

# An Leabharlann

## THE IRISH LIBRARY

Second Series Volume 14 Numbers 3 & 4 1999

- \* Local Studies
- \* Performance evaluation
- \* Libraries and the arts
- \* 1798, the year of libraries?
- \* News



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## THE IRISH LIBRARY

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# An Leabharlann

## THE IRISH LIBRARY

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### Journal of the Library Association of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Branch of the Library Association

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# EDITORIAL

How do you measure a library's success? If your book issues are falling — and if they're not you are bucking a national trend, the supermarket till paperback, our most recent and it may well prove most testing competitor, proving, at £3 .99, irresistible to even our most loyal clients- need this mean that you are failing? The winning of recognition for an inclusive range of performance measures, beyond simple book issues — not that the latter should ever slip from its position of prime barometer of our effectiveness — is clearly an urgent task for all who would defend our services, defend them to politicians, to funders, opinion-makers and anyone else who'll listen. The most casual observer could see that in the typical library of today a variety of transactions routinely occur which have nothing to do with the borrowing of books. There's probably a group of middle-aged to elderly men reading local and national newspapers. Others are reading magazines. In the reference area a couple are consulting a directory. The photocopier, fax machine and reader printer, its microfilm of local newspapers, are in constant use. The public access internet is almost solidly booked. Young people are accessing an encyclopaedia on CD-rom. The children's library is strewn with picture books and children. In the meetings room further activities with children may be in progress. These are all activities which, among public institutions, libraries are best placed to facilitate. And yet who's counting all this? Who is telling us what it is valid to count? In this issue Antoinette Robinson provides a timely introduction to this most urgent area of public library management. Her article has both practical and theoretical application.

The prizing of the local appears to be a response to a fundamental human instinct. Attachment to the place of one's birth, reinforced if that attachment is ancestral, seems to have grown as forces antipathetic, working in a contrary direction, to it — the elimination of distance by telecommunications, the reduction of the real to the near virtual achieved by the internet- have gathered strength. Attachment to place is the stronger for knowing what has happened in that place. The written record is the foundation of such knowledge. Acknowledging this, libraries have traditionally dedicated much of their energy to collecting, storing and, most importantly, promoting access to this record. In this issue articles by Fionnuala Hanrahan and Liam Ronayne highlight the central importance of this aspect of library provision.

Many recent developments point to an increasingly exciting interface between public libraries and the arts. In this issue, finally, Gerry Burns, who has wide experience of both, reports on a groundbreaking initiative in Portadown.



# Performance Evaluation in Irish Public Libraries

ANTOINETTE ROBINSON

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*Providing statistical evidence – to our politicians, funders, opinion formers, – of our usefulness requires that public libraries develop mechanisms for evaluating performance. This article outlines the background to and – in often full and immediately applicable detail – the practical use of performance evaluation in Irish libraries.*

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## Performance Measurement in Ireland - Political Background

In Ireland the Local Government Act, 1991 requires local authorities to have regard to the need to secure the most beneficial, effective and efficient use of the resources available to them. In 1996 the Irish government launched a programme for the renewal of local government entitled “Better Local Government, a Programme for Change.” The programme has four core principles:

- enhancing local democracy and widening participation
- serving the customer better
- developing efficiency in local government<sup>1</sup>
- providing proper resources to allow local government to fulfil the role assigned to it

Some of the measures set out for improving the Quality of Service are as follows:

- There will be greater emphasis on providing quality services and on serving the needs of customers
- Performance indicators will be used to measure and compare local authority activities in the delivery of key services and a special working group will be established to identify the key standards and indicators
- Local authorities will implement quality initiatives to improve particular services.
- A major programme will be put in place to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness in local authorities<sup>2</sup>

## Why measure performance?

The most important reason for measuring performance in any organisation is that it is an essential part of good management. The role of evaluation is not to make a judgement on a performance, but to improve that performance by providing better information for

managers to make informed decisions. The aims of performance measurement in the public service are threefold:

- To show savings
- To enhance accountability and control
- To improve performance e.g. reduce costs, improve services etc.

### Terminology

Before a performance evaluation system can be put into place the library must clarify the concepts involved:

### Performance indicators

Performance indicators are management tools designed to assist library managers to determine how well the service is performing.<sup>3</sup> They provide evidence on which to base judgements. Performance indicators are not an exact science but their value to the service lies in their interpretation and application by library managers. The purpose of the library service evaluation is to develop meaningful indicators of performance which can be used by library managers and decision makers to assess the effectiveness of their operations. They can also help as justification for a course of action or decision. Illustrating library improvements using quantified performance data is more effective in dealing with criticism than generalisations about better services being provided. The library must find indicators for outputs e.g. personnel, finance, size of population, etc. which can illustrate the benefits of providing a certain level of resources to the library. Indicators must be measurable, useful and must indicate performance.

### Performance Measurement

Performance measurement is designed to assess the standard of service. The following is a set of criteria to which measurements must conform:

- Data must be collectable at a local level
- The measurement criteria must differentiate between libraries
- The measurement must be capable of replacing or supplementing existing statistical reporting systems
- The measurement tests must be suitable for interpretation by library managers.

### Performance Appraisal

Performance measurement and performance appraisal are separate considerations. Performance measurement is focused on the service provided and is not used to make a judgement on the performance of the individual. The latter task is the work of performance appraisal.<sup>4</sup>

## Value for Money

The concept of “value for money” (VFM) emphasises service provision that satisfies need and moves away from satisfying demand only. VFM considers the three Es : economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Economy is the purchase of inputs at the lowest cost. A shift to cheaper inputs, e.g. lower rent, will improve economy. Efficiency is concerned with maximising output per given input, or the extent to which the best possible use is made of existing resources. This analysis is concerned with resources and costs. Effectiveness is concerned with analysing the outcome of an activity and comparing it with the intended outcome as the actual output may differ from the planned output or outcome. This is a particular difficulty for the public service as service objectives are often not clear.

## The United Kingdom Experience

All local authority libraries in the UK have to publish information about their services, the standards these services should meet and how well these have been achieved. The indicators which measure performance are set by the UK Audit Commission. The Commission publishes annually details of how local authority libraries performed. These give the opportunity to make year-on-year comparisons of libraries’ performance. The Audit Commission outlines the five features which should ideally be covered by the indicators selected to evaluate libraries’ performance:

- The overall cost of the service to the taxpayer
- The amount of the service provided
- The extent to which the public use it
- The quality or efficiency of the service
- Its value for money<sup>5</sup>

In the UK in the eighties existing databases of in-service information were used for the purposes of evaluation. Its relative usefulness was illustrated in the review of a local government library service. The initial evaluation drew only on current information systems. Clients of the service were interviewed and very high satisfaction ratings were found. This was an important measure of service performance. However, the database was limited as it only covered existing customers and did not provide information for an evaluation of non-users. The problem of low membership was found to be a significant issue and was related to socio-economic class. Those in lower-income families, including the unemployed, had lower usage rates than middle-income families. Had the evaluation of the service been limited to the existing customers, a misleading view of performance would have resulted.

In gathering information, the UK Audit Commission concentrates on information which is already being collected and, where new information is to be collected, a careful study of its usefulness and validity is required.

## The United States Experience

In the United States output measures are collected as part of the Public Library Data Service Annual Report. The 1997 report included data from 794 libraries in the United States.<sup>5</sup> These measures include annual issues, annual in-library materials use i.e. the total number of items removed from the shelf or from their usual place by staff or public, annual reference transactions, the annual number of library visits, i.e.. the number of individuals entering the library and annual programme attendance. Output measures for children's service in the library include the above as well as annual children's information transactions i.e. the total number of contacts between a library user under 14 or an adult acting on behalf of a child and a library staff member who provides help with or knowledge, interpretation, or instruction in the use of an information source. State library laws or administrative rules in the United States inform libraries of the consequences of failing to return annual reports. Penalties can involve a loss of either state aid, or accreditation, or both.<sup>6</sup> For libraries that would not otherwise collect the required data and submit reports, these are usually effective.

## What to measure? A Framework for Evaluation

The library development plan required under Section 33 of the Local Government Act 1994 (Part IV) provides an opportunity to develop a framework within which existing library services can be examined. Libraries in the UK are encouraged to publish their standards of service and demonstrate how these standards can be monitored through the use of performance indicators.<sup>7</sup>

The library performs many roles within the community and an evaluation of the service must consider all these roles. This provides a checklist of performance indicators reflecting the totality of the library's activities and not just those which are amenable to measurement. In the community the library is a collection of materials ranging from historical documents to audio-visual items. The library is a physical system, a building which can be visited, used for reference and where facilities can be used. The library is also an information gateway where users are referred to information they require which may be held elsewhere. This may be through the use of information technology to access on-line databases but also through the inter-library loans system. It is the professional knowledge of the library staff which guides the user to the information required.<sup>8</sup> The library has many other roles, such as education or leisure, depending on its location and purpose, so developing performance indicators must consider all aspects of the service. Defining the roles of the library would be a valuable exercise in which staff can consider the real purpose of the library.

Planning an evaluation must be kept within the existing time constraints and the amount of time the library manager can afford. Starting on a small scale means that the task of evaluation can be expanded over time and new activities added. These indicators will show if the library service is moving in the right direction towards meeting its aims.

They provide information which can be used to improve service and to demonstrate what has been achieved. The Library Development Plan allows the library to develop standards for the library service in that county. These standards will differ from the standards in other counties by focusing on the people residing in the county.

The library should examine its service and understand the principles of good service delivery by asking the following questions:

- Who is the service for? - there will usually be more than one target group.
- What do they receive? - this will require an examination of the current service.
- When do they need to receive it?
- Where do they need to get it?
- How is the service delivered to them? and
- Why is the service being provided?

It is important to put customers into groups when designing a service operation. The people who pay for the service are the taxpayers but those who are most influential in deciding its main parameters are the library managers. In the library, the people who receive the service are different again - children, adults, teenagers, the elderly, the visually impaired, the business community, the arts community and so on. Also the needs of users of the library who may not be registered customers, will have to be considered. The managers need to design a service which tries to satisfy the needs of all groups. This is a never-ending debate, as different groups will assume different levels of influence over time. It is necessary to relate the library activities and services to needs or demand. An evaluation of the library service involves assessing the efficiency or effectiveness of the activities provided or whether these are the right activities in the right balance.

A number of library services are provided to cater for the needs of specific groups, including business information services, special collections and services to a particular group. Statistically these services may be insignificant but they are very important to the user group. To properly evaluate specialist services, a survey of the use made of the service and the amount of the service supplied, would be required. Cost effectiveness indicators compare the effectiveness achieved in providing a given level of service with the cost of achieving that level. In the case of a specialist service, the costs of the service could be compared to the number of target group users of that service. These indicators can assist a library manager who needs to decide if the benefit derived from a service justifies the level of resources invested in it or to assess the benefit of increasing the resource allocation.

