

An Leabharlann

THE IRISH LIBRARY

Second Series Volume 14 Number 2 1998

- * Future of professional librarianship
- * Cathedral libraries
- * Archive services
- * Irish libraries – glimpses of the past
- * News
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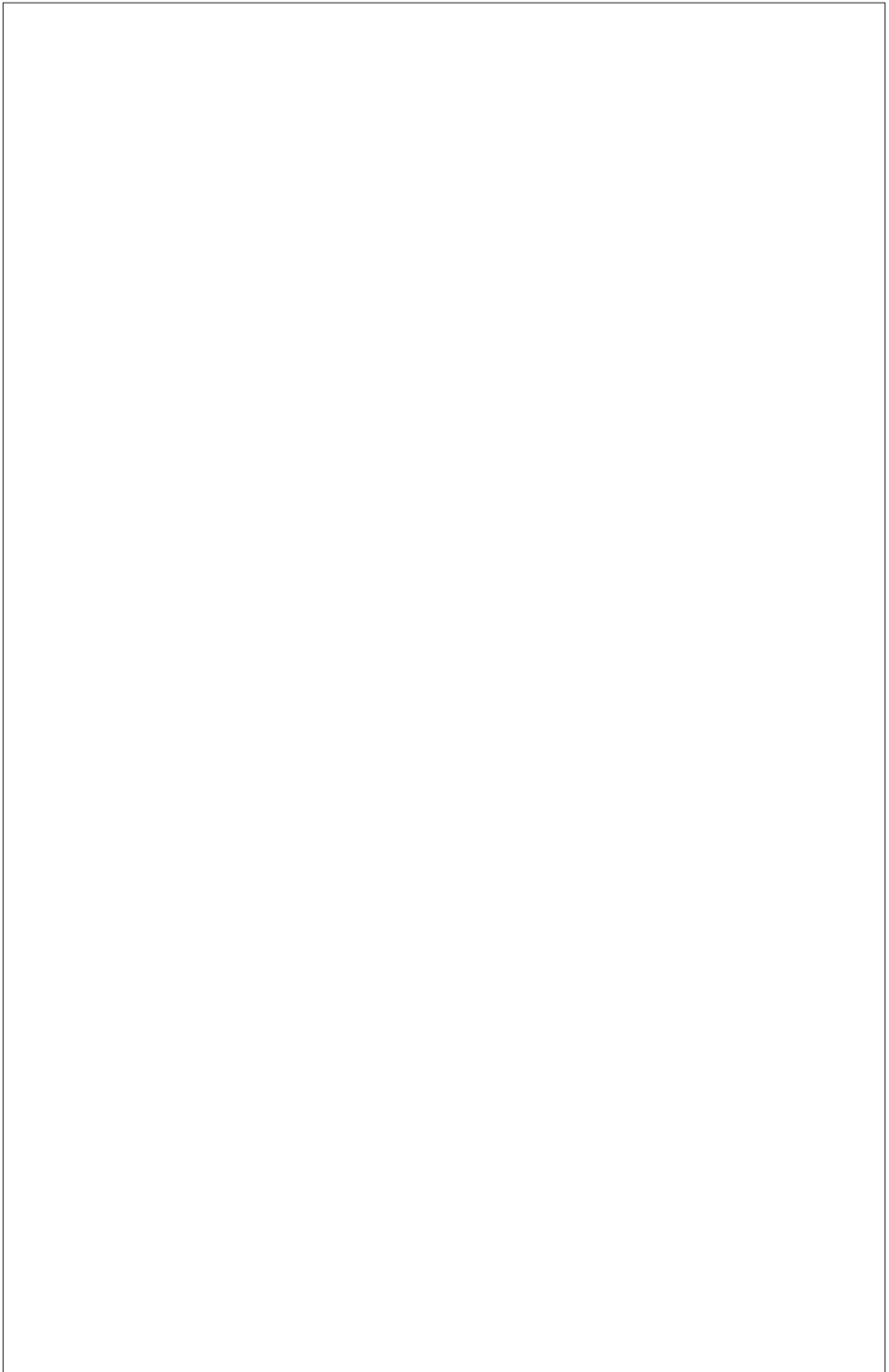
EDITORIAL

Following fast on the seminal **New Library: the People's Network**, October saw the publication of the Library and Information Commission's follow-up **Building the New Library Network**. This volume fleshes out the vision announced in the original publication. And what an impressive and stimulating vision it is. Public libraries have been allotted a key role in reskilling the population for the information society. The Commission's Chairman, Matthew Evans states that "The Commission's programme is a clear route map to achieve nothing less than a revolutionary change in the nature and importance of our libraries". The central proposal is that libraries get their own version of the National Grid for Learning, to be called the New Library Network. This will be based on the internet but be capable of evolving into a dedicated broadband network. Equally encouraging is the Commission's view of librarians' relationship with the content of this network. Far from being mere facilitators of access to it's content, librarians will have a major part to play as creators and developers of the new digital content. The picture is completed in a series of highly detailed appendices setting out a rapid-action training programme that will equip librarians to handle information and communication technology, access databases and online information and perform the role of guides and instructors

Grand visions can serve to disguise problems that are more pressing and immediate. Few would deny that, if the library profession is going to be able to fully respond to the vision being prescribed for it, many problems of a structural nature need to be addressed. In a provocative and thoughtful article in this issue Jeffrey Glenn argues that the continuing problem of self-image, in addition to related questions of library education, job titles, career structure – and, on the latter, in particular, the lack of a fast-track that would permit the emergence of the leaders so crucial to the profession's success – remains central to our problems.

A nice corrective to the thought that all libraries of the future will be bookless technopolises is provided by Harry Carson's account of Ireland's rich heritage of Cathedral Libraries. Finally, Mary Fitzpatrick gives an account of the practical issues involved in introducing a city archive service.

Kevin Quinn and Fionnuala Hanrahan
Joint Editors



THE FUTURE OF PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIANSHIP IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

JEFFREY GLENN

This paper takes as its starting point Joe Hendry's paper "On a fast track or the road to nowhere" (LAR, July 1996) in which the LA President argues that libraries are in a decline which can be linked to the loss of authority, prestige and influence of senior librarians. He calls for the creation of a "fast track" of management high-flyers with a background and education in librarianship. The present paper contrasts Mr Hendry's vision with the reality of recent threats to the status of professional library posts, and Assistant Librarian posts in particular (with Northern Ireland providing the most graphic illustrations), and looks at reasons – many of them deeply imbedded in the structure, institutions and practices of the profession – why attempts to raise the standing of librarians face such an uphill struggle.

