow nine CD-ROMs to be stored and accessed. Whether the user is accessing a CD-ROM loaded on the hard disk or in the tower is irrelevant to their search.

A major consideration in relation to the technological infrastructure is technical support. That is technical support within the library, within the larger organisation and from the supplier or manufacturer of the product. When a subscription to a printed journal commences a record is added to our OPAC (on-line public access catalogue). New issues of the journal can be added to this record. In the case of a CD-ROM product, when a subscription to the new product commences, in addition to being catalogued, retrieval software has to be loaded, either locally in the case of standalone titles, or on the network. Each time an updated disk is received, it has to be loaded on the server, if it is networked. Sometimes there are changes to the retrieval software for using particular CD-ROMs. This is because products are frequently enhanced, to offer search and retrieval features. CD-ROM requires a level of technical support and commitment of manpower resources far in excess of traditional sources.

2. Finance In addition to the cost of the file server and network software, other equipment costs include printers, pc's and wiring if a network is installed. Costs vary depending on suppliers and systems and approach used. It is probably a good idea to budget for at least £5,000 for a basic network.

As the DCU network expanded the number of machines has increased. In some cases additional hard disc space has been purchased to cope with the increasing number of networked CD-ROMs. New PC's have also been purchased and the number of towers has increased. Therefore hardware costs have been ongoing.

CD-ROMs vary greatly in price. Over the counter purchases can cost as little as five to ten pounds. The "Guinness Encyclopaedia" at £36 is DCU's least expensive purchase. Our annual subscription to the "Social Science Citation Index" at slightly over £8,000 for the networked version, is the most substantial investment. (Networking costs are covered in Section 3). Some CD-ROM titles are produced by more than one company. "Medline" is an example of this, with Dialog, Ovid and SilverPlatter versions. It is best to check out

the costs and the specifications with the different manufacturers.

Because of the recurrent nature of the subscription based products it became necessary to establish a formal budget category for these purchases/subscriptions. Initially this was a CD-ROM budget. More recently this has evolved into an electronic resources budget.

3. Product considerations – Some questions to ask

Is a particular CD-ROM title subscription based? If a CD-ROM database is subscription based, there will be a recurrent annual cost. Clarify with the supplier if the library will retain the product if the subscription is cancelled in the future.

Are there extra charges for networking? Some CD-ROM titles cost the same regardless of whether they are used on a standalone machine or networked. All the United Kingdom newspapers DCU library subscribes to fit into this category. Networking licensing charges may be calculated on the basis of the number of simultaneous users, i.e. there may be a 50% increase in the price for 1-5 simultaneous users, a 75% increase for 6-10 simultaneous users and so forth.

Bear in mind that a CD-ROM product which has a large number of discs e.g. Dialog's "Medline", will require a separate space on the tower for each disc. Networking a CD-ROM which comes in a number of separate discs will be much more expensive in terms of hardware, than a product which is stored on one disc. Networking the most recent disc only might be an option for some organisations. However, if extra charges are levied for networking, it is generally not possible to get a discount for networking the most recent disc only.

How many discs make up the product? In addition to space constraints, it should be noted that if there are seven discs in a CD-ROM database, generally seven separate searches will have to be executed. CD-ROM's manufactured by the company Dialog have a facility to repeat the current search. Therefore when changing discs complete searches do not have to be re-entered.

Most CD-ROM databases do not have substantial back files. Many of our bibliographic databases have records dating back to the early nineties. Few companies appear to be undertaking substantial retrospective conversion.

Is it a rolling file? Two of the CD-ROM products DCU subscribes to, fall into this category – "European Business Disc" and "Business Link". Updated monthly, both of these offer the full text of business journals. However, as a new month of data is added, the earliest month is removed. Therefore at any time the previous 18 months data is available on one disc. While the library retains older discs, these are not networked. Problems have occasionally arisen when lecturers recommended articles from journals on these databases to students, in that there was often a time lag between the recommendation and the student going to the network, to find the article had disappeared!

Can records be printed/downloaded? In the case of most of our CD-ROMs records can be printed and downloaded. However, some encyclopaedias do not allow downloading.

Records can only be printed. This means that for good quality graphics and pictures a laser printer attached to the machine is necessary. A colour laser printer represents a substantial investment. If a printer is not attached to the machine, the user must transcribe the information. When evaluating a product which has images, check if the images can be downloaded. If downloading images is possible, check what software package they can then be viewed/printed in. It may be that specialised software is needed to view/print downloaded records which have been saved to disc. Also check if sound can be captured or recorded in any way. If purchasing encyclopaedias which offer sound it is worth finding out if sound bytes come in MIDI or WAV format. WAV provides better sound quality. With most products the difference will not matter, however in the case of products with substantial music content, the quality of sound would be important.

Are there extra charges for records printed/downloaded? This situation arose in the case of the electronic “Kompas Ireland”, a directory of Irish Business companies. While the charge DCU paid for the product (£344) allowed access to records and on-screen viewing, to print or download records one had to purchase credits. Each record downloaded or printed cost ten pence. This was practically unworkable in the DCU library situation, in that the facility for printing/downloading could not be deactivated (unless all the credits were used). This meant the CD-ROM could not be on open access. Rather, library staff had to advise students on the cost of using the print credits and check the number of credits before and after use. The advantages of an electronic directory such as Kompas, include the ability to customise information, for example to bring together quickly a listing of Wicklow companies that export food products to the United Kingdom. However, students do not want to sit and transcribe large amounts of information from a screen, nor do they want to pay for each company record they retrieve. The product was therefore of little use in the DCU library environment and students continued to use the printed product heavily. In a company environment the credit system might be very effective. However, pay-as-you-use electronic resources did not meet the needs of the DCU community.

Is the product user friendly? When evaluating a CD-ROM try to consider screen display and design from the point of view of the user. Opening screens should be uncluttered and easy to read. Basic functions such as printing, saving, marking and exiting the programme should be easily identified. If the product is very complex to use, a lot of time may have to be spent training the user. Sometimes there is a great contrast between the sophistication of the retrieval features of a database and the way they are presented to the user. User friendly manuals and help screens add to the products’ value.

Can the product display charts, graphs, images, page numbers and so forth? Most of DCU’s CD-ROMs are text based and cannot display charts and so forth. Therefore, while the subscription to “European Business Disc” allows access to over one hundred major business journals, some of these such as “The Journal of Finance” are limited in that they con-

tain a number of financial charts which cannot be displayed. Instead, the words “graph omitted” are inserted in the appropriate part of the article. Another slight disadvantage of fulltext newspapers and journals on CD-ROM is that specific page numbers are not displayed. That is, while the article will generally give page numbers at the top, with the bibliographic details, if a user wishes to cite a particular piece of text within the article, it is not clear what the page number is, as the layout and length of pages on the CD-ROM, bears no connection to that of the printed journal. “Factfinder”, the Irish business CD-ROM, produced by “Business & Finance”, does not include page numbers in the bibliographic detail of articles.

Is the database available via the Internet? The answer to this provides some possible solutions to the problems raised earlier. The World Wide Web can cope with graphics, charts and so forth. In addition using what is known as a PDF (Portable Document Format) reader, such as Adobe Acrobat, it is possible to reproduce the text as it appears on the printed page in the journal. Adobe Acrobat can be downloaded free of charge from the Internet. Increasingly products, which were available on CD-ROM, are now becoming available via the World Wide Web. DCU library now subscribes to “European Business” and “General Business File” (fulltext of approximately 400 journals), via SearchBank. This service, marketed by the UK Information Access Company, offers an interface to a wide range of databases via the World Wide Web. The cost is the same as that of the CD-ROM product. A backup archive to these two databases is provided on CD-ROM. However, should the library cancel the subscription via the Internet, the sheer volume of discs, which make up the full text “General Business File” would necessitate substantial investment in hardware, if it were to be networked. Some of the databases available on subscription via SearchBank on the Internet are what are termed “third party.” Basically this means that a backup archive on CD-ROM is not provided as part of the subscription. In the event of the subscription being cancelled the subscriber would be left with nothing. DCU library has made a decision not to subscribe to any databases that fit into this category. Advantages of the web based product, include the ability to retrieve and display charts, images, page numbers and so forth. When deciding whether to subscribe to a product via the World Wide Web or on CD-ROM, a significant factor to be taken into account, is whether the supplier has his own telecommunications line on the Internet. This is the case with SearchBank. While a searcher in Dublin City University uses HEANET (Higher Education Authority Network) in order to connect to SearchBank, once the connection has been established, the searcher is no longer on HEANET, but on the company’s leased line. If the company do not have their own leased line, searching will be quite slow, particularly in the afternoon, when American Internet users come on-line. Telecommunication costs are also a major factor when deciding whether to subscribe to a product on CD-ROM or the Web.

How frequently is it updated? The frequency, with which a CD-ROM database is updated, also has a major impact on the decision as to whether to subscribe to both the printed and

electronic version. Some CD-ROMs are updated monthly, others, bimonthly, quarterly or annually. Newspapers on CD-ROM which are updated quarterly, such as the “Financial Times” and “Guardian,” could not possibly meet the needs of DCU’s business and journalism students, many of whom would need to consult these papers on a daily basis. However, while the printed version is necessary for currency, the CD-ROM serves as an extremely useful tool for searching back issues. This is borne out by the fact that the “Financial Times” was the most heavily used CD-ROM title at DCU, during the academic year 1996/’97, being accessed over 9,000 times. As a product is updated the number of discs may increase. In the case of networked products this will involve finding more space on the computer which acts as server, or in the CD-ROM tower.

While products such as newspapers are to a significant degree out of date when they appear in CD-ROM format, electronic encyclopaedias are updated much more frequently than traditional encyclopaedias.

Will these products replace other printed products and will costs be recoverable in this way?

The answer to this varies depending on the product under review.

INDEXES & ABSTRACTING SOURCES

While some printed sources have been cancelled in the changeover to CD-ROM, the pricing structure of CD-ROM operates in such a way as to generally make this a waste of time financially. In the case of most of the more expensive products such as major indexing and abstracting sources, the cost of the CD-ROM is reduced if the subscription to the printed product continues. Cancellation of the printed subscription generally means an increase in the cost of the electronic product, and any savings from the cancellation are generally wiped out. In general the CD-ROM database is substantially more expensive than the printed equivalent.

If space is a major consideration, then cancellation of the printed source can be helpful. In DCU, in the case of subscriptions where both printed and electronic versions are held, the printed products are no longer bound each year. Therefore there is a small saving in the binding area.