The categorisation of performance indicators, such as efficiency indicators or indicators of economy, can ensure that the indicators selected relate to the characteristic being measured. The following is a list of performance indicators created by comparing the elements of the library service, inputs, activities and outcomes, in different combinations. They are suitable performance indicators for Irish Public Libraries but may not be the only indicators a library manager wishes to use. They cover the concepts of economy, efficient and effectiveness within the library:

<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Accessibility	Availability outside normal hours
Economy	Net current expenditure per capita Proportion of budget committed Professional staff per capita Floor space per capita
Market penetration	Registered users as a proportion of population Correlation between registered users' profiles and population profile Active borrowers/users as a percentage of population Take-up of specific services Visits per capita Children's issues per capita
Efficiency	Speed of supply/delivery Replacement rate
Effectiveness	Timeliness in meeting requests Failure rate/Needs fill rates Turnover rate
Cost-effectiveness	Lending costs per issue
Operational costs	Ratio of materials spending to issues Average cost of books bought
Productivity	Output per relevant staff member

Different stakeholders in the library will differ in their emphasis according to their area of interest. Those concerned with budget, for example, will concentrate on indicators of economy while customers will be interested in efficiency and effectiveness of the service. Having all materials available all the time would be efficient but not economically sound. The role of the library manager is to balance customers' needs with efficiency and value for money considerations. The well managed library has a balance between economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

### **Measurement Issues in Irish Public Libraries**

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, IFLA, publish guidelines and standards as to the level of provision needed to maintain efficient public library services.<sup>9</sup> IFLA recommend that these standards be accepted as guidelines for the development and provision of public library services and form the basis of national standards. The administrative unit in Ireland is the local authority and IFLA recommends a population base of at least 150,000. This, they estimate, to be the minimum population required to make economically viable the provision of a comprehensive range of materials, trained staff, technology and other services. Only five of the 26 authorities in Table 3 have this population base. A population base of 50,000 is considered the minimum acceptable

size.<sup>10</sup> Larger administrations allow a faster rate of development and better standards of service, as the requirements of the general user can be met without adversely affecting the needs of specialised groups. Within the administrative unit, IFLA recommends a population base of at least 3,000 for each branch. Below this figure no useful standards are defined.

As can be seen from Table 1, almost one third of the 26 Irish authorities have a population base of less than 60,000. County boroughs populations are not included

**Table 1: Populations of Local Authority areas in Ireland**

Class of Library	Population	Number in sample
Small	25,000 - 59,000	8
Small/Medium	60,000 - 100,000	5
Medium	61,000 - 129,000	6
Medium/Large	130,000 - 189,000	4
Large	> 190,000	3
Total		26

These statistics have important implications for Irish libraries. The majority of libraries outside the county borough areas will have difficulty providing a comprehensive range of services to customers. When evaluating the service provided, these figures have important implications for quality. Library co-operation, therefore, is particularly important in Irish libraries in the sharing of knowledge and resources. The 1998 “Branching Out” report recommends that library authorities develop a library co-operation strategy. It goes on to say:

“The strategy will develop an approach to resource sharing and better service provision that will embrace co-operation with other libraries...”<sup>11</sup>

Since there is considerable variation in the size of Irish public libraries, this must be taken into account when attempting to measure effectiveness. Libraries with greater resources may be able to offer a broader range of services. In such cases, comparisons would be misleading. The practice of Total Quality Management involves this concept of benchmarking where the performance of a particular aspect of the library can be measured against a similar library. This measurement sets the benchmark, and progress over time can be analysed against it.

**Table 2: Budget as an indicator of library size in Ireland\***

Class of Library	Amount of Budget	Number in sample
Small	£200,000 - £449,000	15
Medium	£450,000 - £899,000	8
Large	£900,000 - £2,000,000	5
Total		28

\* County Boroughs not included.

## How to Measure : A Methodology for Evaluation

The model of the library service, Fig. 1 below, provides a useful way of visualising what the library does and also forms a framework around which performance indicators can be constructed.

*Fig.1 : Library Service Model*

Inputs   Activities   Outcomes
--------------------------------

The different elements in the model can be defined as follows:

- Inputs are resources, staff, materials, funding put into the library's operation.
- Activities are the direct products of the library and can be quantified as the number of issues, number of enquiries, number of exhibitions etc.
- Outcomes are the uses made by the consumer of the activities and the satisfaction with these activities.

There are in addition environmental factors acting as outside constraints on the library, such as population, registered readers, geographical distribution and population characteristics. These can be used to generate indicators of how effective a library operation is e.g. library staff per 100 population or bookfund expenditure per capita.

Beyond the outcomes are higher order effects of the library's activities such as the contribution the library makes to art education by holding exhibitions. These are very difficult to measure accurately.

The library must outline its aims and objectives for the service and state what the service is trying to achieve. The public Libraries cannot be all things to all men. This statement is especially true of public libraries in Ireland which, because of their size and restricted resources, are limited in the services they can provide at a high standard. The evaluation process provides the library manager with the opportunity to determine the most appropriate role for the library and to manage accordingly. American management literature refers to this concept as role-setting.<sup>12</sup> Statistics and role-setting play an invaluable role in the evaluation process. If the library sees as one of its primary roles that of an information and referral centre, for example, there is little point in keeping detailed statistics on the loans of music cassettes. Libraries' adopting different roles also has important implications for library co-operation activities. Where one library is concentrating on a particular aspect of the library service, it may become a referral centre for other libraries. This sharing of limited resources makes economic sense for Ireland.

In order to set up an evaluation system, measurement should initially be confined to the basic services traditionally and universally provided by the public library, such as making materials available to readers, providing information to readers and making facilities available to readers. By analysing existing library services through these three broad areas, we can illustrate improvements in terms of these services. Historically we have looked at inputs, such as the total number of books, and have made assumptions about the service based on these figures. By focusing on how efficiently these services are carried out, we

should expect to see differences between smaller and larger public libraries. We shall better understand the effects of factors such as overall resources, physical facilities, user populations and geographical location.

The majority of indicators become more meaningful when applied to specific aspects of the library service. The aspects to be examined will depend upon the type of library and the range of services provided. However, there is a core set of library activities which are common to the majority of Irish public libraries. Libraries will differ in the scope of the service and the model should be adapted to individual circumstances.

Most library services are now computerised to a greater or lesser extent, so monitoring the performance of the computer system has become important. The quality of the reports generated from the automated system will only be as good as the quality of the input. Like the card catalogue, the bibliographic database will have to be maintained to reflect the current status of the library's collection. Items lost, worn out or stolen should be deleted from the database as new items are added. This allows for greater accuracy in the data extracted. Delays due to down-time and system failures will affect the performance of the service being evaluated.

*Core set of library activities:*

1. Acquisitions
2. Cataloguing and classification
3. Inter-library loans
4. Materials processing
5. Stock management. (Libraries in the United States include in the stock the "virtual" material available electronically to customers.)
6. Collection development.
7. Requests service
8. User training, including outreach activities - exhibitions, library tours, activities
9. Publications, including in-house information leaflets, library guides etc.
10. Usage of space i.e. the use made of library facilities
11. Issues i.e. book issues - books on loan, books consulted, but not borrowed
12. Enquiries

These activities must be costed in order to calculate where resources are being used and to ensure they are being spent efficiently. This information assists in service planning for the library, allowing the library to take full advantage of technology. As book issues decrease and the costs of running the service rise, library managers need to know where the resources are being spent e.g. to find out whether the bookfund is decreasing while expenditure is increasing in other areas or if the processing or repairs of materials are absorbing more staff time. Libraries do not have the data to answer these questions as we do not keep records on repairs or dealing with queries.

Results can be examined and compared with results from libraries of similar size and

budget and which have the same emphasis on the aspect of the service being examined. When comparing libraries in different locations, it is important to compare like with like e.g. loan periods, renewals, books allowed per reader etc. and to consider local circumstances when interpreting comparative data e.g. are opening hours the same or are geographical locations comparable? Lack of data about the use of resources will affect management decisions. The library may be assigning a higher percentage of resources to one activity and foregoing important opportunities by sustaining declining activities. The Library Development Plan gives the library manager an opportunity to prioritise activities and information on resource use can help to clarify these priorities.

The library manager has the information to identify the key tasks and to judge whether the resources spent on the service relate to the service objectives agreed at the planning stage. The starting point should be broader measures, such as building costs per square metre. Staff costs typically account for half of library expenditure. The tasks in which the staff are involved are varied but estimates can be made by keeping a log of time spent at each activity. The proportion of staff time is then charged to that activity for costing purposes. It is at the level of costing the activity that comparisons between library authorities becomes possible. Library managers must be able to explain huge variations in costs, such as cost per issue or per reference enquiry between libraries. The library and the local authority can analyse these costs over time to monitor trends and make an evaluation on the efficiency of the service.

In order for these indicators to be useful, they should be assessments which can be carried out quickly and inexpensively. One of the ways to make the evaluation more efficient is to examine what we collect at the moment. We need to ask if libraries are measuring the right things in the right way. Public libraries are accustomed to counting everything and believing that this is more accurate. For example, one method for producing reference statistics is to mark a tick on a form to indicate each reference transaction. Often, during busy periods, marks are not made after each transaction and, at a quieter time, staff will try to calculate the number of transactions. This calculation cannot be exactly equal to the number of transactions. These inaccuracies are multiplied over the year and the statistics become less reliable as a measurement of the service.

An alternative to measuring everything is to use sampling. If the library counts reference transactions for a two week period, the staff can give quality attention to data collection for this limited time. High-quality data can be collected and the annual estimate can be made from that data. This figure must reflect what is actually happening in the service. For the library manager, the validity and reliability of the data relate directly to costs. The data would be more accurate if the sample was tripled and the library manager must decide if the amount of measuring is accurate. As researchers are aware, carrying out user questionnaires is expensive and time-consuming, so the judicious use of indirect indicators of effectiveness can save time and money.

When using numerical data in performance evaluation it is necessary to assess the usefulness of each measure before collecting the data. The aims of a given service in the library

will decide what data is collected. Libraries collect data on inputs such as staff, stock and cost and on outputs such as issues, membership and requests satisfied. Quantification of activity, such as the number of members or book issues, gives the library manager information on the size and range of the library's operation. Statistics do not provide any indication of the quality of the library service. It is difficult to assess outcomes such as improved literacy rates or increased reading standards in children by examining this type of data.

Many of the data collection systems required are already in place and, with the increased use of computerised circulation databases, this type of statistical measurement is relatively unobtrusive. It becomes more intrusive when customers are asked questions such as in interviews or questionnaires. Using existing data reduces the amount of time spent gathering information. The raw data can be used for further analysis to assess the needs of a particular group of customers or to evaluate an existing service. Library standards are often drawn from existing data sources. Before collecting data, the library should determine what use the statistics will be put to, clearly define what is being counted, develop a method for collection, whether daily or periodic sampling, and recording the results. The usefulness of the data needs to be assessed:

- What was the purpose of the data collection - to describe the use of a service or to further a cause?
- How was the data collected - daily statistics or periodic survey?
- Is the information up-to-date?
- Can the data be verified by other sources?

The data sources can include branch library statistics, national or international library statistics, census records, or any reported surveys relating to libraries.

In contrast to library statistics, a performance indicator shows the use and value of some aspect of the library service. These indicators are derived from combining two statistics to form a ratio. The number of books issued divided by the number of registered readers produces the ratio of average loans per registered reader which can be seen as an effectiveness ratio.

Performance indicators also have value in the context of quality management and quality assurance. Quality assurance mechanisms define the process of an activity in order to ensure a given quality. Performance indicators measure the extent to which quality has been achieved. Neither will guarantee quality. They are management tools designed to raise the standard of the service provided. Quality management is a cyclical process involving four stages:

1. Set standards
2. Translate standards into a service strategy - operational specifications
3. Review or measure what is happening
4. Learn from the information generated

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Libraries have to compete with other vital public services for county council funds so it is necessary to convince the decision-makers of the benefits accruing from a good public library service. Managers are less and less likely to accept the values of the library service on faith alone. Meaningful indicators of performance can be used by library managers as an instrument for decision-making.