In his paper "On the fast track or the road to nowhere", published in the Library Association Record, July 1996, Joe Hendry expresses concern that, as more and more library services are absorbed into Leisure Services, Community Services, Education, and so on, there is a loss of influence on behalf of libraries at senior officer level, to which the current decline of libraries can be linked. He argues that the library profession urgently needs leaders, and that a programme should be initiated to develop the most able young people entering librarianship into top class managers who, in the future, could reach "the top tables where decisions are made" and there represent "the wider activity of the whole ethos that underpins public libraries".

It would be hard to argue against Mr Hendry's thesis, but, the way things are going, such developments must seem like pie in the sky to those currently holding Assistant Librarian posts in public libraries, and probably even more so to those who are presently trying to attain professional qualifications or chartership. Indeed, they would be entitled to feel considerable uncertainty about their professional future. See, for example, what Paul Andrews has to say in Vol.34, No.2 of BRIO, the journal of the UK branch of the International Association of Music Libraries: "Part of the current problem in public libraries is that the split between operational and professional roles in library management which has been introduced over the last few years has led senior managers to question the need for retaining professional librarians at all".

So it would be a wonderful leap forward for the profession of librarianship to produce

a continuous stream of management high-flyers, and an extraordinary one to have them recognised as such by senior managers from other disciplines. Everything does seem to be against it, not least the difficulty the profession appears to have in believing in itself. No matter how professional they may have become, or how wide the range of advanced skills they may have developed, librarians have always suffered for their self-effacement. The caricature of the librarian as a classic low achiever still persists, and the popular notions of what goes on in a library are so misguided that few non-librarians believe it takes much of a high-flyer to run one.

Self-effacement cannot, of course, be ascribed solely to the modest personalities of individual librarians. The institutions of the profession do little to help. A few years ago, there was a move to change the name of the Library Association to one which would better reflect the growing diversity and changing emphasis in the work of libraries and librarians. Here was a chance to present librarianship in a new and more impressive light; to link “library” and “information” in people’s minds in an information-hungry age; perhaps to suggest that this was not so much an association of libraries as of the skilled people who provide library and information services. But no. In a show of glorious complacency, the establishment of the profession opted to keep things just as they were.

Is there room for complacency? If we take public library services in Northern Ireland as an example, we can see that, in the eyes of Government, librarians have already achieved zero visibility. For, in all the recent machinations to reduce the number of Education and Library Boards in the Province, the Library Service – of “Education *and* Library” Boards, mark you – scarcely received a mention. There was no evidence that the effect the changes would have on the library service had been considered, nor indeed the effect which a merger of library services would have on the viability of the project as a whole; yet the cost of dividing up and recombining bits of 5 library services had the potential to sink the whole highly questionable plan.

Many years ago, Keith Lawrey, the then-new Secretary General of the Library Association, told a conference I attended that, if libraries and librarians were to prosper in a cruel and competitive age, librarians would have to develop a much stronger sense of their own worth and not be so apologetic about everything. Unfortunately, however, a rallying call to librarians as individuals to walk tall, walk straight and look the world right in the eye is bound to fail while the inculcation of low self-esteem is part of the very structure and fabric of the profession. Indeed, if the profession of librarianship lacks leaders, it is probably because promising library talent is systematically held back and suppressed.

Witness, for example, the only profession which patronises *itself*. Is it really necessary for the title “Librarian” to be granted with such begrudgerly? When, in the eyes of the world, it appears to be no big thing to be a librarian, how impressed will the world be by an assistant librarian? Yet, picking up a recent Library Association Vacancies Supplement, I find that only 10 posts listed carry the undiluted title of “librarian”, none of them in the public sector. 26 are called “assistants” of one sort or another, 12 are “managers” and 13 have other titles apparently designed to avoid using the “L-word”. The professional librar-

ian's identity crisis cannot create much of a halo of confidence around him or her in the eyes of other professionals. An assistant doctor? An assistant accountant? An assistant solicitor? An assistant architect? Not likely!

If there were more career "headroom", there would perhaps be less of a tendency for those who have obtained a modest promotion to pull the ladder up after them. And what other purpose could one say, on cold hard analysis, is actually served by the librarian's professional qualification, the Library Association Charter? It's damned hard to get, and it takes a long time to get it, but then what? Then nothing! All that happens is that a local government officer working in the libraries department of his authority (rather than in human resources, maintenance, purchasing, salaries and wages or whatever) has his or her career frozen for a number of years while a library qualification is obtained – and then resumes the slow career climb which would have happened anyway, but probably several years earlier!

One might reasonably expect from a profession which imposes stringent requirements on the acquisition and maintenance of professional qualifications that, after the long periods of studentship and professional training are over, the basic substantive post would carry a commensurate salary. While at university I knew two people who had apparently subjugated their entire lives to the task of obtaining professional qualifications. One was bent upon becoming an actuary, the other a quantity surveyor. The process of qualifying was known to be tough, but several years of dogged study and monastic self-denial were deemed to be worth it because, once qualified, a well-paid job was almost guaranteed. There is obvious equity in the trade-off. But what kind of fool would go through a similar sort of process for nothing?

For public librarians there is no compensation for suffering a disadvantage in career progression during the extended educative process, nor is there any reward for attaining chartered status in the form of a salary advantage over staff in administrative posts who do not require a professional qualification. Furthermore, years spent at university obtaining degrees and library qualifications are not only years in which no money is earned, but also years in which no pension contributions are being made, with serious repercussions should early retirement eventually be contemplated.

We can see, then, that those making a career in public libraries do suffer some enormous setbacks compared to other groups of local government officers contracted to the same conditions of service. And here's another one: many of these other groups, free to base their claims on actual responsibility and job complexity without the question of qualifications muddying the waters, have received substantial regradings over the years, and posts which, twenty years ago, were on a par with Assistant Librarians, are now several grades above them.

If things seem generally rather bad in the world of Assistant Librarians, Northern Ireland provides examples of how they could be worse. Here the AP3 and AP4 scales are combined to form one continuous "banded" scale, and for many years, non-professional and professionally qualified library staff employed by the Education and Library Boards were separated by an artificial (and morally questionable) bar at the midpoint of the scale. Now, however, the bar has been abolished, and the highest graded non-professional staff receive the same

salary as qualified – even chartered – Assistant Librarians. Meanwhile, those who had the good fortune to enter the public library service, not as library assistants, but as typists or clerical officers, were not detained by the bar on AP3/4 and could progress, without hindrance to their careers, in administrative posts on the basis of possessing ‘O’ levels.