ENCYCLOPAEDIAS

In the case of electronic encyclopaedias, however, the purchase cost of the CD-ROM is often substantially lower than that of the printed version. “Compton’s Interactive Encyclopedia” came on the market in 1988 at a cost of \$895. By 1996 this cost had been reduced to \$129. “Encyclopaedia Britannica” on CD-ROM costs £125. Three months access to “Britannica Online” (via the web) is included in the purchase price. There are over 15,000 links from the CD-ROM to the relevant Internet sites. To use this facility, the CD-ROM must be loaded on a machine with access to the Internet. Bear in mind that while this works very effectively with a leased line, waiting for a dial-up connection each time a web-link is clicked, might be frustrating for the user. When purchasing the “Encarta” encyclopaedia, a very popular inexpensive product, it is possible to take out a subscription to updates.

Monthly updates from the Internet can then be downloaded to hard disc. Encarta creates a link between downloaded items and related articles in the encyclopaedia.

JOURNAL DATABASES

Occasionally the publishers of journals impose certain limitations on the CD-ROM product. With a limited number of titles on "European Business Disc", there is a condition that the fulltext of articles from a limited number of journals cannot be supplied until a certain time has elapsed from the production of the printed equivalent. This is obviously to stop cancellations of the printed journal. Abstracts only are provided for about a month or two, the fulltext becoming available with a later update of the disc.

As mentioned earlier in this article some of CD-ROM databases such as "BusinessLink" and "European Business Disc" have what are called rolling files. The fact that information is taken off the most recent disc as new information is loaded, is a factor to consider when deciding whether to cancel print subscriptions. While DCU library subscribes to about forty of the journals covered by "European Business Disc" in printed format, the additional sixty titles, are a particularly welcome bonus. To increase the library's printed journal collection by sixty titles in one area, in a year, would be an impossible task. CD-ROM has allowed this in a cost-effective manner. At slightly over £2,000 for one hundred journal titles, each title costs approximately £20. This cost would be halved if a single user subscription were negotiated. The cost of an annual subscription to all of the titles covered by "European Business Disc" would be in excess of £46,000 based on prices quoted in the most recent edition of Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory. Another factor which should be borne in mind when deciding whether to keep a printed journal subscription, is that the companies who produce electronic products frequently do not own the information. Information Access Company, who produces "European Business Disc" negotiate with the publishers of journals for the right to put their titles on a database. A few titles have been removed from this product since DCU library started to subscribe. Some change in coverage is to be expected as more companies get involved in negotiations to sell the same information. The fact that the development of fulltext electronic journal databases is still in a fairly embryonic stage would suggest that decisions on cancellations should be approached with caution. Individual electronic journals are increasingly becoming available via the World Wide Web. Some of these are available before the print copy. This is a rapidly developing area, which DCU library is now actively exploring.

Experience suggests that in general CD-ROM products do not replace a sufficient number of journals or indexing/abstracting sources to allow for savings, or indeed to match costs. DCU library has cancelled very little; therefore additional funding has had to be made available for these products. What CD-ROM does, is provide substantial added value to our service. Academic staff and researchers, frequently remark that with the acquisition of a number of particular CD-ROM titles

and other electronic resources, it is now possible to carry out research from their offices, that previously would have necessitated travel, both within the country and indeed in other countries. There can often be a substantial saving in time also. Turnaround time for an article from the British Library is typically one week. Fulltext electronic journals available on the researchers' office computer, via the library network, can therefore have a substantial impact on the time taken to complete a research paper.

4. Identifying what is available Once the needs of your library user community have been identified, the task of identifying what products exist to meet those needs has to be undertaken. A very good way of identifying what is available is to ask other librarians. This can be done through traditional communications methods, i.e. phone, letters and so forth. In addition to this, very useful information can be gained from subscribing to electronic discussion lists via electronic mail. It is possible to send messages to lists such as Lib-Ref and Lis-Link and to get feedback regarding other libraries experience with various products. More information on how to join these lists, and indeed a wealth of useful information about the Internet can be found at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/~tplwww/e> the Pick website. A variety of printed sources give information on CD-ROM products. These include "CD-ROM's in Print" and the "CD-ROM Directory". In addition the major manufacturers of CD-ROM produce their own catalogues, which are free of charge. These include Silver Platter, Dialog, Ovid, Proquest and ISI (Institute for Scientific Information). Lendac, located in the IDA Enterprise Centre in Pearse St. Dublin, acts as an agent for a number of these companies. Bear in mind that a number of suppliers market the same database. However, in addition to possible difference in cost, there will be differences in the product interface, i.e. searching will be different, and possibly a difference in the number of discs that make up the database. Many library journals review CD-ROM, including the American "Library Journal", "ASLIB Information" and "Reference Quarterly".

5. Evaluation/Selection Selecting electronic products is a more complex matter than selecting printed materials. Factors such as the format of an item, the equipment needs, licensing agreements, access methods and support – both technical support and user support – have to be taken into consideration. In DCU library subject librarians liaise with members of the academic community in book and journal selection. However, decisions as to whether to purchase an electronic product, also require substantial input from the Technical Services Department and DCU Computer Services Department. Generally, if a member of the university community expresses interest in a particular database, a one-month trial is arranged. Many suppliers will allow a month's free trial. At the least the supplier of a product which costs in excess of a few hundred pounds, should give an on site demonstration. It can be useful to ask the demonstrator to demonstrate the CD-ROM on the library machine. On completion of the trial the relevant subject librarian completes a CD-ROM evaluation sheet. (Appendix 1.) This was later developed into an electronic resource evaluation sheet (Appendix 2). Factors considered in the evaluation include the

interface, retrieval features, content and so forth. A proliferation of interfaces exists, with most producers having radically different search and retrieval options, indexes and so forth. Introducing a new interface involves staff investment in training users how to use the product and involves technical support in terms of loading the new search retrieval software. Trying to maintain a limited number of interfaces e.g. buying Dialog and SilverPlatter databases would reduce this problem somewhat. However, frequently pricing structures dictate which manufacturer the library opts for.

The most important factor in the evaluation of any electronic source is the content. This must reflect users needs and must be accurate, timely and appropriate. The library notifies academic staff (generally by e-mail) when a product is received on trial. Their feedback is extremely important to our decision making.

6. Management (Cataloguing, storage, issuing, updating, location of equipment, printing/downloading). CD-ROM's are given an entry in DCU library OPAC (on-line public access catalogue) in the same way as books and journals. They are given a separate category code. In the same way as a book would have the code "REF" before the classification number, the classification number of a CD-ROM is preceded by the code "CD". According to AACR2, CD-ROMs ought to be catalogued as computer data files. However, in DCU library they are catalogued in the same way as books and serials. Details are taken from disc, the box accompanying the disc or anywhere they can be found. The CD-ROM itself cannot be triggered. The box or caddy that accompanies it can be.

CD-ROM titles, which are networked, are located on the network server. All others are filed in an alphabetical sequence, in a drawer at the Information Desk. From there they are issued manually. The name of the student, ID number and the course they are undertaking is recorded. This is extremely labour intensive. However, to successfully manage and monitor the usage of stand-alone CD-ROM titles, the library has concluded that it is necessary to use a manual issue system. Stand-alone titles are issued for a one hour period. One hour is generally sufficient time for a user to familiarise him/herself with the system, find the information needed and print or download it. Demand for particular titles would also make longer periods problematic. The library offers four PCs, which are designed for use with stand-alone or non-networked CDs. Advanced booking at the Information Desk for these is usually necessary during term time. On the network a self-booking systems is in operation. As new issues of CD-ROMs appear regularly, installing updated software can be very time consuming. Again this has implications for staffing.

The location of equipment to facilitate the use of CD-ROM titles in the library is a major factor, which needs careful consideration. DCU library has designated two specific rooms or suites where Internet and CD-ROM access are provided. The advantage of this system is that noise tends to be contained. The suites are located close to the Information Desk, therefore help, which is frequently needed, is at hand. A slight drawback is that neither room is actually visible from the Information desk. The file server should be ideally located in an area where the public cannot gain access.

Printing/Downloading Initially DCU students were allowed to print free of charge. However, this was costly in terms of paper, ribbons and machine maintenance. Three workstations with laser printers are now available. Students download the information they want to disc, retrieve it in Word and print from one of these workstations, using a card, which they purchase.

7. Training There is a common belief that CD-ROM's are very easy to use. Whilst it is easy to retrieve information, frequently getting quality information requires some skill. Many CD-ROM products have different interfaces, different levels of searching (e.g. fields, author, title), and some require the understanding of Boolean operators. Lack of familiarity with a computer can be a problem, as can the lack of familiarity with a mouse. While help screens are available with most products, the consensus of opinion in DCU library is that they are of limited use to new users who need clear straightforward instructions on searching techniques. Therefore training is essential. Initially, the library trained individual people on an ad hoc basis. A basic level of training usually required fifteen minutes. This is far in excess of what it would usually take to demonstrate most printed sources. Also it should be noted that CD-ROM products tend to have much higher usage than the same printed products. To assist users, we compiled printed guides for each product, which we have continued to maintain as these allow users to work independently. However, the need to incorporate one to one training as well as hands-on sessions proved vital in giving users a basis from which to develop their skills. From our experience of these sessions, which students attended voluntarily, and the numbers involved it soon became essential to formalise our training by developing a training programme, which was produced in book form and distributed amongst academic staff. The Library in consultation with staff and students developed this programme. The programmes on offer are part of overall information skills training commitment, which focuses on all aspects of information literacy. CD-ROM and more recently Internet training has become a major component of these programmes. Indeed the value placed on such activity in the Library has recently been recognised by the Library's winning of the University President's Award for Innovation in Teaching.

An issue which DCU library has had to address is the extremely diverse range of computer literacy amongst our students. A substantial number of students have PC's at home and are very conversant with using resources such as the Internet. Others, particularly mature students, frequently have never used a keyboard before. With the move towards more people returning to education and Distance Education opportunities the user population has become very diverse. This is a factor that has to be taken into account when information skills courses are being planned and delivered.

It has been noted that most students have a distinct preference for using CD-ROM databases as opposed to printed reference material and so forth. It is sometimes necessary to point out that more useful information can be retrieved on occasion from printed directories or books.

Another important area of training is the training of all Library staff who provide Information Desk assistance. As each new disk is acquired and in some cases software updated, library staff require additional training. Heretofore this was done on an ad-hoc basis, however last year we introduced a programme of Information Skills training specifically aimed at Library staff. Frequently Information Desk staff had to acquire skills for using a wide range of products very quickly. While this has made jobs more varied and interesting it has also placed new demands on people. The role of subject librarians has changed and evolved as their role in training has increased. Recently the library has assumed the role of training the university community in using the Internet as an information source.