The evaluation process involves commitment from the library manager and the staff.

A suggested sequence is as follows:

- Identify a core set of quantifiable library activities which are common to the majority of Irish public libraries which can be quantified
- Establish acceptable levels of performance
- Assess the inputs needed to finance the activities and the outcomes associated with these activities
- Set a base year
- Set the current standards and targets
- Decide how the library will meet the targets
- Monitor the results
- Re-evaluate the inputs based upon these new analyses
- Assign the necessary resources to meet the targets.

This analysis will provide the basis for the library's annual budget. The spending is justified and analysed and is an alternative to incrementalism where the same programmes are carried out each year without any analysis of content or outcome. These techniques for evaluation allow the library manager to gather methods from different sources or to choose a combination of techniques which most suit their library, such as questionnaires, surveys, data collection and observation. The results obtained from a performance evaluation will depend on how the organisation is assessed, what elements are looked at, what indicators are used, where the data has been found, what standards are used, how improvement is assessed and to what it is compared.

The process of evaluation should not be considered in isolation but in the context of strategic management and planning. If examining library performance is not seen as a means to an end, there is little incentive for library managers to continue, collecting data which does not contribute to the improvement of the service. The library's development plan provides an opportunity to establish the library objectives within the objectives of the local authority. These objectives are discussed with the staff and other stakeholders and performance indicators can be devised. They may then be collected and analysed to indicate how the library, through its services, is meeting these objectives. After reviewing the data, resources can be allocated and future plans and objectives can be formulated based upon the needs of the customers and the objectives of the larger organisation, such as the local authority.

In managing library services, local authorities must achieve a balance between the need to innovate whilst continuing to maintain the traditional services for which

demand has remained high. In order to make progress within the limited resources of the authority, and to secure the funds to meet the needs of the customers, the public library service in Ireland must demonstrate that the provision of all services is economic and efficient.

To meet the challenges of the twenty-first century the library service must demonstrate that it is able to manage change. In light of the “Programme for Change”, public libraries must improve the monitoring of resources and the overall planning of services. The data generated by evaluation will provide a new profile of the library. The aim of the evaluation process is to arm library managers, administrators and decision-makers with the information required for them to make more judicious use of resources and have a factual basis on which to plan and allocate budgets. The opportunity thus afforded to raise the performance of the public library service, and, equally important, to raise the quality of debate about that service, is surely worth the time and the money spent in its pursuit.

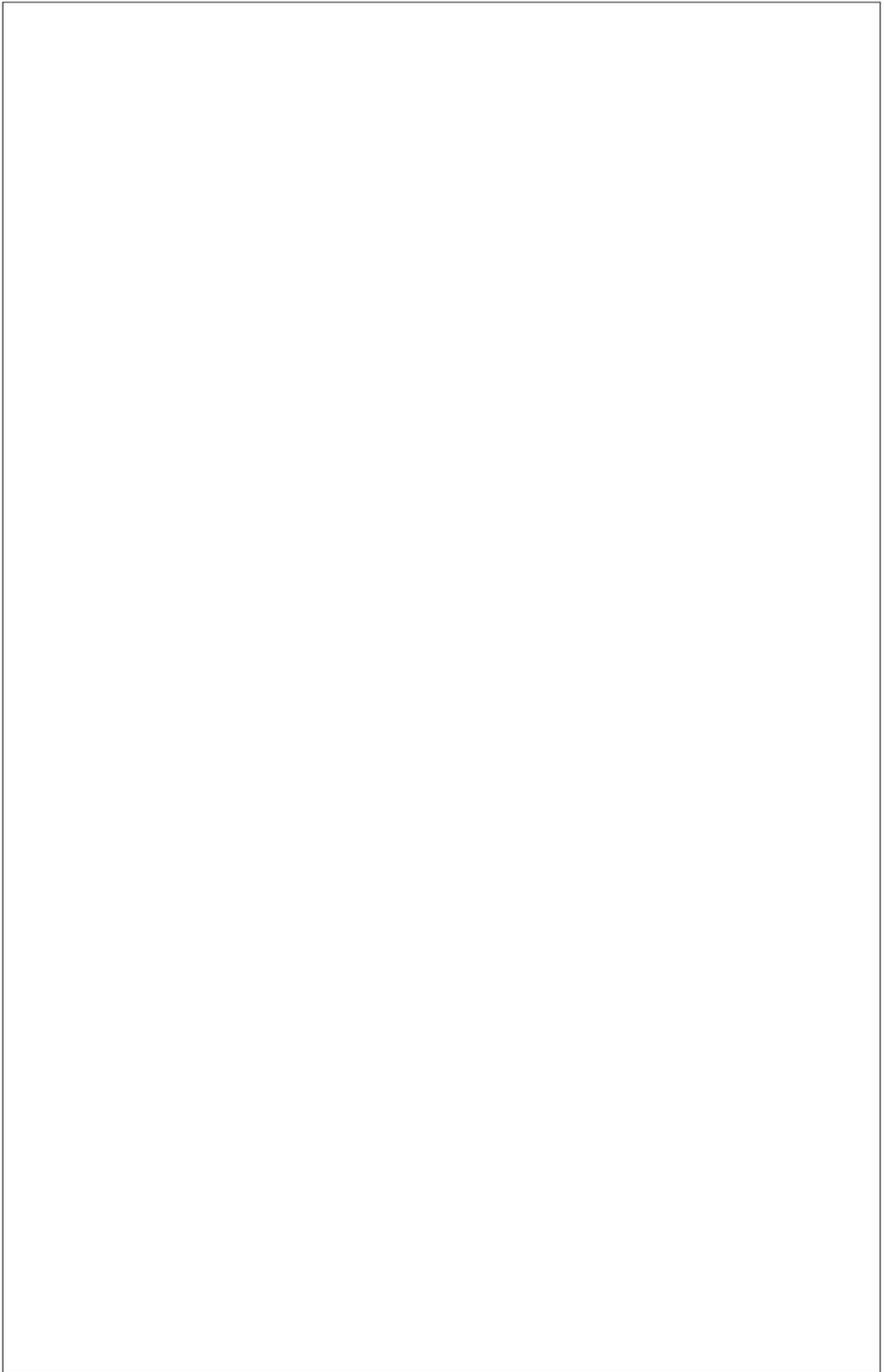
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# Making history: Wexford Public Libraries contribution to the bicentennial commemorations of the Rebellion of 1798

FIONNUALA HANRAHAN

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*This paper outlines how library staff expertise created partnerships and harnessed a single, local studies, information collection to produce an educational programme which disseminated information about the Rebellion of 1798 and its interpretation using local radio, newspapers, and even shop-windows to provoke interest and satisfy curiosity. Elements of the programme are described. This paper is a re-working of a lecture delivered to local historians & the general public in Waterford city in November 1998, part of the Local Studies Collections of Public Libraries series.*

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Another year, another commemoration! Or so it has seemed recently when every year has heralded a national or regional anniversary — the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Great Famine, Dublin 1,000, Limerick 800, Mayo 5,000, and in 1998 - the bicentennial commemorations of the Rebellion of 1798. Libraries countrywide have played a pivotal role in the marking of commemorations through the harnessing of their collections and the expertise of their staff. Most recently, Wexford Public Libraries contributed significantly to the 1798 / 1998 commemorations. The strategies adopted and the lessons learned may have application elsewhere in the future.

Under the umbrella Wexford Comóradh 98 organisation, a management initiative driven by the local authorities, planning for the 1998 bicentenary commemorations was begun as early as 1988. As is the case throughout the country, a number of Wexford library staff contribute at committee level to the work of local history societies. This involvement extended as they became active also on a number of County Council and Comóradh 98 committees, where they contributed to event management and to publicity information dissemination, as well as historical research.

The library's Local Studies expertise was an important resource to the developers of the National 1798 Visitors' Centre, the year's flagships project, in the authentication or refinement of research undertaken elsewhere, and in the development of publications for the Centre. Information support on topics related to the Rebellion could be categorised as part of normal public library service practice. In recent years, work in this area has intensified as the commemorations attracted media and tourist interest. For the media — radio,

television, film, book publishers and the press at national and international levels — the judgement of library staff, and the role of the library as an entry point into the talent bank of the county was significant. Particularly important were areas such as referrals to *authoritative* local experts, and knowledge of the content of private collections etc. Many local people engaged in research as essential background for a pageant, or other commemorative event, or with a view to preparing a book for a publication. In the case of community activists and amateur historians, a number requested direction, as they were new to the literature of 1798. And as the tourist potential of the year was realised, the library supported an increase in general local studies, 1798, and in particular, family history enquiries, throughout the summer.

In addition to re-active provision, the library service developed its own information and educational programme. Its objectives were

- to provide public information at many levels for different audiences — both introductions to the history and folklore surrounding the 1798 Rebellion, and an appreciation of the issues surrounding its commemoration
- to highlight the importance of critical research, and the complexity of interpretation
- to encourage people to undertake research themselves and to provide guidance on methodologies
- to promote the library's existing Local Studies Collection and the expertise of staff, and, by association, library services in general
- To create a Local Studies 1998 Collection, including an Archive

The library programme was developed in an environment where Collections Management is delivered manually, the library branch network is incomplete, and where library opening hours are inadequate to serve the level of need. On the positive side, Local Studies Service is by far the most developed area of library service in Wexford, and the library enjoys public recognition in that area. The essential resources were the well developed information collection, and the expertise of the staff in relation to both the collection content and the target groups in the community.

The library programme was underpinned with the following strategies

- to get the library collection outside the library building — we made strategic alliances with the other major information providers in the county — the local radio service, and two local newspaper groups. This was to ensure that information would be distributed as widely as possible and in a variety of popularising ways
- to harness community expertise and existing networks
- to maximise output from minimal input - projects were selected for their multiple-value capacity. Each was required to deliver in a number of different markets
- where additional materials were being bought in, reproduction rights for every conceivable purpose associated with the library programme were acquired

A single database was developed to manage the programme. It was required to serve a range of interest groups, media and levels of comprehension. For example, all the library's

products harnessed the illustrations' database that we developed with the co-operation of colleagues in the national and other cultural institutions. This had been part of our contribution to the publication of the National 1798 Visitors Centre's authorised book, *Rebellion! Ireland in 1798*, that was developed by the library service on the centre's behalf and published by O'Brien Press. The single focus of the 1798 Commemoration compared with the broader range of other programmes, such as the forthcoming Millennium celebrations, facilitated the last strategy in particular. Once we created the database, library staff expertise, commitment, and our willing partners ensured the production of a range of learning programmes.

Three series of programmes were made with SouthEast Radio.

- *What it said in the papers* introduced the documentation of 1798, excerpts from reportage in 1898, 1948, readings from diaries etc, all available from the Local Studies Collection. On air weekly from February to May, the selection created a context for the Rebellion and encouraged participation in local commemorations being organised later in the year. Further support was provided via a series of research workshops delivered by library staff throughout the branch library network. Additionally *What it says in the papers — 1998* exhibitions were maintained in local libraries and in the public reception area in County Hall, by-products of the Local Studies 1998 Collection development project.
- *The 1798 story — news and views* was a dramatisation of the Rebellion in Wexford, told as a contemporary news story, with interviews and eyewitness accounts. Fifteen excerpts were broadcast in the period March — early July. This programme was more popular and ran parallel with, and following on, the more academic "papers" interviews.
- Manuscript material within the Local Studies Collection was incorporated. One example is a transcript of the unpublished diary of Elizabeth Richards of Rathaspeck, a fascinating insight into the concerns and experience of a young gentlewoman living near Wexford town at the time of the Rebellion. Readings from her diary entries for that day 200 years ago, were broadcast daily throughout the period late May — early July. The research for this programme also contributed to a schools-pack, as well as providing a paper for the local family history society, and a guided tour for the Wexford Festival Opera fringe programme.