At least, with the abandonment of the Bar on the AP3/4 scale, the anomalous treatment of the two groups of library staff who do not require professional qualifications has, at long last, been resolved. On the other hand, qualified and chartered librarians in Assistant Librarian posts on the AP3/4 scale are now out on a very isolated limb. It is difficult to see how the Boards will for long be able legally to sustain a demand that holders of these posts must be chartered, intending to charter or even qualified when other staff receiving exactly the same salary do not. When that demand goes, only the more ambitious, optimistic and patient individuals entering employment in the library service will feel that it is really worth their while going to library school.

The existence of a structural dysfunction such as this should already have provoked a fundamental reappraisal of career progression within the public library service in Northern Ireland, and of library service posts within the broader context of local government grading structures. If Paul Andrews is right, the situation in Northern Ireland is no more than a foretaste of something nasty which will soon be brewing in managerial cauldrons throughout the country. And alarm bells should be ringing in Library Association Headquarters. Sadly, however, in libraries there seems to be a sort of unspoken pact between managements and staff that any action which could result in additional remuneration, however reasonable, should be suppressed because it might hurt the bookfund. But, putting it bluntly, if librarians cannot convince themselves about their worth and status, it is hard to see why anyone else should be convinced about it, and all sides seem to be underplaying the disaster they are storing up for the future.

A large part of the problem must surely lie in the failure of employing authorities to make any clear and structural distinction between posts which, although filled by librarians, have predominantly executive, administrative, personnel, financial or management responsibilities and posts which require a distinctive and discrete library expertise. The common arrangement that almost everyone below the level of the Senior Management Team functions as a jack-of-all-trades is a questionable disposition of labour; but an even more questionable one will occur in situations where high-level professional input is only occasionally required, yet there is too much lower-level work for the library assistants to cope with unaided.

The credibility of professional librarianship is on the line when the only feature which distinguishes a professional from a non-professional member of staff is that the former supervises the latter. The variety of job titles used in the LA's Vacancies Supplement does suggest that there are several different types of library post; but the fact that, as far as grading and remuneration are concerned, they are all jumbled up together must create a risk that all types will be seen in terms of the lowest common denominator.

Job evaluation is currently under way in the Education and Library Boards in Northern Ireland. In theory, this should have the effect of shuffling everyone into proper

hierarchical orders according to the actual content of their jobs. So, if professional library posts are as demanding as the long and tortuous educative process suggests, there will be no problem: all will be regraded to leave clear blue water between posts requiring library qualifications and those which do not. But, for reasons suggested in earlier paragraphs, this will not happen. Some members of staff described as “Assistant Librarians” will be found to be doing largely executive or even clerical work. Some members of staff described, perhaps, as “Principal Library Assistants” will also be found to be doing executive and clerical work. There may well be cases where it is difficult to draw a distinction between the work done by the one and by the other.

Small elements of work which have traditionally been regarded as “professional” – the folk-crafts, as it were, of librarianship – will cut little ice with the evaluators: the factors used in evaluation are factors common to all types of work. Any appreciation which there might be of the nuances of professional practice will depend entirely on the fortuitous possession of inside knowledge on the part of the evaluators, and it must be said that the process of job analysis required for evaluation has a curiously demystifying quality. And, finally, it is a statistical fact that less than 20 per cent of posts evaluated are ever regraded upwards. In the evaluation scheme being used in the Education and Library Boards, the AP3/4 scale is spanned by no less than 90 evaluation points – a span large enough to lump together several groups of staff who would previously have stood in a hierarchical relationship.

Evaluation is unlikely, therefore, to save the day, and a future seems inevitable in which (i) the distinctions between professional and non-professional library work will continue to disappear; (ii) hierarchical positioning will depend on the level of supervisory and management responsibility; (iii) professional library qualifications, as they exist in present custom and practice, will be seen as increasingly meaningless – indeed, in Northern Ireland, the Charter is now no more than one of a range of qualifications acceptable to the Department of Education for posts below the level of Assistant Chief Librarian.

It is clear, then, that the professional organisation will have to come up with something different if it is to survive on the subscriptions of individual members – indeed, if the profession of librarianship is itself to survive. Inevitably, the mind turns to the age-old questions of how to turn librarianship into a “proper” profession, and how to make Chartered Librarians an elite. These were the questions behind the LA’s early-eighties proposals that librarianship should become a graduate profession and that the Charter should become a mark of experience and substantial professional training, and not just a long service medal.

However, in approaching the subject from a “supply” rather than a “demand” standpoint, this was always put the cart before the horse: it had never been established that the majority of employers actually had much work to do which required to be done by graduates with high-level professional qualifications and *only* by them. The result was always fated to be that which I have described above. In any revised approach, such qualifications would only feature in a job specification where the type of work to be done actually required them.

What may well be needed is a twin-track approach, rather than a single qualifications-and-career path for librarians. Track 1 would be a career path for library staff required to

carry out clerical, executive, administrative, personnel, financial and management tasks. They would be employed on the same basis as staff in other departments of their authorities. Library qualifications would not be essential. Career progress would depend on experience and, at higher levels, on obtaining qualifications relevant to the work actually done: qualifications in administration, in financial and personnel management, and so on, though for certain posts library qualifications might be considered equivalent.

Track 2 is a career path for Chartered Librarians. Here obtaining the Charter would become an incentive, because Librarian posts would be fairly senior posts within the authority and would only be open to Chartered Librarians. Librarianship would be a graduate profession, and the structure of progressive qualification for the most senior posts would encompass higher degrees in librarianship and relevant additional diplomas. The Charter would be awarded on the basis of obtaining a higher qualification in librarianship or on achieving specified grades in examinations set by an examining board created under the auspices of the Library Association. Qualifications would be attainable either through full time university attendance or in service by day release and assisted study. Chartered Librarian posts would have the status of Advisers in relation to specific subject areas, client groups and services, and library organisations would be structured accordingly. Posts for Chartered Librarians would carry a minimum salary of (say) PO1 and be graded on a career scale of PO1/2, where PO2 would be the salary for a Senior Librarian. There would also be Principal Librarian posts for which further qualifications would be required.