8. Promotion The investment of resources in CD-ROM and the Internet has been substantial. The promotion of the various databases available has been necessary, both to ensure usage justifies expenditure and in recognition of the fact that these products enhance the image of the service. Our library newsletter "Liblink" carries information on all major new electronic acquisitions. Subject librarians represent the library at programme board meetings and report on electronic information resource development. Links are provided via the library homepage on the Internet to information about our CD-ROM products. Direct links are provided from the homepage to SearchBank. Electronic mail is used as a standard means of communication within the university and is used to notify people about developments.

9. Quantifying Use – Management Information Systems Accurate information is critical to allow library management to justify costs associated with electronic products, both in terms of equipment, the products themselves and staffing resources. It is also necessary for both long and short-term planning and decision making. In the case of networked CD-ROM databases, there is in-built software called Soft Trac on the Novel network. This gives us information on how many times a database was accessed. In the case of stand-alone CD-ROM titles the booking forms, which are filled out at the information desk form the basis for manual calculations. These statistics influence decisions as to whether to cancel a little used product or to network a product that is in high demand.

The Future

With new Internet developments, the library is now exploring alternatives to CD-ROM. Many databases are now available via the World Wide Web. Whilst this presents exciting possibilities, it also poses many challenges, including cost, archival issues, security and the volatility of Internet telecommunications. DCU library is actively exploring the development of resources on the Web, such as ISI's "Web of Science", and the impact these developments have on overall service provision.

CD-ROMs will play a vital role in DCU's electronic resources development for the foreseeable future. Many of the issues raised above will have relevance to whatever medi-

um of information delivery is explored. One thing is certain – change is a constant, which will need to be borne in mind when planning a quality service geared to the needs of a diverse user community.

Helen Fallon, is Sub-Librarian, Readers' Services, Dublin City University.

Appendix 1

CD-ROM Evaluation Sheet

Name : _____

Title of CD : _____

Supplier : _____ **Publisher :** _____

Cost : 1) Single Version: _____ 2) Networked : _____

Time Span Covered : _____

Frequency : Monthly? _____ Quarterly? _____ Other? _____

Annual Cumulations : **Yes?** _____ **No?** _____

Available On-Line: **Yes?** _____ **No?** _____

Print Equivalent: **Yes?** _____ **No?** _____

<p>Search / Retrieval</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Search Levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy Level? Middle Level? Command Level? Menu Level? 2. Boolean Logic? 3. Specific Field Searches? 4. Searchable Indices? 5. Inbuilt Thesaurus? 6. Inbuilt Dictionary? 7. Truncation possible? 8. Searching for plurals? 9. Help Screens? (Rate 1 - 10)..... 10. General Ease of Use? 	<p>Output</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Print? 2. Download to Disc 3. Optional Output formats? e.g. Specified fields <p>Content</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fulltext? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image based? Text based? 2. Abstracts only? 3. Quality of Abstracts? 4. Subject Headings only? 5. Quality of Subject Headings? 6. Description Field? 7. Quality of Descriptors? 8. Command / Menu Driven? Both?
---	--

Useful for Which User Groups? _____

Time held by Library _____

General Comments? _____

Evaluated By : _____

Electronic Resources Evaluation

Please complete a separate form each test session you run. Return to Caroline when completed.

1. Test Session report sheet completed by: _____
2. Date and time of test: _____

Section 1 : Host Service

3. Name of Host Service (ERL, Firstsearch)?
4. How did you connect to the service (e.g. telnet, via Vax 1, Netscape)?

Please circle one number

Very Bad	Bad	OK	Good	Very Good
-------------	-----	----	------	--------------

Section 2 : Communication

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5. How easy was it to connect? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. How reliable was the connection? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Was the speed of communications acceptable? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Section 3 : Database/Service

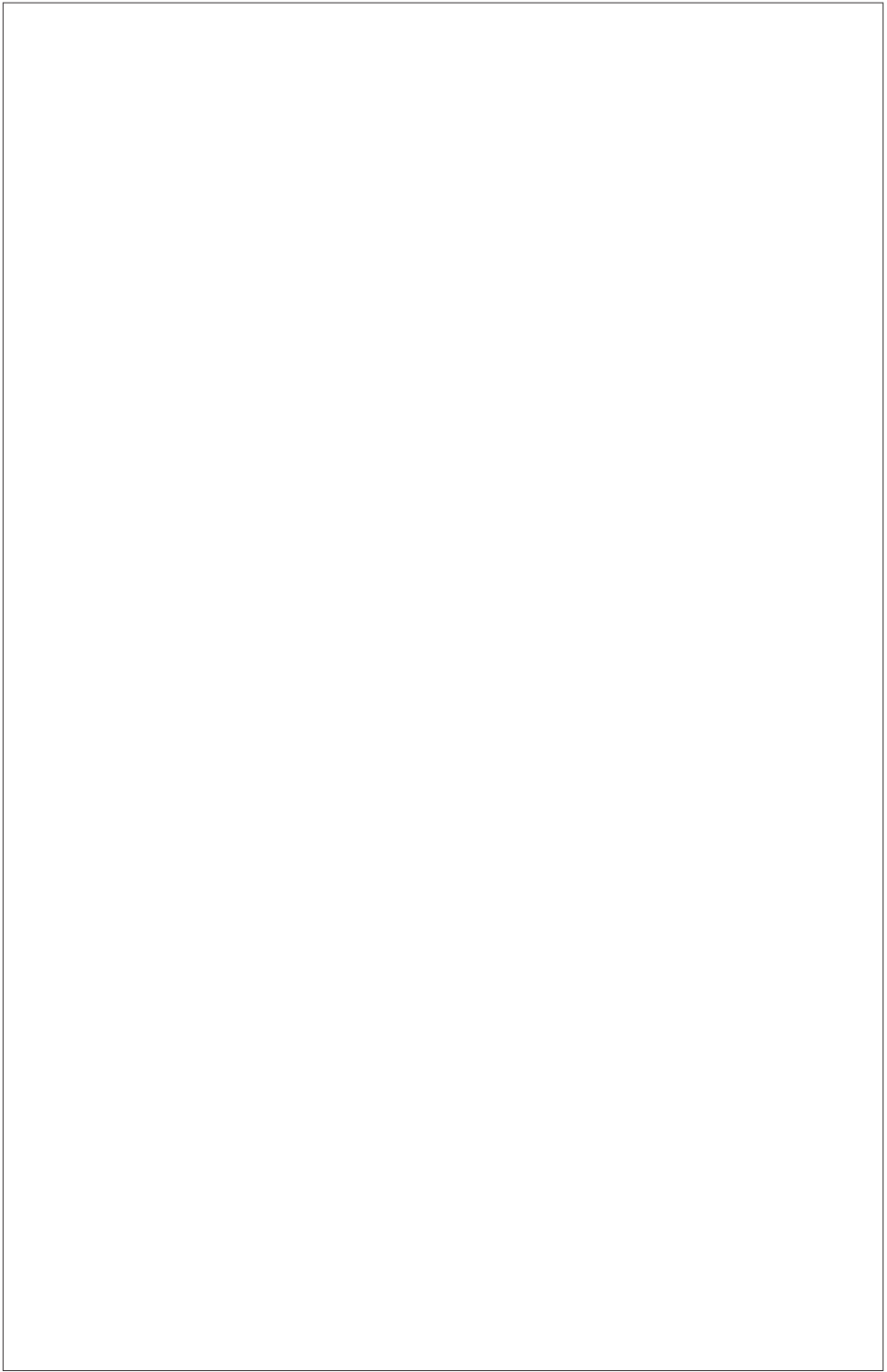
8. If appropriate, please state which specific database or service you are testing
e.g. Medline, ContentsFirst etc.: _____

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. How do you rate the quality of information available? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. How do you rate the search facilities
(Help, Commands, menus etc.)? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. How easy is it to manoeuvre around the database? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. How easy is it to extract results by | | | | | |
| a) Printing? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) Downloading? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

13. Any General Comments?

14. To whom should this service be available (academics/PG's/UG's)?

15. How do you think this service would help us improve our range of services?



Library Association of Ireland Policy Statement on Library Services to Children and Young People

Principles

“The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.”

(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 13 (1), 1989)

- Every child should have access to a library throughout its life.
- Library membership for children should be free.
- Children’s library services should be given equal status to that of adults.
- A fundamental aim of library services to children is to promote literacy.

Service to Children and Young People : The Information Society

Libraries for young people, both public and school, should act as centres for information by providing books, multi-media materials and information technology resources which:

- Inform the mind and stimulate the imagination,
- Encourage and foster their intellectual and social development,
- Enable them to become independent, resourceful researchers and well-informed citizens,
- Foster a love of reading and the pursuit of knowledge,
- Help them to be discriminating in their use of information and reference sources.

Service to Children and Young People : Literacy

Libraries have a major role to play in developing and enhancing children’s literacy skills by

- Working closely with schools and parents/guardians,
- Providing a wide range of quality materials suitable to all ages and levels of ability,
- Providing sufficient resources supported by realistic funding.
- A recent international survey (1) on children’s literacy levels has established that access to books is the most essential ingredient in the development of literacy skills.

Service to Children and Young People : Culture and the Arts

Libraries should act as cultural centres, designed to stimulate child development and creative self-expression by introducing children and young people to

- the Arts (e.g. exhibitions, drama, music events, author visits and storytelling),
- the history and heritage of their communities.

Service to Children and Young People : Funding

There should be parity of funding for children's and young people's services. In particular, library authorities should ensure that a bookfund at a level appropriate to its population is provided. The International Federation of Library Association guidelines for public libraries state "when children up to 14 years of age constitute 25% – 30% of the population, children's books should comprise one third of the total stock".

Service to Children and Young People : Staffing

Work with children is an integral and vital part of each library authority's service provision. It is essential that suitably qualified staffs are responsible for the delivery and co-ordination of services, linking with school and outside agencies. Each large library within a service should have at least one trained member of staff with responsibility for work with young people.

Service to Children and Young People : Children's Libraries and School Libraries Working Together

Public libraries should maintain close contact with all local schools, and the library authority should maintain regular and close liaison with educational services. There should be a statutory obligation to provide libraries in schools at all levels of education. The scope and objectives of school library services, and the role of public libraries in operating them should be fully defined and properly funded in the context of the educational support services being put in place at regional level. Links should be established with other community groups such as pre-schools and parents' groups.

Service to Children and Young People : Planning and Development

Library authorities should recognise services to children and young people as a distinct and important area of provision in preparing and implementing their library development programmes, and should commit sufficient resources – financial, human and material – to this aspect of service.

Children's libraries should be safe, relaxed, informal, accessible and appropriately equipped.