The introduction of a new curriculum for primary education next autumn, coupled with the current investment in IT for schools and the learning programmes for teachers being delivered from Education Centres, is highlighting the need for libraries to improve access to local information as a support for education. This is particularly the case in relation to materials suitable for children. The *Exploring 1798 schools pack* was a collaboration between teachers, historians and librarians, with the library managing the project, and each profession contributing its expertise. Targeted at primary schools, the pack proved useful also for second level, junior grades. Other products and benefits in this case included

- further publication as a free supplement in one of the local newspapers. 20,000 newspaper sales around the county brought the information into many homes, and indirectly promoted the library service
- fact-sheets, such as an easy overview of the Rebellion, what happened on any particular day, the songs and ballads of 1798, provided useful starting points for journalists and people working in the tourist industry
- a digitised copy for inclusion on the library service's Web-site
- in the future, amended copy will provide a workbook for the National 1798 Centre in Enniscorthy, to support school tours and family visits

Further developing the links between formal education and the community, the Schools Library Service and Enniscorthy Community Library organised the *Great School Project Shop Window Display* with the co-operation of the town's Traders Association. Primary schools from all over the county were invited to showcase a class project in a selected shop window. This was organised for the week around Vinegar Hill Day, the highpoint of the commemorations in County Wexford. The library linked shops with schools, sign-posted the windows and mapped the town. Families came into Enniscorthy to admire "their" window, smaller rural schools in particular had an opportunity to exhibit it to a wider audience than would otherwise be available to them.

Simultaneously with this project in Enniscorthy, New Ross Library worked with the local Watercolour Society to bring three art exhibitions to the town. Each exhibition had a local connection. Tony O'Malley exhibited his drawings and paintings done in Wexford in the fifties. Local artist Liz Rackard featured with Mick O'Dea, and another local artist Kathleen Delaney, with Peter Rothschild, produced an exhibition which reworked themes of 1798 for a contemporary audience. Each was supported with library resources.

Wexford town Library's Historian in Residence project delivered two programmes. The first involved children using an object they found at home as a starting point to research an aspect of their family or town history — supported by the Local Studies Library. The second delivered an Antiques and Archives Show, where local and national experts provided free comment and referral on curiosities and documents which may have been in the family for generations.

The collection of the **record of the 1998 commemoration** and development of the associated archive is a responsibility of the library service. Press cuttings have been maintained and related material has been collected wherever possible. Multiple copies fed the *What it says in the papers* library displays. Now we are seeking the minute books and records of all the parish committees, and sub-committees of Comóradh 98. Despite frequent appeals, the collection of very local ephemeral material — raffle tickets, invitation cards, festival programmes — has been the area of least success. This is a disappointment to us. We do not have the manpower to acquire this material in a more structured way, and we are conscious that some of the community colour of the '98 commemorations may have been lost.

The library's principal '98 exhibition — *History, memory and commemoration* —

launched towards the end of the year. It investigated how the Rebellion has been manipulated for varying political purposes over the past 200 years. The exhibition's research emphasis reinforced another theme of all our activities and publication — the encouragement of critical consideration of the writer, his purpose and his intended audience, as well as the writing. A more academic consideration than the *Exploring 1798* schools education pack / supplement, the exhibition worked out of and added to the common information collection. The library service itself was placed under scrutiny, with its 1998 agenda expressed. Acknowledging its role as a powerful contributor to the 1998 information industry, the Wexford Library Service offered its assessment of the 1998 *spin* on the history of the Rebellion in the context of, for example, the current Peace Process on the island, participation in European traditions, and the promotion of cultural tourism.

Assessing the year's work, library staff can take pride in their contribution and can harness the contacts they have made and the additional credibility the service has gained. The programme was library-driven. At the time it was being developed, other organisations were more advanced in their plans. Had we had more planning time, I would like the partnerships with external bodies to have been more equal. Programme elements prove the point that there is nothing new under the sun. We adapted ideas and projects already tested in other places and some of our experiences could no doubt be similarly adapted.

1999 brings other priorities. Regardless of the pressures, however which may influence service in the short-term, the public library service will always recognise and develop local studies as one of its core functions. In making the case for development support, libraries must substantiate their achievements, and one methodology, which is in use increasingly, is the delivery of programmes such as I have described, which sit on top of on-going, discrete, personal services.

Public librarians and local historians are natural partners. We value the record. We share an interest in developing a sense of identity. We recognise history as a force, passive when a mere record in books and computers, dynamic when examined, analysed, discussed and used to set our understanding of ourselves in today's world as a catalyst for a progressive and caring society. More generally, library services actively seek strategic partners. In Wexford the bicentenary commemorations provided an opportunity to demonstrate the pro-active contribution which libraries can make to cultural and economic life, and the nature and extent of the influence we are capable of wielding within partnerships.

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# The Collective Memory:

## LOCAL STUDIES RESOURCES IN THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

LIAM RONAYNE

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*This is a revised version of a public lecture given in conjunction with the Autumn Seminar of County & City Librarians, Waterford, November 1998.*

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When that terrible bomb was exploded in the middle of Omagh town, in August 1998, amongst the dead and injured was a party of young people and their teachers from Spain, who were staying in Buncrana. It was clear in the days and weeks after the bomb that many people outside Donegal were surprised to find that there were so many Spanish students in the far North-West. In the Local Studies collection of Donegal County Library, however, there are records which show centuries old links between Donegal and Spain; more Armada ships were lost off the Donegal coast, for instance, than any other part of these islands. The links between the O'Donnells and the Spanish Court are better known, and it was to Spain that the ship set sail taking Rory O'Donnell and his fellow exiles — the so called Flight of the Earls — although bad weather meant they did not make it there. Links between Donegal and Spain are recorded as early as the 12th and 13th centuries when the chieftains of Tír Chonaill provided safe passage to pilgrims who were visiting Lough Derg as well as Santiago de Compostella.

'Peripherality' is a word much in vogue these days; it may be that constantly going on about peripherality is not such a wise tactic — it can be a self-fulfilling prognosis. A browse through the Donegal Local Studies collection would suggest that such a concept is a very recent one. The following extract from a recently published book on Donegal, which was written using the resources of the Local Studies collection, should illustrate the point:

"During this time when it is not to fanciful to state that Donegal resembled a kind of Gaelic Prussia, the region was anything but economically depressed. The people used the rivers and the sea fisheries intelligently, and in fact on the continent as well as in Ireland the chieftain of the O'Donnells was known as the

*“best lord of fish in Ireland, and he exchangeth fish always with foreign merchants for wine, by which [he] is called in other countries, the king of fish”.*

Even before the beginning of this era Tír Chonaill had established trading links with a number of ports in England, especially Bristol, in Scotland — Ayr, Wigtown and Glasgow - and the two towns of St Malo and Morlaix in Brittany. On the other hand the O’Donnells did not neglect trade with other Irish towns, especially Galway, but also east coast towns such as Drogheda. In North Donegal trade flowed in and out of the O’Donnell controlled ports of the Rosses.

In exchange for its imports of wine, luxury clothes, modern weapons and armour, Donegal sent out fish and animal hides. The O’Donnells themselves had agents living in the Continental ports and from time to time Continental merchants lived in Tír Chonaill itself.

All of this meant that medieval Tír Chonaill was almost independent of the Pale and the rest of Ireland, and, because of its links with Continental Europe, could bypass England as well. On the other hand its direct contact with the lowlands of Scotland and with Brittany and other centres on the Continent gave it a direct contact with some of the leading humanist centres of the day. The O’Donnells were aware of contemporary trends on the continent and built up considerable diplomatic skills. If trade connected Tír Chonaill with the rest of Europe at the time, so of course did the church.” (1)

There is quite a lot of material in the Donegal Local Studies collection on the Congested Districts Boards, which were set up a century ago to develop the poorer Western regions - the ‘peripheral’ regions of the late 19th century. The area for which the CDB was responsible includes all those counties — except for some Midland counties — which have recently been accorded Objective 1 Status. Is it not interesting that 100 years on we are being told Objective 1 status will solve the problems of western counties? A brief survey of the CDB material, for example the Baseline Surveys, or the memoirs of William L. Micks, secretary to the CDB, would prompt a reader to ask “if it did’nt work then ?....”

The point of these examples is that, *firstly*, there is a wealth of information on every topic you could imagine in the local studies sections of county and city libraries all over Ireland, and *secondly*, we need to tell more people about this wealth of information. Libraries need to tell the world more about what we have, and we need to make full use of technology and of promotional and marketing techniques, to bring this resource to the widest possible public.

In this article I will

- discuss the kinds of resources available in the Local Studies collections of Irish libraries — what we might call our collective memory
- make some suggestions on how we might increase awareness and usage.

## I

In late November 1998 the Minister for the Environment & Local Government published a long-awaited policy document on the future of public libraries in the Republic of Ireland — *Branching out: a new public library service* (2). This report identified the uneven

level of development around the country; some local authority areas have a network of modern public libraries offering a state of the art service to their local communities; others have a much lower level of development. But one aspect of the service where each library service has a unique and irreplaceable resource is in its local studies collection.

It might be useful, at this stage, to define what 'local studies' involves. While the terms 'local history' and 'local studies' are both used to describe this aspect of public library provision, I would feel that the latter is a more accurate term. 'Local studies' covers the books, newspaper and journal articles, and other materials that are needed for the study of a particular area in all its aspects — geology, climate, natural history — as well as the study of human activities in that area from the earliest times to the present day. The term which Waterford Municipal Library, for instance, uses to describe its resources is 'The Waterford Room', and this is surely the right approach; it implies that everything about Waterford is to be found there, whether one is interested in the Viking ships and their crews who came to establish Vethrafjorthr in the early 10th century, or the modern port at Bellview; whether one is interested in Wallace the composer of Maritana, or Ken McGrath and his team-mates on the present day Hurling team.

There is both an active and a passive side to Local Studies. Library authorities act as the collective memory of the county or city they serve by, firstly, comprehensively collecting and making available local studies material of all types; and, secondly, acting as a centre for local studies, energetically promoting the resources and the study of local history and culture. Local studies is one area of knowledge in which every library service can realistically aim for comprehensiveness and self-sufficiency. It is an area where libraries contribute to a national resource — one spread around the country rather than concentrated in one place — comprising materials for the study of local history and culture throughout Ireland. There is a greatly increased interest in, and demand for, local studies material of all types, and one that libraries are encouraging and responding to; for instance local studies staff are working closely with schools to efficiently manage local history project work.

To meet the aim of acting as the collective memory, libraries aim to collect, record and preserve, using appropriate media, all printed, audio and visual material relating to the life of the community which they serve. The kinds of materials collected include books, pamphlets, newspapers, periodicals, microforms, maps, prints, cassettes, CDs, and multimedia products. This list is not exhaustive, and libraries will soon be collecting the products of new technologies which do not yet exist, but which will be developed in the future. It is not possible, in an article of this length, to cover in detail what each library service has, but by giving an idea of the holdings of the Donegal Studies collection in the Central Library in Letterkenny (3), I can give a flavour of what is in Irish public libraries nationally.