To sum all this up: librarians would not be “jacks of all trades” and especially not “masters of none”. Work for which librarians would be appointed would be distinctive, substantive and unique. The grading structure for librarian posts would begin at a higher level, would require high level qualifications and involve high level work. The incentive to obtain library qualifications would be eligibility for these posts and nothing else. Work in a library service which did not need to be done by librarians would not be done by them, but by staff with clerical, executive and administrative titles. There would be no artificial bar to their career progress in the clerical, executive and administrative grades. While working in these grades they would be facilitated in obtaining library qualifications if they so desired.

Here, then, we return to the start of the argument: Joe Hendry is absolutely right in perceiving that libraries need a voice at the highest levels of administration. His suggestion of a fast track course to produce top class managers from a library background is clearly the sort of thing which needs to be done in the longer run. However, it is difficult to resist the nagging feeling that the drive for credibility and status for librarians has been proceeding in reverse gear for so long now that it will prove to be impossible to manipulate a credible change solely at the top end of the profession. Reform needs to begin at a much more fundamental level.

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Cathedral Libraries in Ireland

HARRY CARSON

*“It is not altogether easy for a person, whose knowledge of a cathedral church has been gained by familiarity with any of the ancient cathedrals of England, to realise, when standing at the door of some humble, and perhaps common-place little country church in Ireland, that the insignificant building before him may possibly possess as just a claim to the proud title of a cathedral church as any of the stateliest of the minsters, which are the glory of England, or of the continent of Europe. Yet so it is, and the insignificance of the country cathedrals of Ireland, their inaccessibility in villages remote from railway stations, and the fact that many of them are buildings of no great age in a country where nearly every parish can boast of some object of remote antiquity, have combined to contribute to the general obscurity with which most of these churches are surrounded, and we have thus an explanation of how it is that such complete ignorance prevails as to them” (quoted from the 1894 publication *The Cathedral Churches of Ireland* by Thomas McAll Fallow).*

Fallow was an enthusiastic antiquary and he decided that the inaccessibility of Ireland’s cathedrals, and the insignificance of their size and architecture was no excuse for allowing ignorance to prevail. He thus travelled through Ireland in the 1870s and 1880s visiting many of the Church of Ireland cathedrals.

It is difficult to disentangle fact from legend in the history of Ireland before the beginning of the 5th century and to know precisely what was happening. Ireland was not one country but a collection of petty tribes and dynasties, constantly fighting against each other and striving for local supremacy. With the exception of a few brief years under the High Kingship of Brian Boru(1002-14), Ireland remained a fragmented state.

During the 5th century the historic four provinces of Ireland, Ulster, Leinster, Munster and Connacht, began to appear.

Christianity reached Ireland at an uncertain date, but there was a sufficient number of Irish Christians by the end of the 4th century to justify the dispatch of a bishop from Rome. The history of Christianity in Ireland is inseparable from the activity of Patrick. Patrick arrived in Ireland c. 432 and most of his work was confined to the north because it is said that when he arrived he found four bishops already working in the south.

The foundation of his seat at Armagh, now the Primatial See of Ireland, is traditionally dated as 444. He baptised several thousand people, introduced an Episcopal form of government, appointed bishops, built churches and founded several monasteries before his death around the year 461. The history of the Church of Ireland would require a separate article and is outside the scope of this one.

There are thirty one Church of Ireland Cathedrals in Ireland to-day. Eight of these are in Northern Ireland. Out of the total, eleven can be said to have some sort of a library. It is also worth noting that 75% of the members of the Church of Ireland are resident in Northern Ireland.

In Northern Ireland two of the eleven Cathedrals that have libraries are Armagh and Derry, while the other nine in the Republic of Ireland are at Tuam, Cashel, Waterford, Lismore, Kilkenny, Cork, Ross and two in Dublin. I presume it is the same in any walk of life but with regards to the well-being of the libraries in the Cathedrals, it has depended on the interest and enthusiasm of the incumbent. It must also be pointed out that Diocesan Libraries do not come into the scope of this article.

It is difficult to know where to start to describe the various collections because they vary so much in size, and size really is not the important factor.

The Cathedral of the Diocese of **Ross** is **St Fachtna's in Rosscarbery**. This is a good example of what Fallow was talking about in that it is a Cathedral in a village on the shore of a bay some 75 miles south-west of Cork. A monastic settlement was founded in the 6th century by St Fachtna and, although no date is available for when the cathedral was built, there is a record of a Bishop of Ross in 1152. The library is housed in the Chapter Room and little is known of its origin. There is no formal catalogue of the collection which is small and varied in scope. Dean Wyse Jackson states that "This little library in the place where St Fachtna founded in the 6th century a monastery school which afterwards became a famous seat of learning, deserves wider publicity and appreciation. "Alas," according to the present Dean, "there once was a good library here but it has fallen to neglect and partial dispersal."

Tuam Cathedral is an example of the problems facing the Church of Ireland in the Republic of Ireland. With a dwindling congregation the Cathedral fell into disrepair and the fabric had deteriorated. The library was housed in the east end of the Synod Hall and when plans were made for radical renovations and restoration of the Synod Hall the library had to be removed. The books are now housed in St Nicholas' Collegiate Church, Galway. The library was founded by Rev Joseph Henry who offered in 1881 his collection of books to the Diocese and in his will left the sum of £15 per annum towards the purchase of further editions. Not all of the original books have survived but those that remain constitute a good example of a late Victorian library. The library now has some 4,500 books. Thanks to a FÁS project over a three year period the books have been cleaned, waxed and minor repairs carried out before they were catalogued and placed in new shelving in St Nicholas' Church.

Waterford is another example of rescue. The Library of **Christ Church Cathedral, Waterford** was founded in 1745 upon the death of Bishop Este. Very little has been added to the library since the Church of Ireland was disestablished in 1870 and in the present century it has suffered almost total neglect. The condition of the library room with its crumbling ceiling and lack of ventilation and heating made it impossible to carry out any restoration work in the library. Thanks to the co-operation of the local St. John's College,

working and storage facilities were made available. This is an ecumenical venture with a vengeance as a Protestant (and very often anti-papist) collection of books is being housed in a Roman Catholic seminary. The scheme was again a FÁS funded one and the project was linked to the Waterford Heritage Genealogical Centre. The earliest printed book in the collection is Erasmus's edition of St. Augustine printed in 1528, with at least a hundred books of the 16th century. The remainder were published in the 17th and 18th centuries. The books have now all been removed from the Cathedral, cleaned, conserved, catalogued and packed into boxes awaiting their return to the Cathedral.