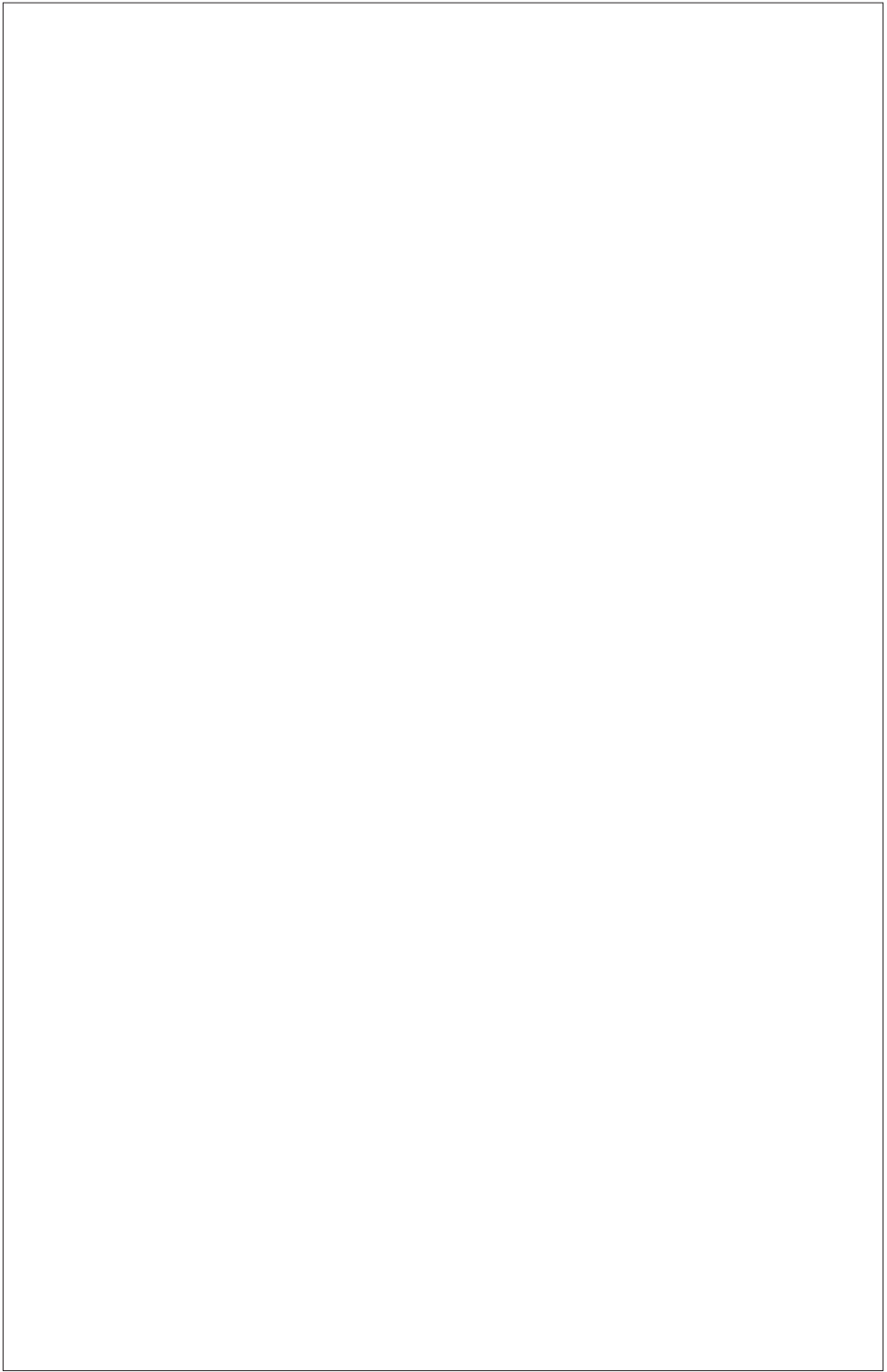
Service to Parents, Guardians and Educators

Library authorities should acknowledge the special role of parents and guardians, and pay attention to their information needs. The provision of child-care information to carers, teachers and other educators should be supported. Modern information services should include current awareness services and regular targeted programmes on illuminating the role and extent of relevant services and information products.

Reference

1. Martin, Michael and Mark Morgan, *Reading literacy in Irish schools: a comparative analysis*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre, St. Patrick's College, 1994.

*At the Annual General Meeting of the Library Association of Ireland, 6th March 1998,
this Policy Statement was adopted.*



Irish Rural Libraries – Glimpses of the Past

MÍCHEÁL Ó HAODHA

In Ireland between the years 1915 and 1917 the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust commissioned two reports into the situation of rural libraries. The reports found that the rural district schemes instigated by the Trust, had for the most part, been a failure. Two men who worked tirelessly for the promotion of the library ideal, the (Abbey) playwright Lennox Robinson and a librarian from the Co-operative Reference Library, Cruise O'Brien, father of the present-day political commentator Conor Cruise O'Brien wrote these reports. Their observations give a fascinating and humorous insight into the social standing of public libraries in the Ireland of the early 1900's and are of much value from a socio-historic point of view. They give a glimpse of a pre-industrial Ireland, a country very much rooted in an old rural way of life, suffering quietly from the ravages inflicted by war and poverty yet poised to become a new republic with all its attendant opportunities and problems.

Glimpses of the Irish Rural Library Situation at the Turn of the Century

The next time we librarians complain about understaffing, lack of resources and the CD-ROM which isn't working, it might be worth our while sparing a thought for the generations of librarians who came before us, many of whom struggled under far more grim and precarious conditions to keep the flame of culture alive.

We only have to think of the Irish monks rushing to their "teacha screapta"¹ at the sight of the Scandinavian longships in an effort to hide their most precious and ornate books from the invader. Librarians, right up to our own times, have had to put up with the vagaries of chance and adverse conditions whether these be the result of poverty, war or famine. In an Irish context, it seemed on occasion that history was actively conspiring against the library movement and the idealistic individuals who were its' main promoters. The turn of this century saw the Irish public library movement in a precarious position. The 1855 Public Libraries (Ireland) Act had given Irish municipal and town councils the power to set up free public libraries and museums or schools of science and art in towns where the population exceeded 5,000 people. These councils were permitted to levy a rate not exceeding one penny in the pound in any one year for the purposes of the Act. Many councils throughout Ireland welcomed the passing of this Act and the Irish newspapers of the time, spoke in praise of its potential benefits. Nevertheless progress was slow. By 1880 only Dundalk and Sligo had established public libraries. A combination of

factors was responsible for this lack of progress. The country was very poor and only trying to recover from the ravages of the Great Famine. The nature of the local authorities was often unrepresentative of local interests and there was a severe lack of funding with which to provide library buildings. Then, just as the country appeared to be finding its footing again, the First World War took place.

The Great War, as it was known, began in 1914 and many Irishmen left to fight on behalf of Britain. It was followed by the Easter Rebellion of 1916 which took place in Dublin, and this, in turn, was succeeded by a three-year period of guerrilla warfare which engulfed many parts Ireland. The 1921 Treaty between Ireland and Britain was followed by the further violence of the Civil War. The ideal of a consistent form of public library provision seemed ready to recede into insignificance once again. However it was at this apparently inopportune moment that one of the most significant episodes in the development of Irish public libraries took place. The Carnegie United Kingdom Trust extended their grant system to Ireland establishing the first county library scheme in Donegal in 1922.

The Carnegie Trust

A Scot by birth, Carnegie was a self-made man whose family had emigrated to the United States when he was a child. At thirteen years of age he began work as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory educating himself in his spare time in the local Pennsylvania free libraries. It was this education which gave him his life-long appreciation of the value of libraries and which he claims stood to him in his later dealings in the business world. He became a very wealthy entrepreneur through his investments in both rail and oil companies, and on retirement he decided to put his money to use for the benefit of mankind.

He set up the Carnegie Trust, and between 1882 and 1919 a large number of libraries in Britain, Canada, Ireland, the United States and other countries benefited from his cash endowments towards the foundation and upkeep of public libraries. He also promoted cultural and social affairs generally through his support for the provision of music halls, art galleries and museums amongst other enterprises. Many public libraries in Ireland received grants from Carnegie at one stage or another and his Trust spent over 110,000 pounds on its' urban and rural library policy in Ireland between the years 1915 and 1950. Applications for the grants were subject to a number of provisos, the principal ones being that the community seeking to have a library built had to provide the site; the plans had to be approved by Carnegie's agent and the libraries were to be run in accordance with the Libraries Act. The community who wished to have a library also had to apply to the Carnegie Trust for support. Carnegie never offered a grant. He didn't believe in charity per se and only believed in helping those who wanted to help themselves.

Situation of Rural Libraries in Ireland

The Carnegie Trust commissioned two reports into the situation of rural libraries in

Ireland between the years 1915 and 1917. The reports found that the rural district schemes instigated by Carnegie had, for the most part, been a failure – many grants having been allocated without a true knowledge of the local situation. Two men who worked tirelessly for the promotion of the library ideal, the (Abbey) playwright Lennox Robinson and a librarian from the Co-operative Reference Library, Cruise O'Brien, father of the present-day political commentator Conor Cruise O'Brien wrote these reports.

Their observations give a fascinating and humorous insight into the social standing of public libraries in the Ireland of the early 1900's and are of much value from a socio-historic point of view. They give a glimpse of a pre-industrial Ireland, a country still very much rooted in a rural way of life, suffering quietly from the traumas inflicted by war and poverty and yet poised to become a new republic with all its attendant opportunities and problems. Cruise O'Brien's survey of the rural district schemes on the Trust's behalf took place in the year 1915, and he found, like Robinson a little while later, that the schemes had for the most part been a failure. While commenting on the status of public libraries in Ireland both he and O'Brien were quick to point out to the Carnegie Trustees that the peculiar political and social conditions prevalent in Ireland in the early Twenties were particular to that country. This meant that carrying out any policy corresponding to that operating in England or Scotland, where the Trust was also very active, would be a waste of effort.

Cruise O'Brien examined County Limerick where there was a high percentage of Carnegie libraries, concentrating on the district of Rathkeale as his particular reference point. Standards varied from library to library in Rathkeale according to O'Brien. The library in the town was doing well but the branch libraries in the rural districts were not in a healthy state. The prize for the most neglected library went to the village of Croagh – "an eyesore in the village, dirty and dilapidated ..."² No one ever borrowed any books at the library there, for the simple reason that the caretaker never got any books from the distributing centre at the Union. The library itself was in bad condition and the previous caretaker had burnt the collection of books he was in charge of! – "whether to emulate the example of Savonarola or from some less exalted motive". When Cruise O'Brien visited Croagh he spoke to the present caretaker, who was also the local blacksmith. The man had stated his interest in getting the hall open again. However he was hampered by the lack of interest shown by the local library committee.