## Books

The oldest and most valuable books we have in stock are copies of John Colgan's works *Triadis Thaumaturgae and Acta Sanctorum*, both printed in Leuven / Louvain in the

1640's;

- We also have a small but important collection of books printed in the 18th century, and more importantly, a further 300 or so volumes in our 'Early Printed' collection, i.e. books printed before 1851 — roughly the time of the major change in the paper-making process.
- We also hold a number of special collections relating to individual authors. These are:
  - The Patrick MacGill Collection;
  - The Peadar O'Donnell Collection;
  - The Seumas MacManus Collection;
  - The John Kells Ingram Collection.

These collections all relate to authors from the county, and as well as various editions of their printed works, also contain a small amount of papers, and illustrative material.

These comprise the special collections, a resource of which Donegal is very proud. The major element in Donegal Studies provision, however, is the collection of approximately 1800 titles — books, pamphlets and other types of items — about Donegal and by Donegal persons. We add about 70-80 new titles each year, in addition to maybe twice that number of journal articles.

Donegal aims to acquire copies of the following:

- books and other materials printed and / or published in County Donegal
- books and other materials by writers from County Donegal published elsewhere in Ireland or abroad
- books and other materials about County Donegal, persons from the County or subjects related to the County, published elsewhere in Ireland or abroad
- theses and semi-published/unpublished documents about County Donegal, persons from the County or subjects related to the County

### Manuscripts / Personal Papers

- We have recently reached agreement with Cathal O Searcaigh, the leading Gaelic language poet, regarding the care and preservation of his papers:
  - Cathal's personal archive — manuscripts of his poetry and other writings, original editions of his published work in monograph and journal form, videos and tapes of his broadcast work, and other relevant papers and materials — will be deposited with Donegal County Library and we will henceforth preserve this archive and manage access to it
  - Cathal's own library of poetry and other literature will be housed in his house in M'n a'Leagha, Gort a'Choirce, and will be catalogued by Donegal County Library, and maintained by Donegal County Library *in situ*

We intend to reach similar agreements with other Donegal writers in due course, and add to the small but important collection of manuscripts we hold. The Donegal County

Archive, a separate but related facility, holds the records and archives of local authorities in the County, together with some private and business papers.

### Visual Material: Photos, Prints etc.

We are building up a collection of photos and prints relating to the County. This includes i) prints, from the late 18th and 19th Century mainly, of Donegal scenes and persons; ii) postcards; iii) topographic paintings; and iv) photos taken by Library/Council staff, purchased from professional photographers, or donated to the Library.

### Maps

The most valuable items in our Map Collection are the ‘Grand Jury Maps’ - an almost complete set of the 1837 6 inch Ordnance Survey maps backed with linen and kept in leather boxes. We also have full sets of other OS maps of the County in various scales, as well as non-OS maps.

### Ephemera

We collect ephemera relating to the county — publicity material and programmes for local events, exhibition catalogues, posters, annual reports of local organisations, local election material, and material relating to Donegal constituencies in Dáil, Presidential and European elections, and other relevant material.

In 1997 Donegal County Library published *75 blian ag fás* (4), a history of the library service, compiled to mark the 75th anniversary of its establishment. This was an example of a local publication at one and the same time taking from the local studies resource and adding to it. Also to mark the 75th anniversary of the library Donegal County Council established a scheme called *Deontas Mhic an tSaoir*, which funds high-quality local publications, and post-graduate history and cultural studies students from the county at doctorate or masters level.

We also keep collections of Donegal interest in all the libraries around the county, much of it available for lending.

1998 was the bicentenary of the 1798 Rising, which had a special focus in Wexford, to which Wexford County Library, as described elsewhere in this issue, responded in commendable fashion. Centenaries, bicentenaries and anniversaries of all kinds are a staple of the local studies librarian's life; hardly a year goes by without some centenary or other. As well as the 1798 events, 1998 also saw commemorations of the Young Irelanders of 1848; 1848 was the worst year of the Famine in some regions; on the international level, 1968 was remembered, thirty years on, with the unrest and uprisings from Derry to Paris to Berkeley to Saigon. In 1997, the 1400th anniversary of the death of St. Colmcille was remembered very extensively in Donegal, and the Library co-ordinated a wide range of

events. Libraries are usually the first place where people come calling when they want to do something about such anniversaries. These commemorations mean extra business, and extra pressure, but this is something that local studies librarians thrive on.

In their local studies provision Irish public libraries have much to be proud of. Leitrim County Library, for example, took the lead in setting up a genealogy service based in the Library. Clare County Library set up an innovative organisation called CLASP, republishing important local sources, and publishing some new work, venture for which they have won both critical acclaim and awards.

In a number of counties, such as Kerry and Tipperary, the local history society is based in the County Library and would find it difficult to function without the Library's support; if local studies staff had a fiver (or six Euros!) for every acknowledgement they receive from grateful authors and researchers, they could probably retire on the proceeds.

To meet the aim of acting as a centre for local studies, libraries actively promote local studies resources as a central element in promoting access to the collective memory of their area. We promote local studies resources through whatever means appropriate, — publications, exhibitions, visits to the library, as well as lecture series and once-off talks to local groups by appropriately qualified staff. We prepare bulletins and bibliographies of local material, summarise, abstract, and index local material, making use of IT, and actively facilitate research and publication. We do a lot in this regard, but much more could be, and should be, done.

The combined local studies collections of Irish public libraries are an irreplaceable national resource. It is perhaps a new way of looking at things — a national treasure not contained in one building but dispersed throughout the country. Libraries need and deserve funding and other support from bodies like the National Library of Ireland and An Chomhairle Oidhreachta/Heritage Council for conservation and preservation work. Rare books are not only repositories of information, but are heritage objects in their own right and deserve to be preserved in the same way as other artefacts. Unique items should rarely if ever be made available for consultation, but should be reproduced in print, microform or multimedia formats, and libraries should provide an adequate range of IT equipment, microform readers, etc. to enable the widest possible use of these resources. That is the ideal, but libraries need the funding to make it a reality.

Library authorities increasingly recognise the need for greater concentration on the conservation of original materials, given the increasing pressure on such unique resources held in local studies collections. The conservation of local studies material is a priority, and as more use is made of local studies material so more time and resources will be required to ensure that collections are properly conserved.

## II

Libraries actively promote local studies resources as a means of meeting the aim of acting as a centre for local studies, but they need to do more.

Information and communications technologies are now a fact of life, in all public bod-

ies, in all local authorities, and in most, if not all, libraries. Libraries should take advantage of the increased use of ICT to provide full bibliographic information, accessible in all libraries, and so create a national network for local studies. ICT can be of great assistance in preserving the treasures of the nation's local studies resources and bringing them to a wider audience. While no library authority can afford not to become involved in information technology, we need to have a clear idea of what we wish to achieve before committing a large amount of scarce resources to automation. In using ICT imaginatively we have the opportunity:

- (i) to provide an integrated information retrieval system that will not merely automate existing practices, but will go beyond bibliographic records, to give access to information and knowledge in all its forms — books, journal articles, recorded music, videos, maps, cuttings, photographs, etc.
- (ii) to create an information utility for the people we serve, linking with other information networks and information resources, especially the information networks of the parent local authority and other public bodies
- (iii) to facilitate future development, by making the best use of staff resources

It is vitally important that we do not merely automate existing systems, which were designed in a manual age. Computer scientists use a phrase — Fuzzy Logic — when trying to design software to approximate how the human mind, and in particular the human memory process, works. Fuzzy logic has the potential to enable librarians create a vast cybermemory that will help us, and our users, find what we are looking for, even when we, and the users, are not fully sure what we are looking for.

### ICT can enable the public to enjoy

- an easy-to-use gateway to the unique information on history, archaeology, geology, natural history, folklife and folklore, economy, literature music and culture, biography and family history and other topics that we hold
- access to information in all its forms, through catalogue records of, and indexes to, monographs, maps, journal articles, prints/photographs, compact discs, cassettes, sheet music, videos, newspaper cuttings, theses, ephemera, MSS etc.
- full text, images, and, where required, the capability for voice and music.

Librarians have a vision of making our treasures accessible to everyone, a vision that can now be realised, for example, through the internet. We must have closer cooperation on issues such as subject headings and key word searches to make it easier for enquirers to search and retrieve information.

Libraries must also collaborate more closely with heritage institutions and voluntary bodies, including local authority and community run museums, genealogical centres linked to the local authority, local history societies, oral history groups and other agencies in this field to maximise the use of local resources.

One initiative recommended in *Branching out: a new public library service* which will

be of great benefit is the proposed investment package for the preservation and digitisation of local studies material. This would recognise the work of library authorities in acting as the collective memory of the county or city they serve, fostering a sense of community and identity through the collection and making available local studies material. It would acknowledge the increasing importance of this activity, given the changes in society which are leading both to greater threats to our material and oral heritage, and a greater interest in pursuing local study and research.

There are broadly four elements to this:

1. investment intended to create a national on-line network for local studies which would use ICT to the full, and lead to the provision of full networked bibliographic information on local studies materials in all formats, accessible in all libraries and via the internet.
2. investment in digitisation of local studies materials, beginning with unique / rare resources, but with the long term aim of making the holdings of all local studies sections available in digitised form. Digitisation would involve capturing and storing information, text and images, moving images and sound as computer files which may then be accessed via computer. Local studies material which might be reproduced in digital form would include photographs and prints, historic maps, local newspapers, community information, leaflets, rare printed material, archival and genealogical resources.
3. investment in conservation and preservation. The combined local studies collections of Irish public libraries are, as we have noted, an irreplaceable national resource, and there is a need for greater concentration on the conservation of original materials, given the increasing pressure on such unique resources held in local studies collections. Investment in conservation and in digitisation together would mean that unique and at risk items would rarely if ever need to be made available for consultation.
4. investment in publication by local authorities and in the promotion of local studies, initially targeted at innovative projects. This would include the publication, in print or electronic form, of bibliographies and finding aids, as well as reproductions of rare works and the results of new research. Investment would also support the production of interactive local studies products, such as CD-ROMs, local studies learning packages related to family history and specific towns / parishes, and publishing on the net.

Libraries have long recognised that a developed programme of local studies activity at local level can generate a great deal of public interest and do much to strengthen relationships between local communities and their library, and more importantly, perhaps, help sustain a sense of identity in a changing world. The promotion of local studies materials should thus be seen as being of equal importance to their collection and conservation. Promotion is a two-way process, and library authorities and individual libraries involve local historians and societies in their local studies work. Each library service benefits from this involvement. Our work would be very difficult indeed without such people.

In conclusion, Irish public libraries together hold a unique and irreplaceable national

treasure in their local studies resources. We hold the keys to the collective memory of our counties, cities, and individual communities. We need to let the world know.

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# Libraries and the Arts: the Portadown experience

GERRY BURNS

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*This article reports on two recent projects which have demonstrated close co-operation between public libraries and the arts community.*

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In this, the first government-backed 'Year of Reading', it is perhaps appropriate to look at a venture which is helping to build stronger links between the public library service and others involved in the cultural sector in Portadown. The town, sadly, has been much in the news again this year, just as it has been for the last number of years, for all the wrong reasons, for inter-communal strife, for religious intolerance, for political intransigence etc., etc. Beneath the surface, however, far below the surface some people might say, things are slowly beginning to change, as inevitably they must do. No community could possibly survive the stresses and strains of an endless repetition of the events that we have witnessed in recent summers. Lasting change, however, does not take place overnight. It requires a lot of effort on the part of people working together in a wide variety of fields, including the cultural sector, for the change to become a reality.