Cork, one would assume, as the third largest city in Ireland, should have a substantial library. Unfortunately this is not so. The Library of the **Cathedral Church of St Fin Barre Cork** was founded in 1720 by Bishop Browne and contained many old manuscripts and incunabula. In 1892 the Cathedral Library and the Parish Library were amalgamated to form a Diocesan Library housed in the Chapter House and supervised by the Dean. This whole collection was bought by University College, Cork in 1982 and is in the Special Collections department of the college library. Work has now started on the conserving and cataloguing of this collection.

The library in **St Carthage's Cathedral, Lismore** is the Lismore Diocesan Library and, strictly speaking, is not a Cathedral Library. Dr Henry Cotton presented his theological collection, of almost 2,000 volumes, to the Diocese and the Chapter of the Cathedral showed its appreciation by erecting a room attached to St Carthage's Cathedral as the library. The library has not changed much over the years. It is rich in theological and biblical works, ecclesiastical histories and sermons.

Ossory Diocesan Library which is attached to **St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny** was founded in 1693 by Bishop Otway who bequeathed his own collection to it, and £200 towards its erection. 1756 saw another boost to the collection when Bishop Maurice left his collection of books to the library in 1756. He also instructed that £20 a year be paid to the Librarian, on the understanding that 'the librarian was to give due attendance to such clergy and gentlemen as may be disposed to study there from 6 o'clock in the morning to the tolling of the bell for Morning Prayer at the Cathedral Church of St Canice'. How reading habits have changed. The library houses over 3,000 volumes and is presently being catalogued and indexed. It is thought that the walls of the present library in the grounds of the Cathedral are the original walls of the old school, which was the forerunner of Kilkenny College. The school was to produce such distinguished pupils as William Congreve, Jonathan Swift, Bishop George Berkeley, and Archbishop Connor Magee of York. There are over 300 books printed before 1600 and 4 printed before 1500.

The story of the **Cashel Library** is another one where many books were lost through lack of interest and lack of money. The library of **The Cathedral Church of St John the Baptist and St Patrick's Rock** was founded by Archbishop Bolton in 1730 shortly after his appointment as Archbishop of Cashel. His own private collection of some 6,000 books, including some which had belonged to his friend Archbishop King, a celebrated scholar, bibliophile and book-collector, formed the nucleus of the collection. The late David

Woodworth, Dean of Cashel, published a short history of the library in 1994. Over 800 of the more important books were removed in 1934 to Marsh's Library in Dublin and from there to the library of the Representative Church Body in Dublin. In 1984 when Dean Woodworth arrived the books were in a bad state and the first floor of the library ready to collapse. He, with the help of major sponsorship, repaired the library and laid out an exhibition area. Display cases were provided, heating and dehumidifying controls installed and the library re-opened in 1986 under the new name of the GPA-Bolton Library in recognition of its founder and its principal benefactor. The oldest items are 3 manuscript codices, each hand-written in England between 1168 and 1220.

The library attached to **Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin** was largely dispersed by the 1980s but is now being built up again, and is housed in the Chapter Room of the Cathedral. The library does contain a notable music collection and a quantity of valuable Cathedral manuscript records dating from the 12th century. These valuable records constitute the archives of this ancient historic Cathedral. Originally built in 1038, it was rebuilt in 1172 by Strongbow and restored in 1871.

Derry has two collections, the Derry Diocesan Library and the Chapter House Library. The Chapter House Library in **St Columb's Cathedral** was begun by Very Rev R G S King, Dean of Derry from 1921-1946 as a purely historical collection of works relating not only to St Columb's Cathedral but also to the history of the city. The library has been added to over the years with several important collections. The first benefactor was Sir Frederick Heygate who gave a remarkable collection of rare pamphlets on Irish affairs, over sixty of which were printed before 1700. Any of the collections received were carefully examined and books, manuscripts etc., relating to the City were kept in the Chapter House Library and those relating to the County were given to the Diocesan Library.

This has left just two very important collections. These are not Cathedral Libraries as such, but must be included in any survey of this subject. These are Archbishop Marsh's Library in Dublin and Archbishop Robinson's Library in Armagh. Both have strong Church of Ireland connections, not only obvious from their names but also from their administration.

Narcissus Marsh was Archbishop of Dublin and in 1701 built the first public library in Ireland and one of the earliest still operating in these islands. It was designed by Sir William Robinson, architect of the Royal Hospital, Kilmainhan. The interior of the library remains as it was in 1701, with the beautiful dark oak bookcases and 3 wired alcoves or 'cages' where the readers were locked in with the books. Originally many of the books were chained.

In 1707 *An Act for Settling and Preserving a Public Library for ever* was passed. The government or administration of the library was vested in the Governors and Guardians, Church of Ireland Archbishops of Dublin and Armagh, Deans of St. Patrick's and Christ Church Cathedrals, Provosts of Trinity College and four other persons ex-officio whose offices became extinct with the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922. One of these was the Lord Chancellor and recently the Government of the Republic, at the request of

the Governors and Guardians, appointed the Chief Justice as a governor.

The collection consists mainly of 16th, 17th and 18th century books. The most important collection is that of Edward Stringfleet (1635-1699), Bishop of Worcester. Marsh in 1705 paid £2,500 for this library of nearly 10,000 books. It contains books printed by some of the earliest English printers such as Daye, Fawkes Wolfe and Wynkyn de Worde. Marsh left all his books to the library but he left his great collection of Oriental MSS to the Bodleian. He was particularly interested in science, mathematics and music and many of his maths books are extensively annotated by him. He also collected in Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish and Russian. Marsh wrote nearly 300 years ago 'Liber rarissimus' (rare book) in one Hebrew book which had been printed in Italy in 1491. He was also responsible for the preparation for printing of Bishop Bedell's translation of the Old Testament into Irish.

For most visitors to the library the mementoes of Jonathan Swift are of great interest. As Dean of St Patrick's he was a Governor and attended the annual visitation for many years. In Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* there are extensive annotations of his, mostly insulting references to the Scots for the part they played in the rebellion.

The Armagh Public Library was founded by Archbishop Richard Robinson in 1771. Like Marsh's, an Act of Parliament some two years later gave it its legal status and its governing body which consisted of the Archbishop of Armagh as Chairman, the Dean and Chapter of St. Patrick's Cathedral and two lay members who became the Governors and Guardians of the Armagh Public Library. The library was extended in the 1830s by Archbishop Beresford and remains as it was, a large spacious reading room, shelved from top to bottom, some 24 ft, with a gallery and a suite of apartments for the Keeper, The Dean of the Cathedral.