Unfortunately some of the library buildings which O'Brien visited in the Rathkeale rural districts were not utilising the village hall to its' maximum potential on behalf of the people. Some halls, such as those in Askeaton and Kilcolman, were kept in reasonably good repair but were ill-kept and badly furnished. Some of the rooms were let out to organisations such as the village Temperance Society and the village band and although these societies were certainly doing much good for the people, O'Brien wasn't convinced that the principle of sub-letting to particular societies, a building which was for public use, was a sound one. He suggested that permanent sub-letting be forbidden and that a limit should be put to the number of days per week on which any one society might have the rooms of a Carnegie library.

When the library building was ill-kept and uncomfortable it was unlikely to be used much by the local people and O'Brien pointed the finger here at the system of administration. Some of the sub-committees, who were supposed to be managing the libraries, took their duties far too lightly. These committees, usually consisted of the clergy of both denominations in the parish, the Rural District Councilor, the medical officer and perhaps one or two co-opted members. They often expressed an initial enthusiasm for the idea of a library, but tended to lose interest after a few years.

Cruise O'Brien made it clear that when the people of any district got a library building the first function they wished it to fulfill was that of a village hall. Then he made an observation which must have sounded startling to the Trustees who read the report. In none of the libraries which he had visited in the Limerick region, not even in the Central Library in Rathkeale, did anybody actually use the premises to read a book! In Rathkeale, which was an averaged sized town by the standards of the day, the rooms were used for conversation and as a venue for concerts and other forms of entertainment. The closest the people came to reading was their perusal of the newspapers. In the more rural areas, when they were used at all, the libraries were used as village halls, where people gathered to chat and play games. O'Brien put forward the argument in favour of employing trained librarians when he said: "The people have no one to tell them what there is to be found in the books on the library shelves. The blacksmith-librarian is as wise as they are, and the library committee is more anxious to keep a strict supervision over the boys' and girls' jigs and reels than to set itself to the more important business of making its books of real use to the people."³

Odd as it might seem, O'Brien advised the Trustees not to be too worried by this. The truth of the matter was that these village halls supplied a real need in rural Ireland. He felt that the fact that the rooms were not used for reading ought not to weigh with them when the Trustees were deciding on the building of further libraries. Provided the allocation of the building was compatible with the terms of the Trust and provided the Trust was satisfied that the people of the district would make use in their homes of the books provided for them, these libraries/village halls were a good thing for the community. It was widely known that one of the major causes of migration from the countryside to the larger towns and indeed a contributory factor to emigration from Ireland itself was the lack of recreational outlets in the villages. As O'Brien put it: "A quick-witted people fond of talk and company, finds life under the ordinary conditions which prevail in an Irish village intolerably dull."⁴ Not only this, but the fact that the only recreational outlet seemed to be the pub, was hardly an ideal situation.

As the "librarian" in Kilcolman had confided in him when accounting for the low numbers who read the few books that were available – many of which they had probably read more than once already anyway – "They'd sooner read the story in the "Cork Examiner" than to be reading history books. Sure it's a little excitement they want".⁵ When people did read they were very fond of novels. O'Brien noted with satisfaction that the works of the great novelists such as Dickens and Robert Louis Stephenson were eagerly read as were books on Irish history and biography. Some of the readers, particular-

ly the young women read books “of what was generally termed an “improving” kind, such as the Encyclopaedia of Home Teaching. Cookery books were very popular amongst the women and Mrs. Beaton’s classic work was “not allowed to travel beyond the precincts of the building”.⁶

It was necessary to make the people who didn’t yet read on a regular basis more interested in books and here O’Brien reiterated to the Trustees the point he had mentioned earlier – that of endeavoring in the future to appoint people with some training in library work or at least an active interest in reading. It was only by doing this that his pen-portrait of Askeaton library, would, in time, become a distant memory – “the “library” was confined to a bookcase, and the “librarian” was “a well-intentioned man who had never read a book in his life”.⁷

The majority of the people didn’t know what books to read or what books would be of interest to them. While it was essential to leave them a free choice of the books provided, it was as well, too, “if some plan could be devised by which books for reading might be suggested to them, so as to guide their taste and develop their imagination.”⁸ While books of an “improving” and practical nature whether they were on cookery or farming were very useful in themselves, the people also wanted to wander in “the realms of gold”. Cruise O’Brien crystallized his own idealism and the idealism of others of his generation when he added – “We want to raise the standard of civilisation and culture in our rural community, to realise in other words, that “better living”, which is the third of the three great ideals set before us in Ireland by Sir Horace Plunkett”.⁹

O’Brien gave an example of what he meant when describing how a well-to-do woman in County Limerick who was interested in this aspect of rural development, was in the habit of sending books to her husband’s tenantry and to the labourers. She lent them translations of Gaelic folk tales, as well as folktales simply told from the Odyssey, all of which they loved, often reading them out aloud to one another around the fire at night. O’Brien’s idealism took on an almost romantic hue when he went on to say: “That the adventures told in the Odyssey should be read round a County Limerick peasant’s fire in the present day, and should be enjoyed, will not be believed by everyone. But nothing can be more natural.

These great tales came out of the simple imaginative folk-mind which loves great and heroic adventures; and where you have a rural population undemoralised by the cheap press and cheaper ideas of today, these tales will still be loved.”¹⁰

Two significant factors served to keep this idealism in check. One was the poverty of the country and the other was the faint whiff of corruption and “jobbery” which tended to emanate from the small towns in rural Ireland. Lennox Robinson was to comment on both of these in his witty reports to the Carnegie Trustees. His first glimpse of the library system he had been sent to try and improve had not been an uplifting one.

“on the way to Mount Trenchard on Saturday we stopped at . . . and I inspected the “library”, that is to say , I climbed in through a broken window and saw the bare room. As you know yourself there are neither books nor bookcase there; that lonely

hillside, those few scattered cottages, that gaunt empty building, how am I to bring them all together?”¹¹

It was clear to Robinson that the sheer poverty of the country and not inefficiency on the part of the mainly well-meaning caretaker-librarians was still the principal reason for the inadequacies and inefficiencies of Ireland’s libraries both urban and rural.

Nevertheless, and in spite of this poverty, a complete restructuring of the library system could bring nothing but benefits as Cruise O’Brien had pointed out. The two men began their restructuring scheme by concentrating on two aspects of library administration in particular – the issue of book distribution and the appointment of new librarians. Books were generally distributed through the schools. Each school in the Union area received, from time to time, a parcel of books for the use of the local townspeople, the books generally being brought home by the children. The local school teachers in Rathkeale informed Cruise O’Brien that the parents of the children named the book they wanted and the children then informed the teacher but Cruise O’Brien didn’t believe this for a moment. Taking the library in Rathkeale as an example he said that even though there were some catalogues for the books in the Union there, it was extremely unlikely that many of the rural population were provided with them. Nor was it likely that they could obtain the books they wanted even if they had catalogues as not more than two dozen boxes, selected sometimes by the teacher, sometimes sent down at random, were supplied at any one time. The real scenario, he imagined was that the parents indicated their preference by asking for a story, a book of history or something similar. Whether it was a legacy of British occupation or not, there was still a healthy mistrust of officialdom in rural Ireland and an indication of Cruise O’Brien’s frustration at his inability to get any reliable information from the locals is clear when he says:

“It is exceedingly difficult to get these people in rural Ireland who are in charge of any form of administration to say exactly how it is done. They invariably tell you that it was done on some plan which corresponds less to the actual method than to the method which they fancy to be right, although the unattainable one.”¹²

This was also the impression of the playwright and temporary civil servant Robinson when he visited Castleisland in County Kerry.

“I got the impression, that the place seethes with jobbery and corruption. They have no books, nor do they have the vaguest idea of how to set about getting them, or indeed to want to get them.”¹³

Having got their library the people of the town declared that Castleisland was “the last place in the world where a library would be used”. They spoke to Robinson of the advantages of education and informed him that what the town really needed was a secondary school under the care of the Christian Brothers. When Robinson delicately suggested to them that Mr. Carnegie might object to his gift being used for such a purpose they expressed nothing but surprise and pointed out that in neighbouring Killorglin the library was already being used as a school. As Robinson was to discover the rural poor didn’t

demur when the Carnegie Trust offered them its money even if they had no intention of being bound by the pretexts under which the same money was given.

The unfortunate fact that the libraries were so poorly stocked meant that the local library committees were too open to the temptation to use the buildings as concert rooms or amusement halls. The library committees in some towns spent a disproportionate amount of time setting the ground rules for concerts, card drives and dances, occasionally going so far as to lay down instructions to the effect that a significant proportion of the dances performed on the premises should be Irish ones, jazz and foxtrot being frowned upon in certain quarters. A peculiarly humorous situation arose in the case of a very dilapidated library in Millstreet, Co. Cork where the Library Committee was persuaded to install a billiard table just off the main reading room. The committee charged a certain amount per game and pretty soon the place had plenty of money. It was doing so well that its' allocation of the library rate was reduced significantly in comparison with other libraries. However disaster struck when the cloth on the billiard table was damaged and about the same time the town of Millstreet split into two political camps – the Redmondites and the O'Brienites!¹⁴ The latter took over the Library Committee with the unfortunate result that the library was boycotted by half the town. Library funds dropped to zero and the library returned to its previously dilapidated state.

The same ambivalent attitude towards the actual *raison-d'Être* of a library was to be seen in the appointment of the librarian. Since a job as a librarian often meant a job for life there was the danger that the “jobbery” which Robinson hinted at could come into play. O'Brien warned the Trust that it was important in future that the person appointed to the job was a competent and intelligent person. In many of the places which he visited he found that the selection of the librarian by the rural authority was often regarded as “an occasion more for the exercise of benevolence than for the fulfillment of an important public trust”.¹⁵

It was happening on occasion that people were being appointed as caretaker/librarians who hadn't the slightest interest in books or in the running of the library generally. These same jobs were sometimes being passed onto other family members thereby perpetuating an inefficient system.

Although O'Brien and Robinson could have been forgiven for apathy in the face of the sometimes pitiful conditions they came across during their surveys they weren't disheartened and instead turned the apparent inefficiencies and lack of centrality of the prevailing system to good advantage. In one of his reports Robinson described how he encouraged a particularly enthusiastic female librarian in rural Limerick onto greater efforts on behalf of her impoverished library by extolling the “imaginary” virtues of an equally impoverished rival library in a neighbouring part of the same county.