The Kaleidoscope Project is one such venture. This is a cross-community arts initiative that was established in 1995 with the aim of developing a sizeable and prestigious visual and written arts centre in Portadown, something which the town has never had. The location chosen was the old Markets' Centre in the centre of the town

I became involved with the project at an early stage but I would have to admit that my invitation to become a member of the Project Board stemmed more from my long involvement with the local Council's Arts Committee rather than because of my position as Divisional Librarian in the town. Nevertheless, as the project has developed, my dual role has proven to be very useful, particularly in heightening awareness of the important role of the library service in sustaining a vibrant cultural life in the community. Within the Board I also hope that I have been able to ensure that libraries are not forgotten in drawing up future strategies for the development of the arts in the local area.

This, I have to confess, is something of a bugbear with me. The significance of the contact which libraries and library staff have with a huge audience of readers is generally overlooked, a fact for which we as librarians must take at least a modicum of blame. If this situation is ever to change, library staff must be encouraged to involve themselves in as wide a range of local issues as possible. They must actively promote the library service in as many and as varied a range of situations as possible and, most importantly of all, library

managements must recognise the intrinsic value of such activities and support them wherever possible.

An important new research project, *The next issue: reading partnerships for libraries* examines this whole question of libraries working with other agencies, in both the commercial and the public sectors, in order to develop people's reading practices. The research is funded by the Arts Council of England, the Library Association, Birmingham Universities and De Montfort University and aims to inspire the changes that are going to have to take place if libraries are to change their profile and become more pro-active as partners for others in the world of reading and literature.

To return to Portadown, the Kaleidoscope Board was successful in obtaining almost one million pounds of Lottery funding for the Markets' Centre project and once this had been achieved we thought that the new gallery would be open for business within a relatively short space of time. Unfortunately we were wrong. The original Markets building is owned by the local Council and although we have worked closely with them in attempting to bring the project to fruition, the wheels of progress grind slowly in local government. This fact, combined with a difficulty that arose over Council attempts to acquire adjoining property, has meant that we have been waiting for almost two years for building work to even begin. The beginning of the magical year 2000 is now being suggested as the most likely date for the Gallery's opening. It is disappointing, to say the least, but there is little or nothing that the Board can do to change the situation.

Faced with the delay in opening the Gallery, the Board members felt that, unless their energies were channelled into other activities, the group might begin to fall apart. Accordingly, a public meeting was organised in the local Town Hall, with over 200 people attending, and from this two groups were established, a fine arts group and a writing group. The aim was that these two groups would, in time, form the basis for future activities in the new centre. To date the two groups have performed very well. The arts group has had an exhibition of work in one of the local shopping centres. The writers' group meets regularly and has already published a collection of members' poetry. Writing workshops have been held in a number of the local libraries, and members of the group have taken part in readings and at an open day organised by the local College of Further and Higher Education.

The verbal and written arts are to be given equal prominence with the visual arts in the new Gallery. It is thus vitally important that the library service become actively engaged in relevant partnership ventures with Kaleidoscope in the period leading up to the opening of the Gallery. Despite reducing book funds and an ever-increasing enthusiasm for digital storage and retrieval of information, libraries will remain the main providers of books and the reading experience for most people in the new Millennium. As such they are the natural partners for Kaleidoscope in regard to literary ventures.

Seven years ago, in 1992, the Arts Council's report *Reading the Future* made a strong case for the acceptance of reading with literature as a combined art form and reinforced the significance of libraries as reading development agencies. The Report was well received but little practical help was given to change a situation where libraries were becoming increas-

ingly seen, at best, as the poor relations of the arts and culture sector. There is a feeling abroad at the moment, however, that a corner has been turned. Where libraries might once have seen themselves almost in a backs-to-the-wall situation with regard to the defence of reading, there appears now to be a much wider recognition of the value and importance of books and writers, of readers and reading, and this is to be warmly welcomed. The Labour Government's role in helping to create this new climate should be acknowledged, although the question remains, as ever, delicately poised on people's lips, *will they, in the end, put their money where their mouths are?* If they fail to deliver, ventures such as the current Year of Reading will be much less successful than might otherwise be the case.

As well as initiating writing and visual arts projects, a separate project, entitled "Border Directions" has been developed by Kaleidoscope in Portadown, with financial assistance from Co-operation North and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. This is a cross-border arts project, with myself as Chairman, which has been established with the aim of developing links between the local community and the community in Monaghan town, just across the border. The aim is to work with young people in both areas in a variety of arts activities in an exploration of their own sense of identity. We advertised, interviewed and appointed an Arts Development Officer who has responsibility for ensuring the success of the project, from establishing links with youth leaders and groups of young people to the employment of artists, handling publicity, including the production of newsletters, and the organisation of a final touring exhibition detailing the work of the project. The project is due to finish at the end of this year and, so far, despite the political upheavals of the summer, the signs are that it is going to be a great success.

Co-operation with libraries has been regular and is on-going. The A.D.O., Myriam Fearon, who is an artist in her own right, has visited the local libraries and spoken to staff and she was involved in the planning and production of a large mural on one of the walls in Brownlow Library. This in itself was a partnership venture which also involved not only the local library and Border Directions, but also the Open Learning Centre in Craigavon, the Chrysalis Women's Centre in Brownlow, a number of local schools, as well as local parents and children.

Adrian Rice, a Belfast poet, who is directly involved with the Border Directions Project, carried out a number of very successful workshops in Lurgan and Armagh libraries in relation to World Book Day, working with children from local schools and it is hoped to get some of the children's work into print as part of the S.E.L.B.'s contribution to the Year of Reading.

These are just some examples of what happens when you get involved in partnership ventures of this kind. Contacts become more and more widespread and activities can become more and more varied. The potential benefits of such ventures are immeasurable but will certainly include the broadening of staff experience and the heightening of public awareness of library services and strengths.

There is no longer any excuse for library services feeling that they have to continue to plough a lonely furrow in relation to the promotion of books and reading. This year, for the

first time, there is a librarian on the judging panel for the Orange Prize. Waterstones was actively involved in National Libraries Week and is now involved in the development of *Joined Up Reading*, a lottery-funded readers' group project. BBC Education is developing its National Year of Reading strategy very much with libraries in mind. So all the indications are that a change of mood is taking place. The potential for partnership ventures is much greater now than it has been for decades. It is up to library authorities to ensure that the opportunity is grasped with both hands, because it may not come again. Equally important is the necessity to ensure that library staff members become willing participants in joint ventures. Library staff morale has taken a very severe pounding in recent years and we are far from out of the woods in relation to the problems that this has caused. Partnership ventures of any kind cannot succeed with reluctant or unmotivated staff. The benefits for staff, however, in terms of enhanced job satisfaction and so on, should be highlighted in preparing to engage with outside agencies. Failure to engage now with other generally sympathetic partners in promoting what libraries have been doing on their own for years can only condemn the library service to further isolation and, ultimately, to decline.

Partnership, however, should mean exactly what it says on the tin, to paraphrase the current T.V. advert. It means full and equal co-operation with another body to promote, and hopefully achieve, a common aim. It means a widening of trust. It may mean a lessening of control in certain areas, perhaps even in a vital area such as financial expenditure. So it is not something to be entered into lightly. It requires detailed local knowledge of the organisation and, more importantly, of the people in the organisation, with whom you are considering a partnership.

In some ways, therefore, the library's experience in Portadown might be viewed as a microcosm for the country as a whole. Building viable partnerships in a seriously strife-torn community may not, on the surface, appear to be especially relevant in a great many other areas, particularly those on the other side of our national divide, but it could be argued that if it is possible to develop successful partnerships in Portadown, then it should be possible to build them anywhere.

It is far too early to evaluate what is happening in Portadown, particularly in terms of library gains. The Markets Centre will open its doors to the public early in the year 2000. Close by is the vacant site that has been waiting to be filled by a new library for the past five years or more. The town desperately needs a new public library. The old Carnegie building, attractive though it might be in architectural terms, has long outlived its usefulness. A new library situated in close proximity to the Arts centre would enhance the functions of both and would be a natural outcome of the work which is going on at present in the town. Whether or not it happens remains to be seen.

## POSTSCRIPT

Wednesday, 07 July 1999. To bring the story up to date: proposals having been submitted for a wide range of artistic activities to take place over the coming twelve to eighteen

months, the Border Directions' project has recently received funding from Co-operation Ireland in the region of £150,000 for this next phase in the project's development.

An Assistant Arts Development Officer has recently been appointed and is due to commence work in Portadown at the beginning of August. Artists are currently being engaged to work on the various projects.

Two of the artists engaged on the first phase, Eddie Rafferty and Neil Gregg, have combined to produce a large joint-exhibition of their work which is to tour the border counties over the coming months.

As far as the Verbal and Visual Arts Centre is concerned, in recent months there has been progress in this area as well. After long, long delays caused by legal wrangling over adjoining properties the building has finally been given the green light to go ahead and it is hoped that the builders will go onto the site in November of this year. If all goes according to plan the building will open its doors to the public in Portadown in October 2000. This will mean that its opening will more or less coincide with the opening of the town's new library which is situated near-by. The hope and intention is that the two buildings will work closely together in developing exciting strategies for lifelong learning, education and the promotion of the verbal and written arts.

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*Gerry Burns has recently been appointed Promotion and Marketing Co-ordinator with the Southern Education and Library Board.*

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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.

### *1999 IMPAC Dublin Literary Award*

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Andrew Miller's first novel *Ingenious Pain* has won the £100,000 IMPAC Literary Award prize. The prize is now in its fourth year and it is the first time that it has gone to a first novel.

*Ingenious Pain* tells the story of James Dyer, an 18th century surgeon who is conceived during the great freeze which took place during the reign of George II. He is incapable of experiencing any form of physical pain or emotion. The book, written in the continuous present tense, outlines life as lived in a particularly harsh 18th century world. The novel, first published in 1997, also won the 1997 James Tait Black Memorial Award.

The award is unique in seeking nominations from public libraries throughout the world. 180 nominations were received from city municipal libraries in thirty two countries for the 1999 IMPAC award. The nominations included four Irish writers: John Banville's *The Untouchable*; Bernard MacLaverty's *Grace Notes*; Niall William's *Four Letters of Love* and the late Brian Moore's *The Magician's Wife*. The award is restricted to works of fiction in written in English or translated into English. In the event that a work in translation wins the award, the translator receives a £25,000 share of the total prize money. The 1999 IMPAC short list

included *Quarantine* by Jim Crace (UK); *Underworld* by Don DeLillo (USA); *The Ordinary Seaman* by Francisco Goldman (USA); *Enduring Love* by Ian McEwan (UK); *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* by Haruki Murakami, translated by Jay Rubin (Japan); *The Puttermesser Papers* by Cynthia Ozick (USA) and *The Reader* by Bernhard Schlink, translated by Carol Brown Janeway (Germany). The panel of judges were Andre Brink, novelist and Professor of English at the University of Capetown; Bodil Malmsten, Swedish poet, novelist and translator; Alberto Manguel, writer, translator and critic; Julia O'Faolain, writer and Tom Shapcott, the Australian poet.