The stock consists of a selection of standard works of theology, history, literature and the classics together with a good supply of books on most subjects. It is especially rich in religious controversy. There are over 300 books in the collection printed before 1600. The earliest printed book is Gerson's *De praeceptis decalogi*, (Strasbourg 1488). The library has a two volumed first edition of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* with some marginal emendations by Swift, six original letters of Swift and three books out of Swift's own library. A curiosity is a tiny copy of the Koran in a metal case measuring one inch by one inch.

Robinson was a wonderful collector, collecting not only books and manuscripts but prints, coins and seals. Together with the fine set of 18th and some 17th century engravings is a full set of Piranesi drawings. The library also has a good collection of maps, a full set of the 1839 Ordnance Survey maps for each county in Ireland and a first edition of Petty's Survey of Ireland (1683).

A library which is definitely not classified as a Cathedral Library but one which the Cathedral Libraries could not do without is that of the the Representative Church Body, Dublin. This library is the theological and reference library of the Church of Ireland and the Church's principal repository for its archives and manuscripts. It was founded in 1931 when the Representative Church Body agreed to accept the library of the Irish Guild of

Witness. In 1969 the library moved out from Stephen's Green in the heart of Dublin to a quieter area at Churchtown where it continued to provide an excellent service. In 1981 the Church appointed its first archivist and in 1984 built archival storage accommodation. The library has some 40,000 books and now manages records from 527 parishes, 17 dioceses and 15 cathedrals as well as 560 collections of ecclesiastical manuscripts. Under the guidance of its present Librarian and Archivist Dr Raymond Refaussé, it has developed tremendously but like all large institutions it is finding additional resources hard to obtain.

The future of Cathedral Libraries in Ireland is brighter than it has ever been. Under Raymond Refaussé's guidance, those involved with Church Libraries have held yearly meetings since 1997. This valiant effort of the yearly meeting of interested persons is an attempt to keep up the interest in maintaining the collections at a high level.

Harry Carson is Librarian, The Armagh Public Library

Establishing Archive Services in Waterford Corporation – The First Phase

MARY FITZPATRICK

Waterford Corporation appointed an Archivist on contract in December 1995. This appointment is the first appointment to a local authority since the passage of the 1994 Local Government Act placing statutory obligations on all local authorities to preserve and provide access to their records. Readers may benefit from an account of the progress of the project to date.

Waterford Corporation is fortunate to possess high quality archives of local and national significance. These include, for example, the City Charters, 1449-1815; the great parchment roll (1365-1649) and Council minutes from 1655 to the present. In addition a large quantity of records have survived throughout the offices of the Corporation. There is therefore an excellent and continuous record of the development of Waterford's Civic administration and the history of Waterford City and region.

Funding and Grade

In the 1996 estimates Waterford Corporation provided £30,000 for archives. The archivist salary is included in this appointed on the Local Authority grade V.

The objectives of the project have been defined as follows:

Project Objectives

- To establish an archive service for Waterford Corporation
- To establish permanent storage facilities
- List all corporation records over 30 years old
- Prepare reports on Electronic Records Management
- Prepare reports on Archive collections held locally and in private hands.

A Phased Approach – Accommodation and Preservation

In keeping with guidelines published by the Department of the Environment, the establishment of archives in local authorities should be approached on a phased basis.

Key priorities in the initial phase of establishing archives services are preservation and accommodation.

Preservation

In the archival context, preservation involves protecting archives from further deterioration and/or destruction. The Local Authorities' Records Survey identified records over 30 years old throughout the departments. There is, however, a need to prioritise which records were most damaged and which were most at risk.

Each department head was contacted by way of introduction and forwarded a copy of the survey results relevant to each particular department. This was followed by a visit to each section or departmental head to discuss transfer arrangements for the records.

The result of these meetings was mixed. Most administrators have long-standing concerns centring chiefly around definition of non-current records and legal issues surrounding disposal. These issues are best addressed in the context of document disposal schedules. Records' schedules are properly a function of the second phase of an Archive program, requiring a high level of motivation throughout an organisation. It is important to instruct that there should be no further destruction of records without reference to the archivist.

The departments of Waterford Corporation are spread between seven sites in the city. Space in each is at a premium. Basic preparatory work was completed on site i.e., records were boxed and transfer dates arranged. Archives are most at risk when they are being transferred. Although perhaps basic, such labeling is a simple and effective way of preventing destruction or further disordering.

Accommodation

Guidelines have stated that accommodation be arranged before material is transferred. In Waterford, space was provided in what were previously low-cost industrial units at High Street in the city centre. It is important that accommodation be at least of sufficient standard to permit sorting and cleaning. Where possible it is also best to plan accommodation at least until this phase is complete.

British Standard BS 5454 notes the storage and exhibition requirements for Archives. The principle applications of this standard as relevant to phase one are discussed below under the headings site and location, structure, fire prevention and security.

Site and Location

Not all buildings offered will necessarily be suitable. If the repository is not free standing it should be capable of being completely protected from dangers posed by neighbouring buildings. What are the conditions of the nearby buildings? Are they dilapidated, vandalised, in poor repair? The repository itself should be accessible to potential users. In

the case of Waterford, the building was centrally located, within minutes of the Heritage Centre, Library and City Hall.

Structure

Obviously the building must be structurally sound. Waterford Corporation employed a consultant engineer to report on the condition of the building. An immediate outcome of this was that the weight-bearing capacity of the wooden floors was in question. There is a very high weighting requirement for archives, at 11 kilonewtons per meter squared. It was necessary to have a further survey carried out to ascertain the exact weight-bearing capacity of the wooden floors. In this case they were found to be substandard. It is of the utmost importance to have these surveys carried out.

Fire Prevention

Archives are uniquely flammable, and there are stringent requirements in relation to fire prevention. A Fire Officer's Report was obtained which noted such hazards as wooden partitions and staircases etc. As the building had previously been used as industrial units and office spaces, the fire exits were well marked, and fire hoses were in place, as was a fire alarm. Also under this heading one must look at the electrical system, as stated in BS5454. A Corporation electrician performed a preliminary check on the building for live wiring, damaged sockets and so forth. Electrical switches and fuse boxes were placed outside storage areas.

Fire extinguishers must not contain water. The alternatives are not ideal, however, as CO₂ can be damaging if inhaled and chemical powders can damage computer equipment. The best compromise perhaps is CO₂ in the storage areas and chemical extinguishers in the processing areas.