The recommendations made by Robinson and O'Brien to the Carnegie Trustees were many and varied. Rather than concentrating solely on grant allocation as the Carnegie Trustees had previously done, the two men recommended other approaches which would aid library development. Their recommendations included: increased centralization – the

amalgamation of certain rural districts would offset the marginalisation of small rural libraries; the appointment of paid librarians by the Trustees; an increased vigilance on the part of the Trustees as to how the libraries were progressing including regular reports and routine inspections of the libraries, and an increased emphasis on book selection so that whatever books were available were representative of the interests of the people.

The results of the Carnegie Trust library reports have been tangible and far-reaching. The recommendations of Robinson and O'Brien were to become the framework for the County Rural Library system begun in Ireland in 1921, and a forerunner of the County Library system as we know it today. A trained librarian was sent to the county town to establish, with the help of a representative County Committee, a central repository or distribution centre for books. From this central repository the books were sent out to local centres in schools and other institutions in the smaller towns and villages.

In the years following these reports a special effort was made to cater for a wide spectrum of reader requirements, from the simple to the most specialized. Mindful of the needs of the latter type of reader in particular, the Carnegie Trustees decided in 1923 to establish a special library in Dublin which became known as the Irish Central Library for Students. This was an amalgamation of the old Carnegie repository set up for the lending of books in bulk and the Cooperative Reference Library operated by the Horace Plunkett Foundation. It was from this library that An Chomhairle Leabharlanna¹⁶ emerged, the latter-day body whose duty it is to advise the government on public libraries in Ireland and coordinate library cooperation thereby promoting the library ideal nationwide and building on the same continuum established by O'Brien and Robinson so many years ago.

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the University of Limerick*

Notes

1. "houses of writing"
2. Glimpses at the Rural Library Problem in Ireland (Part 1 and 2), Carnegie United Kingdom Trust Reports, (1915-17)
3. *ibid*
4. *ibid*
5. *ibid*
6. *ibid*
7. *ibid*
8. *ibid*
9. *ibid*
10. *ibid*
11. Lennox Robinson, *Curtain up* (autobiography), pp 84-5.
12. Glimpses at the Rural Library Problem in Ireland (Part 1 and 2), *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust Reports* (1915-17).
13. *ibid*

14. John Redmond and William Smith O'Brien were rival Irish politicians at this period.
15. Glimpses at the Rural Library Problem in Ireland (Part 1 and 2), *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust Reports* (1915-17).
16. Irish Library Council. Set up as a result of the Public Libraries Act of 1947. Its purpose is to maintain and operate a central library and to assist local authorities in improving their library services.

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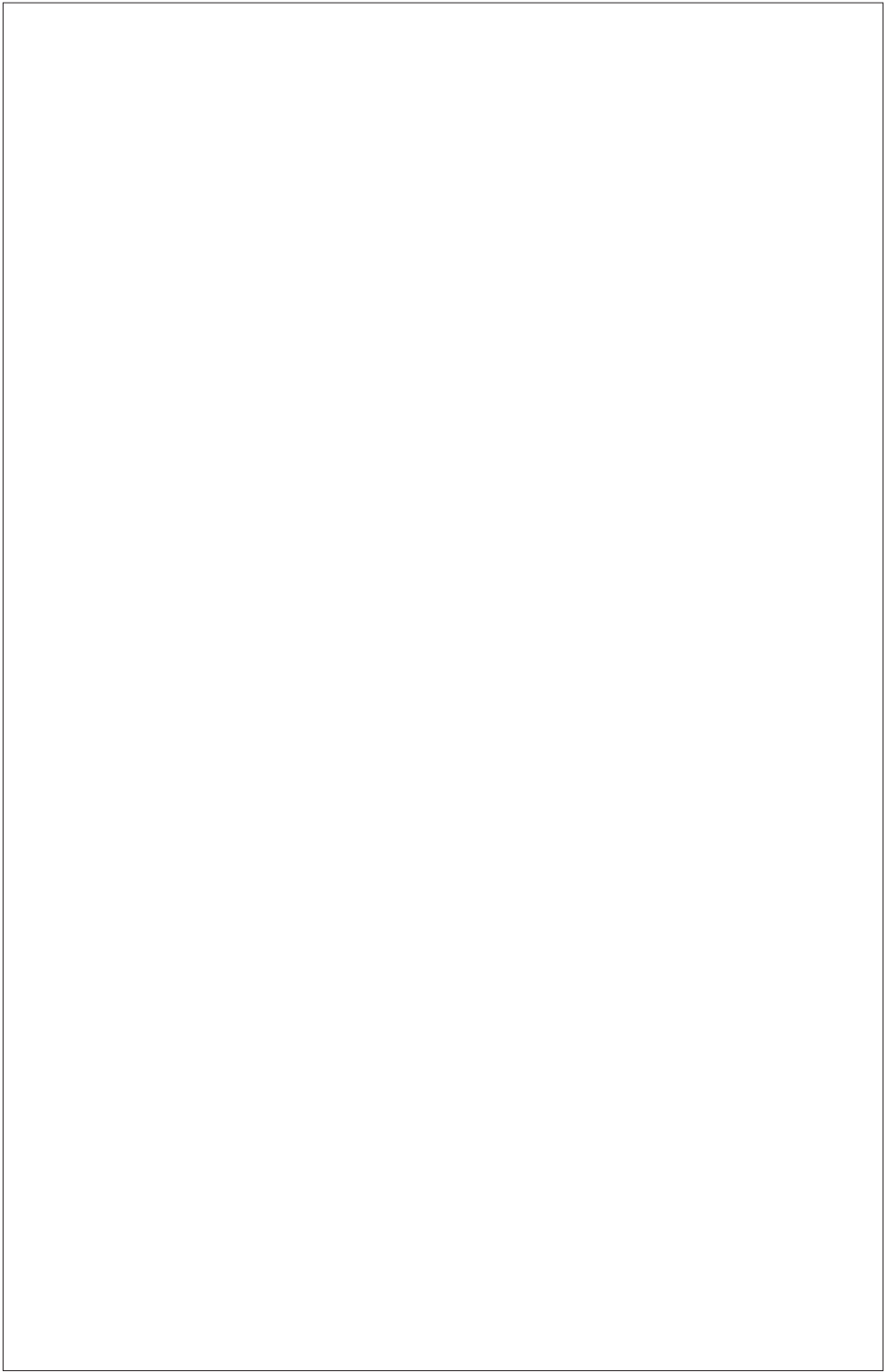
Miscellaneous CUKT papers including Annual Reports held in the archives of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna in Dublin.

Adams, W.G.S., *A Report on library provision and policy to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees*, Edinburgh Carnegie UK Trust, *Glimpses at the rural library problem in Ireland* (2 Vols.), 1915-1917

Devlin, Felicity, *Brightening the countryside: the library service in rural Ireland, 1902-1935*, Ph.D. thesis, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth 1990.

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INFORMATION MATTERS

News and Notes

Please forward contributions to:

- Fionnuala Hanrahan, County Wexford Public Library Service, Abbey Street, Wexford, Republic of Ireland. Fax: +353 53 21097. E-mail: library.wexford@tinet.ie
- Mary Kintner, South Eastern Education & Library Board, Windmill Hill, Ballynahinch, Co. Down, Northern Ireland, BT24 8DH. Fax: +8 01238 565072.

Consumer Health Information report launched

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Jerry, Dwyer, Director General of the Dept. of Health and Children, launched the report, *Well read: developing consumer health information in Ireland* in June. A research project of the Library Association of Ireland (hereafter LAI) funded by the Department of Health and Children and undertaken by Jennifer MacDougall, the resulting report establishes the need for increased access to information on all aspects of health information, particularly for those who are disadvantaged. The report also acts a comprehensive reference book on the current provision and providers of consumer health information in Ireland.

Launching the report, Dwyer indicated that his Department is undertaking an internal review of CHI requirements, the results to be available early next year. The *Well read* report would be an important starting point for that work he said.

Copies of the full report, are available, price £10.00, from the LAI. c/o County Wexford Public Library Service, Abbey Street, Wexford, Republic of Ireland. Fax: +353 53 21097. E-mail: library.wexford@tinet.ie.

Multiple copies of the Executive Summary are available free.

In support of the research project, the Health Promotion Unit of the Dept. of Health and Children is funding a feasibility study on the development and delivery of a clearing house and information system for the management of CHI. That report is on schedule for submission to the Unit by the end of September 1998.

Department of Education Funds Primary School Library Research Project

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The Department of Education is funding a research project, under the auspices of the Library Association of Ireland, which will

- Assess the nature and extent of current provision of information services,
- Determine the perceived needs of all members of the school community, including a consideration of the impact of the ICTs and other recent developments in provision,
- Review best practice internationally, and
- Consider the best routes towards delivery of effective information services into the primary school library sector.

The research will be completed within a year, commencing autumn 1998.

An Expert Committee, which is drawing

nominees from the Department of Education, the National Parents Council, the Irish National Teachers Organisation and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna as well as the Library Association of Ireland, will manage it. The resulting report will be the first piece of comprehensive countrywide research in this area. Further information from the library Association of Ireland, E-mail : laisec@iol.ie.

Development of Library and Information Services in Ireland: A national policy for libraries.

A possible framework for the development of library and information services is being developed by a project team at An Chomhairle Leabharlanna. All aspects of library and information services are being considered, and the resulting discussion document will be available in early 1999. Further information is available from project manager, John Cullen, @ An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 53 & 54 Upper Mount St., Dublin 2. Tel: (01) 6761167. Fax: (01) 6766721. e-mail: lib-pol@leabharlann.ie. <http://www.iol.ie/~libcounc/policy.htw>

The work of other research projects – such as the *Public Libraries and the Arts* initiative of the Irish Library Council and the Arts Council of Ireland, and the *Public Library Service Review* under the auspices of the Department of the Environment and of Local Government, will be taken into consideration.

Library Accommodation

CARLOW'S NEW COUNTY LIBRARY, County Archives, Administrative HQ was opened by the Minister for the Environment, Noel Dempsey, TD, in early July. The library is

housed over three floors – 921 sq. metres – with the ground floor housing the main library and reference services and the county Archive positioned on the top floor. The first floor accommodates local studies, offices and stores. The library System is Horizon 4.2. Carlow County Library is at Tullow Street, Carlow, Tel : 0503 70094, Fax : 0503 40548.

Based on the collections of materials relating to all aspects of the visual arts in Ireland built up over the past 20 years, the NATIONAL VISUAL ARTS LIBRARY was been set up in the National College of Art and Design. Development is on-going: relevant materials are sought, and library staff are encouraged to make use of the new resource. Access is free. Further information is available from the administrator, Ann Hodge, NCAD, 100, Thomas St., Dublin, 8. Tel : Dublin 671 1377, ext.254.