### *Omagh Community Archival Collection*

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The Library Service of the Western Education and Library Board is organising the collection of local, national and international material relating to the 1998 Omagh bombing. The library service is working in partnership with the District Council and the Sperrin Lakeland Trust. The archive will include individual single items, reports, minutes, photographs, books of condolence, videos and press and media coverage. The purpose of the collection is to ensure that all relevant material is collected,

preserved and organised for future use by victims and their families, the people of Omagh, people from similarly affected areas and by academics, researchers and historians. For further information contact Rosemary Adams, Assistant Chief Librarian, Library HQ, 1 Spillars Place, Omagh, Co. Tyrone BT78 1HL. Tel : 01662 244821. Fax : 01662 246716.

### *Belfast's Electronic Information Service*

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An Electronic Information Service is available to the public at Belfast's Central Library. It provides access to all forms of electronic information resources including CD Roms, applications software, e-mail and the Internet. To accommodate differing levels of physical ability, a number of the workstations have adjustable desking, larger monitors and voice activated software. All floppy discs on the workstations have been disabled as a precaution against viruses. Users may print or download from all terminals and downloaded files can be copied to a floppy disc at the control terminal. The disks are sold in the library at £1.00 per disc. Printing costs are 10p per page. Thirty eight CD Roms are accessed by subject via a menu system. Subject coverage includes Bibliography, Company Information, Dictionaries, Encyclopaedias, Newspapers and Official Publications and Trade Atlases. Internet access is free. Users are initially restricted to sites which have been chosen for their relevant and valuable information content. These sites offer an easy introduction to the World Wide Web and enable users to build up a level of expertise before 'surfing the net'. Ten terminals provide restricted access. Full access is offered through an additional eight terminals at a charge of £2.00 per hour. There are no restrictions on the information

accessed. A message is automatically sent ten minutes before the hour to enable the user to finish on time. E-mail has proved to be one of the most popular services offered by EIS. There are a number of free e-Mail systems available on the Internet. Anyone with access to the Internet can register with any of these systems and be given an e-Mail address. Once accepted, the user can send and receive e-Mails from any of the EIS Internet-connected PCs. E-Mails can be printed, saved to an e-Mail account or saved on floppy disc. Five terminals have word processing, spreadsheet, database and presentation software. It is planned to use these terminals for the delivery of ICT qualifications to the public. EIS, in partnership with Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education (BIFHE), will provide the facilities and skills base to assist members of the public to attain CLAIT standard and undertake CLAIT examinations on-line in the library.

### *Ulster Folk and Transport Museum*

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The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum has recently acquired a significant set of oral history recordings. The collection was originally made by Don Anderson for the Linen Hall Library in Belfast. The recordings, made in 1974, contain some of the people most directly involved in the Ulster Workers' Strike. Glenn Barr and Andy Tyrie, UDA officers involved in the leadership of the strike. Austin Curry, Paddy Devlin, Brian Faulkner, Oliver Napier and John Hume, ministers in the power-sharing Executive and Hugo Patterson, spokesman on the radio for the electricity industry who talked the province through the gradual decline of the power supply. The Royal College of Nursing Historical Society have also lodged a useful collection of materials in the archive relating to

the history of medicine and nursing. For further information contact Dr. Anthony Buckley, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra, Co. Down BT18 OEU. Tel: 01232-428428. Fax: 01232 428728.

### *The Linen Hall Library Millennium Development Appeal*

The Linen Hall Library launched its Millennium Development Appeal on the 9th March 1999 with the support of its patrons, pianist Barry Douglas, poet Seamus Heaney and novelist Jennifer Johnston. To date some £2.9 million of the total £3.4 million cost has been raised with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation and other trusts and donors. Building work to extend the library into 48-50 Fountain Street, Belfast is scheduled to commence in May 1999 with a completion date in the year 2000. The

new extension will mean an additional 50% space for readers, collections and cultural events. There will be a new 20 space reading room for users of special collections; a new lift/staircase block linking both buildings and providing disabled access, improved strong room provision and environmentally controlled heating/cooling facilities for the entire building. The project also provides for a comprehensive computer based catalogue, repair of the Library's historic collections and an extensive outreach and education programme for the wider community. A Millennium Development pack is available from Jennifer Campbell, Press Officer at the Linen Hall Library, 17 Donegal Square North, Belfast BT1 5GB. Tel: 01232 321707 up to the end of May 1999. Tel: 028 90321707 from 1st June 1999 onwards. Fax: 01232 438586 up to the end of May 1999. Fax 028 90438586 from the 1st June 1999 onwards. e-Mail: info@linenhall.com



Launch of the Linen Hall Library Millennium Development Appeal on 9th March 1999 *Back row:* William Montgomery, Vice-President of the library; John Killen, Deputy Librarian; John Gray, Librarian; *Middle row:* Lady Faulkner, Library Govenor; Dr. Maurna Crozier, President of Library; Prof. Vincent Mageean, Library Govenor; Harry Riddell, Hon. Treasurer of the Library and Barry Douglas, Pianist, (*seated*), patron of the Development campaign.

*The new Chester Beatty Library, Dublin Castle*

From July 1999 the new home of the Chester Beatty Library will be Dublin Castle. The library will be housed in a new development which consists of an 18th century building (The Clock Tower Building) and a modern exhibition building designed by Angela Rolfe of the Office of Public Works. The Clock Tower Building was constructed in the mid 18th century as an office for the Irish Board of Ordnance and was used for a variety of official purposes until 1994 when the Government agreed that it would be given to the Chester Beatty Library. The original building and the modern block are connected by a steel and glass public concourse. The facilities include two permanent exhibition galleries, one temporary exhibition gallery, a public reading room, specialist study rooms, an audio visual theatre, a lecture theatre, a restaurant, shop and roof garden

*The Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive*

Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Dr. Mo Mowlam, officially opened the Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive in Armagh on Saturday 8 May 1999. The library contains environmentally controlled areas for the storage of the late Cardinal's books and documents (approximately 15,000 volumes) which reflect his interest in Irish history, language and literature. The new building has a public library/reading room, a lecture hall/exhibition space and offices and workrooms for the librarian and archivists. It is located on Ara Coeli hill in Armagh, in close proximity to St. Patrick's Cathedral. The library

is open to scholars and the general public. The new building is funded by a grant from the British Library through the Heritage Lottery Fund. The archive is a major repository and resource for Irish Church history and the Irish language. The library and archive is open to the public between 2-5 p.m. Monday - Friday. Acting librarian is Joe Canning, The Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive, 15 Moy Road, Armagh BT61 7LY. Tel: 01861 522981. For an account of architectural details and photograph of building see *Seancas Ard Mhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* Vol. 17 (2) 1998 pp 167-168.

*The National Gallery Extension*

The National Gallery of Ireland is proceeding with the major extension of its site at Clare Street, Dublin. The extension will provide the Gallery with an extra 4,000 sq. metres and a street frontage. The total cost of the project , which includes the retention of the unlisted Georgian house, is around £17.5 million (the original scheme envisaged the removal of Number 5 South Leinster Street, a significant Georgian house). It is expected that £9.4 million will come from EU sources, with the remainder to be raised from other sources. It is hoped that the scheme will be completed by the year 2000.

*The Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum*

A two year library cataloguing post, funded by an award from the Heritage Lottery Fund, is being established at the Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum to set up the LIRA Library Collection. The collection was acquired from

the former Lambeg Industrial Research Association which closed in 1993. The LIRA material is a major research resource for a range of disciplines, including historians, textile and costume curators, industrial chemists, textile technologists and plant geneticists. It is planned to make the collection available for research and public access and to integrate it with the existing cultural information services provided by the Museum. Lisburn museum was founded in 1979. It expanded into its present form with the opening of the Irish Linen Centre in 1994 with the aim of preserving and interpreting the cultural heritage of the Irish linen industry and of the Lagan Valley region.

***Library Association Chief Executive appointed new IFLA Secretary General***

Ross Shimmon has left the position of Chief Executive of the Library Association to become the Secretary General of IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations). The post is based in The Hague, Netherlands and commences in April 1999. Ross Shimmon has been at the Library Association for fifteen years and Chief Executive since 1992. Mr. Shimmon has worked at a variety of levels in professional associations in the UK and other countries.

***Booker Prize Library Association Display Competition***

The Library Association is reviving the Booker Prize Library Display Competition which is designed to encourage interest in contemporary fiction. The competition is open to all UK public libraries. Participating libraries will be required to mount a display on the theme of the 1999 Booker Prize between 1st-30th October 1999.

Libraries can use Booker Prize material or create their own displays. Entries will be judged on originality of approach and creative use of materials. Three judges, Stephen Bayley, Founder of the Design Museum; Martyn Goff, Administrator of the Booker Prize; and Sherry Jespersen, Director of Communications at the Library Association, will consider the entries. Two winners will each receive a case of wine and an invitation for two to the Booker Prize dinner in the year 2000. The winning library display will be announced at a ceremony at the Library Association in London in November 1999. Details of the competition will be sent to the Heads of Public Library Services at the end of May 1999. For more information contact Karen Bedwell, Marketing Manager, The Library Association, 7 Ridgmount Street, London WC1E 7AE. Tel: 0171 636 7543. Fax: 0171 436 7218. e-Mail: [marketing@la-hq.org.uk](mailto:marketing@la-hq.org.uk)

***Irish Library and Cultural Resources Exhibition***

Ireland's second Library and Cultural Resources Exhibition will take place in the new Shelbourne Hall, Royal Dublin Society Exhibition Centre on the 13th and 14th October 1999 in a new and much larger hall, which includes a fully equipped Hospitality Lounge for Exhibitors and with the full support of the Library Council of Ireland. The official brochure for the exhibition is available from Anne O'Driscoll, Exhibition Organiser, Key Events Ltd, 24 Terenure Road East, Rathgar, Dublin 6. Tel: 00353 1 490 1790. Fax: 00 3531 490 1792. e-Mail: [info@keyevents.ie](mailto:info@keyevents.ie). Web Address: [www.keyevents.ie](http://www.keyevents.ie)

**NEELB**

Five large libraries in the North Eastern Education and Library Board have installed stationery vending machines. Ballymena, Coleraine, Larne, Carrickfergus and Glengormley libraries now offer access to a range of BIC stationery - pens, pencils and erasers. The Library Service will receive a percentage of the profits from the sales.

**Newsplan**

Newsplan has been awarded some £5million by the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the cost of helping to conserve and microfilm some 3,500 regional and local newspapers in the UK dating from 1800 - 1950. The money, which is part of a larger bid, will be distributed to the regions on a pro-rata basis. Funding covers the cost of microfilming and installing 800 microfilm readers in libraries throughout the UK. Northern Ireland libraries will receive 28 microfilm readers.