Security

Protection against vandalism is an important consideration. BS 5454 recommends that locks be upgraded to BS3621. In Waterford, due to the less than ideal situation where several individuals had, at the time, access to the building, we have the additional issue of securing the Archive area. An intruder alarm, linked to a monitoring agency has recently been installed.

Archive Practice

Once we were satisfied that these fundamental considerations had been addressed throughout the building there was then an opportunity to assign archive functions to the building. These are examined here under the following headings.

Transfer

Records have to be taken in and out of the building. Luckily there is a loading bay with gates out to the street.

Processing

This is that part of archive practice where the material is cleaned and put in order. There is a large space requirement for this. Also, it is important that the room is well ventilated as the material is likely to be in poor condition. Basic equipment requirements here are trestle tables or benches, chairs, protective clothing and latex gloves. Good quality equipment represents a good investment as do high grade acid-free packaging and storage materials.

Shelving

Shelving was the expensive outlay in the initial part of phase one. Sixty bays of shelving were required. In summary the requirements for the shelving are:

- It must be adjustable without tools
- It must be made from stainless steel with rounded edges so as not to damage documents
- Runs should not exceed 10m and be no higher than 2.3m
- There should be a minimum of bracing to allow through shelving.

It is a good idea here to get some graph paper and plot out where the shelving is best placed with regard to the most efficient use of space.

The weight-bearing capacity of the floors was sub-standard in some rooms and there was the option here of shelving to a height of only 1.2 m on the wooden floors areas. Strengthening the wooden floors would have cost around £4,000 which was prohibitive at the time so we were confined to using concrete floor areas. Space available here is adequate for present requirements but this is something that we are going to have to address in the near future.

Environmental Conditions

Storage conditions need to be environmentally controlled in a constant environment of between 13c and 18c and in relative humidity of between 55% and 65% The key here is constancy. A recording thermohydrograph will give a continuous reading. There are cheaper hand held instruments but it is difficult to rely on the accuracy of these. These thermohydrographs need to be calibrated regularly. Readings in Waterford have been a high 65%. Dehumidifiers are used to lower humidity.

Light

Paper will fade and become brittle when exposed to light and especially to ultra-violet light which is present in daylight and in the light from fluorescent tubes. A protective filter can be put on windows relatively inexpensively. Also, protective sheaths can be put on fluorescent bulbs. Light fittings which block out the UV light are also available.

Listing

The purpose of listing is to gain control over the holdings to set up manageable systems,

which place the material in context and accurately record the extent of the holdings. In Waterford, while there is an excellent scholarly list, it is hierarchical in its structure and contains no provision for modern records. Both processing and listing are interlinked and are on-going processes and the material will be visited many times before the definitive list is produced, but very broadly the following sequence was followed in this instance:

- Clean the records and remove any metal paper clips
- Put 'like with like', that is identify the function of the particular record
- Note the covering dates and identify the department of origin

Following this process a draft listing can be drawn up. Unlike librarianship, where there are universally accepted standards of description, archivists disagree as to the applicability of standard terms of description to archive collections. Certainly, in relation to local authority archives, listing will be a matter for the individual archivist. It is important that the listing is kept simple. The key elements to be incorporated are:

- Department of origin
- Nature of the record
- Covering date of the record
- Computerisation

A database has been designed in accordance with the skeleton structure recommended in the Guidelines. With the assistance of a computer science student, Microsoft's Access database software was used to implement these recommendations with two record groups (Expired Leases and OS Maps) recently. Work has recently begun on the major tasks of computerising the Local Authority records, now that the computer system has proven itself on a trial run.

Promotional Issues

By agreement with the Town Clerk access was closed during the first six months of the project. There was however a need to make the general public aware of the Corporation's commitment to the archives and the nature of the work undertaken.

The Waterford Archeological and Historical Society was informed of plans for the year ahead. A press release was also issued to the local newspapers announcing the plans and describing some of the records and inviting queries. In August 1996, an exhibition of some of the material, chiefly maps, was held in the Courthouse. This was followed up by a talk to the public on the material displayed. The exhibition was able to 'piggyback', to an extent, on an existing arts exhibition. This was useful in spreading organisational and overhead costs and, while feedback was generally positive and facilitated making local contacts with potential depositors, it must be pointed out that the exhibition was not strictly part of contractual duties, and took considerable extra time over a 3 week period to organise. This points up the conflict between public access to the material and the necessity to get on with the groundwork. The Archive is now open to the public on an appointment basis.

Staffing

The minimum requirement for an archive staff is an Archivist, Secretary and Porter. Two students, under the Department of Social Welfare Summer Student Scheme assisted the archivist in cleaning records, In August, the project was assigned two FÁS CES trainees, one working mainly as a porter, the other as a form of archival assistant.

CES schemes are participant orientated and there is a large time commitment in terms of planning and liasing with FÁS. While some aspects of archival work, such as cleaning and secretarial assistance, were suitable for FÁS participation it is important that the work be supervised by an archivist. Ideally the archivist should be allowed to work on material for at least six months before untrained staff are introduced. However staffing issues are resolved in these times of chronic staff shortages and scarce resources, a professional archivist must be at the core of the archive.

Conclusion

Development is continuing in Waterford in accordance with the Municipal Archive Development Plan 1997. Having completed preliminary listing, with assistance in place and accommodation available, plans are now being put in place for the implementation of the second phase of the project, i.e. the provision of public access.

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Irish Rural Libraries – Glimpses of the Past

MÍCHEÁL Ó hAODHA

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

- *Note: due to a printing error an incomplete version of this article appeared in the last issue of An Leabharlann. With apologies to the author and readers, the article is reproduced here in its entirety.*

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

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

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

Many councils throughout Ireland welcomed the passing of this Act and the Irish newspapers of the time spoke in praise of its potential benefits. Nevertheless progress was slow. By 1880 only Dundalk and Sligo had established public libraries. A combination of factors was responsible for this lack of progress. The country was very poor and only trying to recover from the ravages of the Great Famine. The nature of the local authorities was often unrepresentative of local interests and there was a severe lack of funding with which to provide library buildings. Then, just as the country appeared to be finding its footing again, the First World War took place.

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

The Carnegie Trust

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

He set up the Carnegie Trust, and between 1882 and 1919 a large number of libraries in Britain, Canada, Ireland, the United States and other countries benefited from his cash endowments towards the foundation and upkeep of public libraries. He also promoted cultural and social affairs generally through his support for the provision of music halls, art galleries and museums amongst other enterprises. Many public libraries in Ireland received grants from Carnegie at one stage or another and his Trust spent over £110,000 on its urban and rural library policy in Ireland between the years 1915 and 1950.