International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award 1998 winner

The shortlisted titles and the winner (*) of the International IMPAC DUBLIN LITERARY AWARD 1998 are *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood, *Imaginations of sand* by Andre Brink, *The counting house* by David Dabydeen, *The glade between the grove* by David Foster, *The autobiography of my mother* by Jamaica Kincaid, *Salt* by Earl Lovelace, *The land of green plums* by Herta Muller(*), *The Pope's rhinoceros* by Lawrence Norfolk, *Last Orders* by Graham Swift, and *The Englishman's boy* by Guy Vanderhaeghe.

Michael Hofmann translated *The land of green plums*.

Belfast illustrator wins again

P.J. Lynch has won the Kate Greenaway Medal for outstanding illustration for *When Jessie came across the sea* (Walker Books). This is the second time the illustrator has won this award: *The Christmas miracle of Jonathan Toomey* (Jonathan Cape) was successful also, in 1995.

Library systems

Clare County Council, the University of Limerick and Dublin City University libraries have selected the Talis BLCMP library system.

The Information Society Commission

The first annual report of the Information Society Commission, available since the spring, has summarised Commission and advisory group initiatives and activities as well as highlighting on-line services being provided by Government Departments and advances in a range of IT and related areas. Find the report at the Commissions web-site:

www.infosoccom.ie, or from the Government Publications Office, 4-5 Harcourt St., Information Society Ireland: first report of Ireland's Information Society Commission – Dublin: Stationary Office, 1998. ISBN: 0 7076 4999 4, IR£4.00

Public access to the Internet

The Microsoft *Online Project* has supported Dublin City Libraries (at Ballyfermot Library), Limerick City Libraries (at the Granery Library) and Mayo County Library Service with a suite of pcs, all the Microsoft Office Applications and Reference Software. A dedicated leased line provides full free Internet

access. The project was initiated by Microsoft Ireland and the Local Government Computer Services Board; the three libraries selected are pilot sites

People

Betty Boardman, BA, DLIS, former Senior Librarian, Dublin Corporation, has been appointed Librarian, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.

Jess Codd, BA, ALAI, has been promoted to Executive Librarian with Tipperary Joint Library Committee.

Maureen Comber, BA, ALA, has been appointed Assistant Librarian – Local Studies, with Clare County Library Service. She is the first appointee to this post.

Canada Life has appointed **Ursula Cooney** to set up its library and information service.

Angela Cotter, BA, DLIS, ALAI., has moved from the Library, St. Patrick's College, Maynooth to Dublin City University.

Clare County Librarian, **Noel Crowley**, has been appointed to the new Council of the Arts Council of Ireland.

Librarian **Laura Daly** has moved from Dublin Corporation Libraries to the Institute of Chartered Accountants, where she is replacing **Isabella Downes**, who has taken promotion to edit the Institute's professional journal.

Dublin City Librarian, **Deirdre Ellis-King**, and Cork County Librarian, **Ruth Flanagan**, are the Library Association of Ireland's nominees to the new Council of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.

Anthony Edwards, DLIS, has been promoted to Executive Librarian in County Clare Public Library Service.

Correction. Both **Ursula Gavin** and **Ann**

McSweeney have been appointed Senior Librarians with the Dublin Institute of Technology and not Deputy Librarians as stated in Issue 13 (2). The DIT Library has no grade of Deputy Librarian.

Sheila Kelly, DLIS, has been promoted to the Senior Librarian grade within Dublin Corporation Public Libraries.

Margaret Merrick has been appointed Manager of IRIS, the Consortium of Irish University and Research Libraries. Margaret previously worked as Librarian at the Dublin law firm of A & L Goodbody

Eithne Mooney took early retirement from the Guinness Library and Information Service in July.

Carmel O'Sullivan, BA, DLIS, ALAI, former Deputy Librarian, Dublin City University, has been appointed Assistant Director, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna.

Assistant Librarian, **Noirin O'Neill**, has moved from Donegal County Council Libraries to Limerick City Libraries.

Bob Pearce, Lecturer in the Department of Library and Information Studies, University College, Dublin, retired in September 1997.

Theresa Walsh, former Librarian, South Dublin County Council, has been appointed Senior Librarian, Dublin Corporation.

David Welsh, FLA, retired from the South Eastern Education and Library Board, after more than 41 years as Chief Librarian.

Dr. Judith Wusteman has been appointed Lecturer, Department of Library and Information Studies, University College, Dublin. Previously a lecturer in computer science in the University of Kent at Canterbury, her specialism is electronic publishing.

Welcome to new LAI Members: **Stephen Kennedy**, **Eileen O'Connor**, **Mary Buckley**, **Linda Austen**, **Denis O'Kelly**, **Ursula Cooney**.

New Library Association of Ireland Officers

At the AGM of the Library Association of Ireland in March, **Beatrice Doran**, Librarian, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland became President. The new Vice-Presidents are **Pat McMahon**, County Librarian, Galway County Council, and **Marjory Sliney**, Senior Librarian, Fingal County Council. **Brendan Teeling** retired as Hon Secretary, to be replaced by **Jess Codd**, Executive Librarian, Tipperary Joint Library Committee, and **Catherine Watters**, Librarian – Coopers and Lybrand, is the new Hon. Treasurer, replacing **Nora Buggy** who has moved to England.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Recent publications is compiled by Agnes Neligan. Items for inclusion should be sent to her at The Library, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Republic of Ireland. Tel: +353-1-708 3880. Fax: +353 1 628 6008. E-mail: agnes.neligan@may.ie

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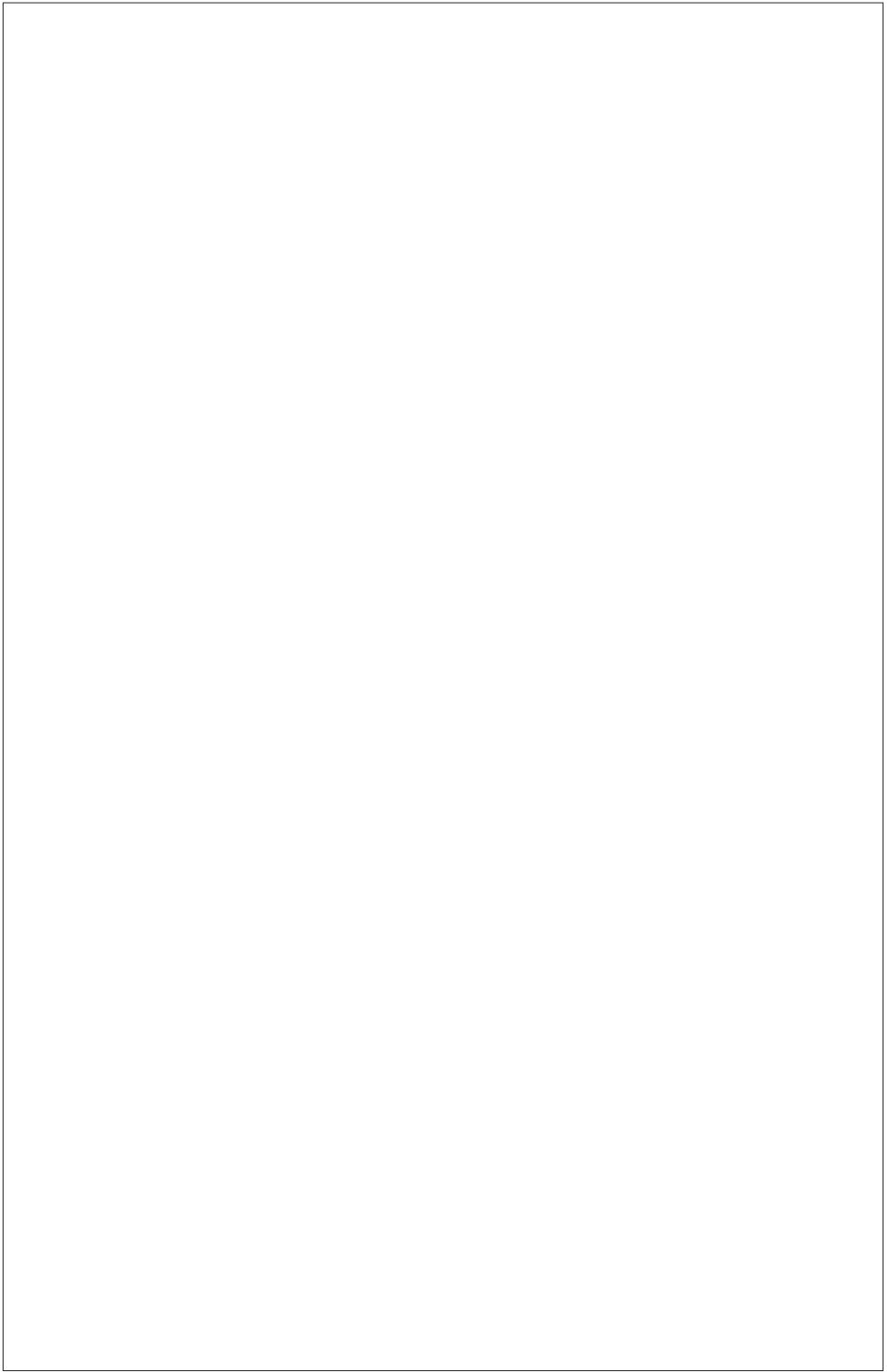
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REVIEWS

“Vanity enough” the story of the origins and development of Newry Public Library.

Patrick J. Byrne. Armagh: Southern Education and Library Board, 1997. xii,67p. ISBN 0 905962 09 5. £3.50.

75 Blián ag fáis 1922-1997: a history of the Donegal County Library. Letterkenny:

Eagrán Dhún na nGall, 1997. 23p. ISBN 0 9508407 5 0. IR£4.95.

These very different booklets were published in 1997 to celebrate two anniversaries, 100 years of Newry Public Library and 75 years of the Donegal County service.

Patrick Byrne died before completing the story of Newry library and the book was edited by his daughter Margaret. He was Chairman of the Library Committee from 1981-1985 and the book is as much a history of Newry itself as of its library.

The book charts the history of Newry back to monastic times. It describes in some detail the eighteenth and nineteenth-century world of book clubs, reading societies, circulating libraries and the coming of the Mechanics Institute in 1850. In 1800 Newry was a thriving port and trading centre with a population of 10,000 and vied with Belfast as a centre of culture. It was also the main port for the export of live pigs. William Drennan, a medical doctor who ran the Newry Book Society, referred to the town as “stirring with pigs and papists”. The same man is noted for being the first to refer to Ireland as the “Emerald Isle”. Newry also supported a thriving theatre business supported by Volunteers, Freemasons and United Irishmen. At a benefit night for “distressed Freemasons” the *Belfast News Letter* recorded that “a more brilliant audience was never seen on the like occasion in the North of Ireland”.