**Publications**

***Branching Out - A New Public Library Service***

A new report on the Irish public library service has been published by the Department of the Environment and Local Government. Prepared by a project team comprising officials of the Department of the Environment and Local Government, a representative of the Library Council, Librarians, Local Authority members and local authority managers, the report addresses the many issues seen by the team as the key to a better library service - opening hours, staffing levels, staff training, new or enhanced services; a better infrastructure, a

better ICT infrastructure and better stock. It also makes recommendations to improve library co-operation and library participation in the community; to improve the marketing of library services; to develop the cultural role of libraries; to improve school libraries and to improve the use of research in the development of the library service. The printed version of the report is available from the Department of the Environment or from the Government Publications Office. It is also available on the Internet at [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie). For further information contact Norma McDermott, Director, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, 53 & 54 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2. Tel: +353 1 676 1167 / 1963. Fax: +353 1 676 6721. E-Mail: [nmcdermott@libcounc.iol.ie](mailto:nmcdermott@libcounc.iol.ie). Web address: <http://www.iol.ie/~libcounc>  
*Branching Out - A New Public Library Service*. ISBN 0 7076 6174 9. £5.00

***LAI/LANI Conference Proceedings Wexford 1998***

The 1998 LAI/LANI Annual Joint Conference Proceedings are now available. Edited by SEELB's Mary Kintner, the 91-page publication contains the majority of the papers presented at the 34th Annual Joint Conference in Wexford in April 1998 on the theme of the Informed Citizen. Papers include John Cullen on the Irish National Policy on Library and Information Services, Jennifer MacDougall on Consumer Health Information in Ireland, Gail McKinley on the implications of the 1995 UK Disability Act for Library and Information Providers in Northern Ireland and Bob Usherwood on the University of Sheffield's Social Audit as well as a keynote address by Tony Worthington, the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. *The Informed Citizen:*

*Towards an Inclusive Society: Proceedings of the 34th Annual Joint Conference of the Library Association of Ireland and the Library Association Northern Ireland Branch: Wexford 28 April-1 May 1998.* Library Association Northern Ireland Branch ISBN 0 906066 17 4. Price £5.00. Available from Elga Logue, Executive Secretary, LANI, Derry Central Library, 35 Foyle Street, Londonderry BT48 6AL. Tel: 01504 272307 Fax: 01504 261374.

### ***Index to the Register of Inhabitants of Killyleagh, County Down 1891-1899***

A Register of the Inhabitants of Killyleagh 1891-1899 was discovered during renovations to the former RIC barracks in Killyleagh, Co. Down, in the spring of 1987. It was compiled by local RIC Sergeants and is, in effect, a nineteenth century census of the Petty Sessions District of Killyleagh, Co. Down. The document lists approximately four thousand people and is arranged by street or townland. All the members of each household is listed with their relationship to the head of the family, their occupations and the family's landlord. A remarks column records deaths (usually undated) and other information, for example, the emigration of a family. The document is invaluable, not just as a research tool for family history, but as source for the study of social history of late nineteenth century Ireland. The only other comparable document is that held by the Public Record Office Northern Ireland which covers the sub-district of Knocknacarry, near Glenarm, Co. Antrim. This was also maintained by RIC Sergeants and the similarity between the two documents would indicate that both were maintained under direction and that other examples may be still awaiting discovery.

The whereabouts of the original Killyleagh

Register are unknown at present but a photocopy of the document may be consulted by arrangement with the Local Studies Section, SEELB Library Headquarters, Ballynahinch, County Down BT24 8DH. Tel: 01238 566400. To facilitate access, SEELB's Patricia Webb has compiled an index to the Register. The index lists all the names recorded in the Register, including the RIC Sergeants who maintained it. The index is arranged by surname, first name, address and page number to point the researcher to the relevant entries in the original Register. The index also includes a description of the town of Killyleagh and the neighbouring village of Shrigley in the 1890s and a map showing the area covered by this valuable document. Copies of the *Index to the Register of the Inhabitants of Killyleagh 1891-1899* is available from Patricia Webb, Cormeen Publications, 8 Dundela Gardens, Belfast BT4 3DH. Price £11.00 plus p & p (cheques payable to Patricia Webb).

### ***Websites***

**The Chester Beatty Library** Website includes an overview of the collection, information about current and upcoming exhibitions, publications and links to sites of interest in Ireland, UK and elsewhere. There is also information about the Library's future home in Dublin Castle. The library will remain open at its Shrewsbury Road address until the end of June 1999. Web Address: <http://www.cbl.ie>

**The Heritage Ireland** Website. This Website is part funded by the EU and is a collaboration between the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and Dúchas. The site is multi-lingual and covers archaeological sites, monuments, parks and gardens, inland waterways and cultural institutions. Web Address: <http://www.heritageireland.ie>

### **The Royal Ulster Constabulary Museum**

The R.U.C Museum in Belfast have developed a new website. Images from the collection are now available on

<http://www.nics.gov.uk/ruc/museum/start.htm>

### *People*

**Alf Armstrong** BA, DipLib, DMS, ALA is Antrim's Group Librarian. He won the Ulster Television award for his work during the Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations Certificate course at Queen's University Belfast. He also jointly won the Newsletter award for the best certificate student on the course with Aiden McMichael from Northern Ireland's Department of Agriculture. Alf gained top marks in advertising while Aiden came first in marketing.

**Mairead Gilheaney** has taken over from Gail McKinley as Executive Officer of the Library and Information Services Council (NI) on the 1 February 1999. Mairead worked as Publications Officer at the Law Centre (NI) for the past eight years. She was a founder member of the voluntary sector's Information Workers' Network (IWN). She can be contacted at LISC(NI), PO Box 1231 Belfast BT8 6AL. Tel: 01232 705441. Fax: 01232 401180.

**Michael Houlihan** is the new Director for the National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland. The new institution is the result of the merger of the Ulster Museum, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum and the Ulster American Folk Park. Mr. Houlihan was formerly Director of the Horniman Museum and Gardens in South London. He studied at Bristol University before joining the Imperial

War Museum originally as a research assistant.

**Nigel McCartney**, Director of the British Library's Research and Innovation Centre since 1995, has taken up the post of Director of Educational Services (which includes computing, libraries, and media services) at the University of Ulster. Before joining the British Library Nigel was Librarian at the University of Hertfordshire, Managing Director of CIMTECH Ltd and County Technical Librarian for Herts County Council.

**Siobhan Weir** BSc (Econ) Information and Library Studies. Siobhan has just been appointed to the post of Project Officer with the Health and Promotion Agency Northern Ireland. Her new role involves supporting the implementation of the Northern Ireland Physical Activity Strategy Action Plan 1998-2002 to motivate the sedentary population to increase their levels of participation. She will be the main link between the agency and organisations providing opportunities for physical activity at local level. Siobhan joined the SEELB Library and Information Service in 1979. She gained her experience in the Special Services Section which provides library services to hospitals, residential homes, adult day centres and the housebound as well as a postal tape service to visually impaired adults. She was also involved in providing health information. Siobhan recently completed a three year distance learning degree course at Aberystwyth University Wales, gaining a first class honours degree in Information and Library Studies.

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#### ALAN R E A G E R 1 9 2 6 - 1 9 9 8

The death took place recently of Alan Robert Eager, former Librarian to the Royal Dublin Society and author of A guide to Irish Bibliographical Material published by the Library Association.

Alan joined the staff of the Library in 1944, became Assistant Librarian in 1958 and succeeded Desmond Clarke as Librarian in 1974. He was a Fellow (1965) of the Library Association and a member of the Library Association of Ireland, whose journal *An Leabharlann*, he edited for a number of years.

Alan's main professional interest was Irish bibliography. His major work in this field, *A Guide to Irish Bibliographical Material—a bibliography of Irish bibliographies and sources of information*, is an invaluable bibliography for research on any aspect of Ireland. The bibliography was first published in 1965, and a second revised and enlarged edition appeared in 1980. At the time of his unexpected death, Alan was busy collecting new material for a third edition. The first edition contained 3,800 entries and the second 9,500. The original edition was described as "an exploratory volume to fill a gap". This it has continued to do, particularly with the growth in heritage and cultural projects throughout Ireland.

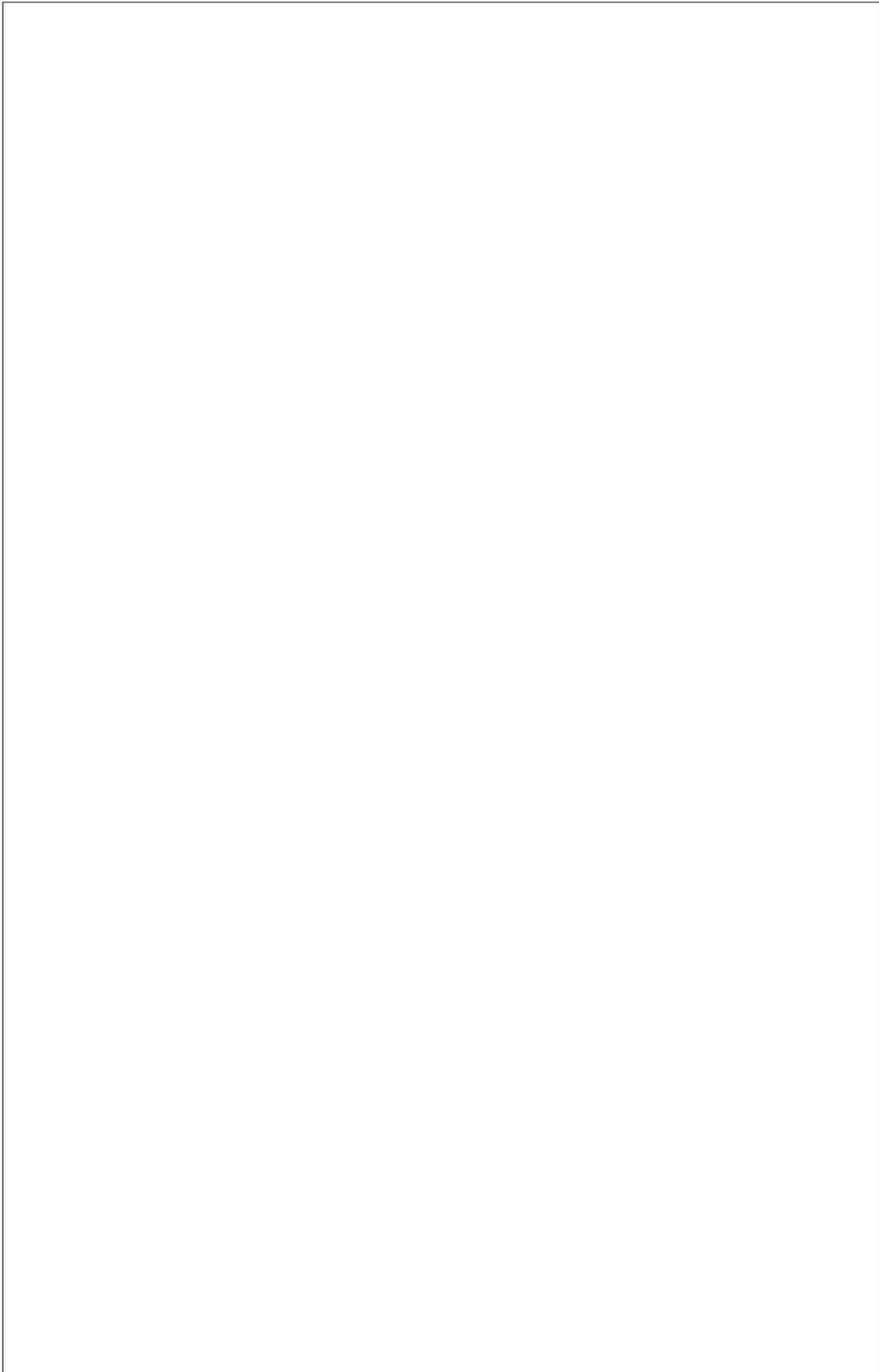
When Alan took early retirement in 1987, his involvement with the RDS Library did not end, and he continued to visit on Tuesdays with contributions of biscuits and wit! Retirement provided Alan with more time to indulge his great passion for bowling and enabled him to travel as far afield as Australia to play bowls.

News of his unexpected death came as a sad and sudden shock to all his friends and former colleagues. He will be greatly missed, but remembered with great affection. Our sympathy goes to his daughters, Susan Lesley and Alison.

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*Beatrice Doran*

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