There is a chapter on the Gilchrist Trust who persuaded the Town Commissioners to adopt the Public Libraries (Ireland) Act of 1894 and as a result Newry Free Public Library opened its doors in September 1897. There was a gala evening to mark the occasion at which Lord Kilmorey gave the opening speech. His comments on the value of libraries reflect the thinking of the time. Patrick Byrne puts it “Based upon the simplistic assumption that a main cause of poverty and deprivation was illiteracy and an unwillingness of the lower orders to avail themselves of educational opportunities, public libraries were regarded as a form of instructional outdoor relief.” The supporting speech by a local barrister, Charles Drumgoole, saw the library as a repository of all the legends and traditions of the town of Newry but also highlighted the lack of a proper system of technical education and the library’s role in vocational self-education. Another speaker spoke of the literary tradition of the area – from Charlotte Bronte to Art McCooley. Not everyone supported the establishment of the library and members of the Town Commissioners were conspicuous by their absence at the official opening. As happened elsewhere there were objections not only to paying the rate but moral and political objections too. Worst

of all was the danger that “the virtue of the nation would be undermined by the infection of maiden minds with the sleazy sentimentality of cheap romantic novels”.

The chapter on the history of the library is all too brief. The introduction states that its history is one of survival and notes with satisfaction that the library has outlived many seemingly more enduring institutions such as the Inland Navigation canal, the Gasworks and three railway stations. In particular it would be interesting to know more about the seven librarians listed in an appendix – all women. In 1970 the library came under the jurisdiction of the Southern Education and Library Board. The library has thrived ever since with a new building opening in 1987.

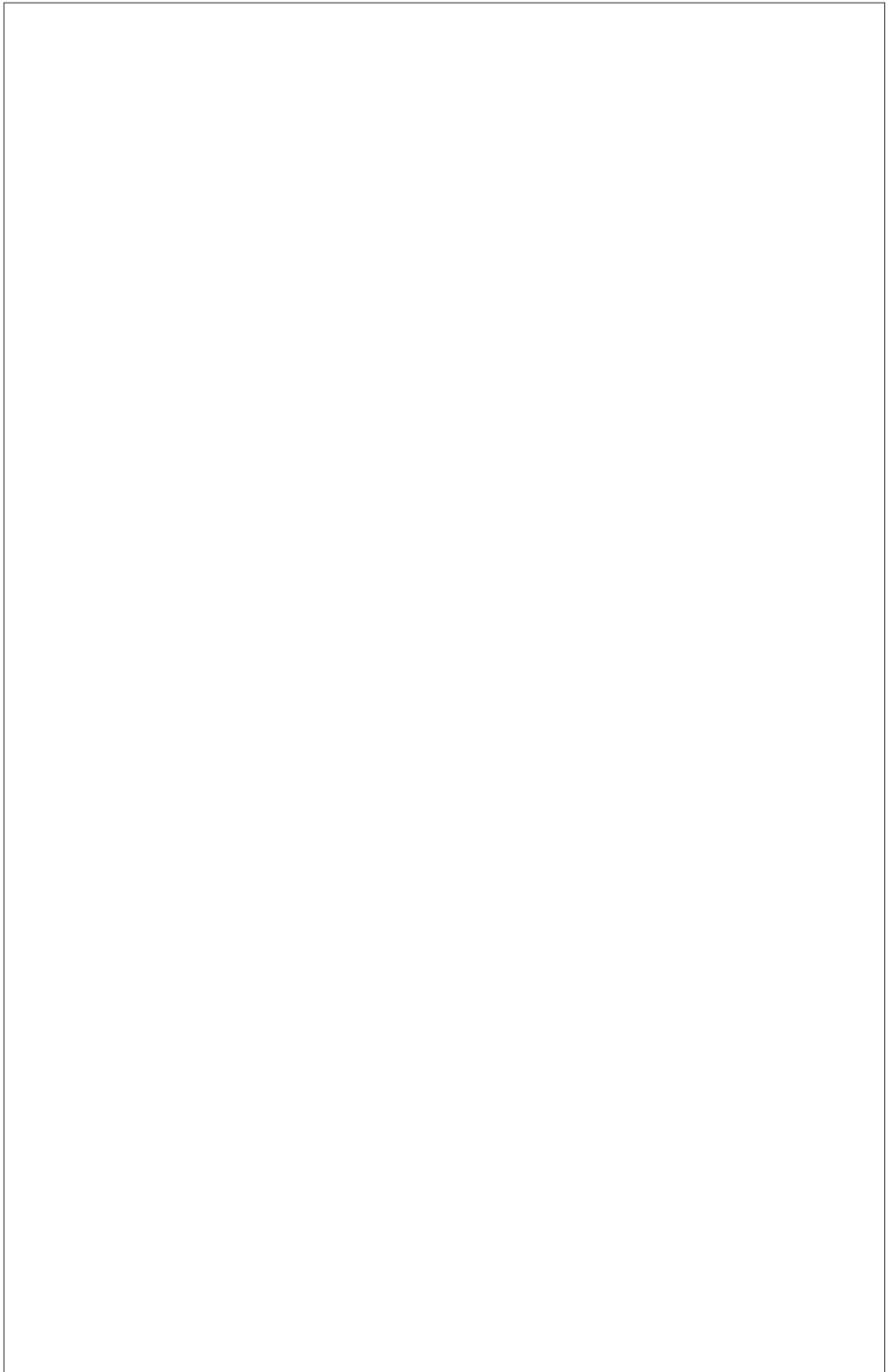
A substantial part of the book deals with the flourishing early publishing and printing industry in Newry and there is a useful listing of books printed between 1761 and 1911 given as appendices.

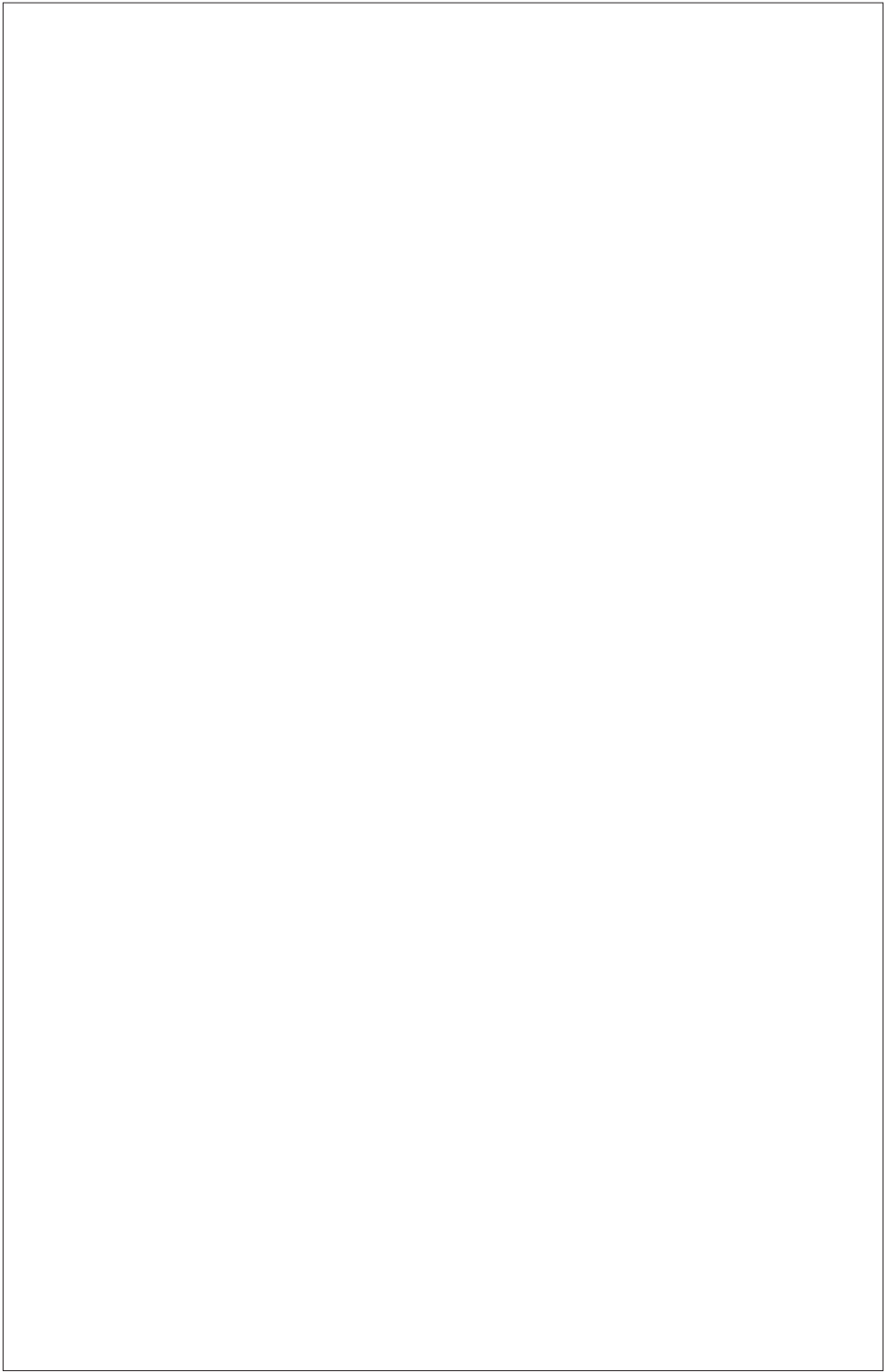
Patrick Byrne died before finishing the book and as a result it is somewhat uneven. His research notes are deposited with the library and these will provide a valuable source for future library historians.

The account of the Donegal libraries is a professionally and attractively produced publication which is a commemorative booklet rather than a history. Unlike Newry, Donegal was established with the help of the Carnegie Trust. Though twenty-five years later the same opposition to libraries existed from councillors. There were fiscal objections and objections to any further expenditure on books as, it was stated, the books in the library were unfit to read. Disagreeing a councillor said “the selection of books was totally in the hands of clergymen, representing all denominations.” Today’s councillors view the library service rather differently as seen in the comments from the Chairman of the Council and the County Manager who promises a first class library service with state of the art technology to all citizens of the county.

The book is well illustrated with photographs of past and present staff and gives an upbeat picture of a library service conscious of its role in society today and into the next century when “the Council plans to have a comprehensive and integrated cultural development service spearheaded by the library.”

Agnes Neligan, Deputy Librarian, National University of Ireland, Maynooth





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