Applications for the grants were subject to a number of provisos, the principal ones being that the community seeking to have a library built had to provide the site; the plans had to be approved by Carnegie's agent and the libraries were to be run in accordance with the Libraries Act. The community who wished to have a library also had to apply to the Carnegie Trust for support. Carnegie never offered a grant. He didn't believe in charity per se and only believed in helping those who wanted to help themselves.

Situation of Rural Libraries in Ireland

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

Their observations give a fascinating and humorous insight into the social standing of public libraries in the Ireland of the early 1900's and are of much value from a socio-historic point of view. They give a glimpse of a pre-industrial Ireland, a country still very much rooted in a rural way of life, suffering quietly from the traumas inflicted by war and poverty and yet poised to become a new republic with all its attendant opportunities and problems.

Cruise O'Brien's survey of the rural district schemes on the Trust's behalf took place in the year 1915, and he found, like Robinson a little while later, that the schemes had for the most part been a failure. While commenting on the status of public libraries in Ireland both he and O'Brien were quick to point out to the Carnegie Trustees that the peculiar political and social conditions prevalent in Ireland in the early Twenties were particular to that country. This meant that carrying out any policy corresponding to that operating in England or Scotland, where the Trust was also very active, would be a waste of effort.

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

Unfortunately some of the library buildings which O'Brien visited in the Rathkeale rural districts were not utilising the village hall to its maximum potential on behalf of the people. Some halls, such as those in Askeaton and Kilcolman, were kept in reasonably good repair but were ill-kept and badly furnished. Some of the rooms were let out to organisations such as the village Temperance Society and the village band and although these societies were certainly doing much good for the people, O'Brien wasn't convinced that the principle of sub-letting to particular societies a building which was for public use

was a sound one. He suggested that permanent sub-letting be forbidden and that a limit should be put to the number of days per week on which any one society might have the rooms of a Carnegie library.

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

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

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

As the "librarian" in Kilcolman had confided in him when accounting for the low numbers who read the few books that were available – many of which they had probably read more than once already anyway – "They'd sooner read the story in the "Cork

Examiner” than to be reading history books. Sure it’s a little excitement they want”.⁵

When people did read they were very fond of novels. O’Brien noted with satisfaction that the works of the great novelists such as Dickens and Robert Louis Stephenson were eagerly read as were books on Irish history and biography. Some of the readers, particularly the young women read books “of what was generally termed an “improving” kind, such as the Encyclopaedia of Home Teaching. Cookery books were very popular amongst the women and Mrs. Beaton’s classic work was “not allowed to travel beyond the precincts of the building”.⁶

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

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

O’Brien gave an example of what he meant when describing how a well-to-do woman in County Limerick who was interested in this aspect of rural development, was in the habit of sending books to her husband’s tenantry and to the labourers. She lent them translations of Gaelic folk tales, as well as folktales simply told from the Odyssey, all of which they loved, often reading them out aloud to one another around the fire at night.

O’Brien’s idealism took on an almost romantic hue when he went on to say: “That the adventures told in the Odyssey should be read round a County Limerick peasant’s fire in the present day, and should be enjoyed, will not be believed by everyone. But nothing can be more natural. These great tales came out of the simple imaginative folk-mind which loves great and heroic adventurings; and where you have a rural population undemoralised by the cheap press and cheaper ideas of today, these tales will still be loved.”¹⁰

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

“on the way to Mount Trenchard on Saturday we stopped at . . . and I inspected the “library”, that is to say , I climbed in through a broken window and saw the bare room. As you know yourself there are neither books nor bookcase there; that lonely hillside, those few scattered cottages, that gaunt empty building, how am I to bring them all together?”¹¹

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

Nevertheless, and in spite of this poverty, a complete restructuring of the library system could bring nothing but benefits as Cruise O’Brien had pointed out. The two men began their restructuring scheme by concentrating on two aspects of library administration in particular – the issue of book distribution and the appointment of new librarians.

Books were generally distributed through the schools. Each school in the Union area received, from time to time, a parcel of books for the use of the local townspeople, the books generally being brought home by the children. The local school teachers in Rathkeale informed Cruise O’Brien that the parents of the children named the book they wanted and the children then informed the teacher but Cruise O’Brien didn’t believe this for a moment. Taking the library in Rathkeale as an example he said that even though there were some catalogues for the books in the Union there, it was extremely unlikely that many of the rural population were provided with them. Nor was it likely that they could obtain the books they wanted even if they had catalogues as not more than two dozen boxes, selected sometimes by the teacher, sometimes sent down at random, were supplied at any one time. The real scenario, he imagined, was that the parents indicated their preference by asking for a story, a book of history or something similar. Whether it was a legacy of British occupation or not, there was still a healthy mistrust of officialdom in rural Ireland and an indication of Cruise O’Brien’s frustration at his inability to get any reliable information from the locals is clear when he says:

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

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

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

Having got their library the people of the town declared that Castleisland was “the last place in the world where a library would be used”. They spoke to Robinson of the advantages of education and informed him that what the town really needed was a secondary school under the care of the Christian Brothers. When Robinson delicately suggested to

them that Mr. Carnegie might object to his gift being used for such a purpose they expressed nothing but surprise and pointed out that in neighbouring Killorglin the library was already being used as a school. As Robinson was to discover the rural poor didn't demur when the Carnegie Trust offered them its money even if they had no intention of being bound by the pretexts under which the same money was given.

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

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

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

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

The recommendations made by Robinson and O'Brien to the Carnegie Trustees were

many and varied. Rather than concentrating solely on grant allocation as the Carnegie Trustees had previously done, the two men recommended other approaches which would aid library development. Their recommendations included: increased centralization – the amalgamation of certain rural districts would offset the marginalisation of small rural libraries; the appointment of paid librarians by the Trustees; an increased vigilance on the part of the Trustees as to how the libraries were progressing including regular reports and routine inspections of the libraries, and an increased emphasis on book selection so that whatever books were available were representative of the interests of the people.

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

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

Mícheál Ó hAodha is Librarian (Informatics and Electronics), the University of Limerick

Notes

1. "houses of writing"
2. Glimpses at the Rural Library Problem in Ireland (Part 1 and 2), Carnegie United Kingdom Trust Reports, (1915-17)
3. *ibid*
4. *ibid*
5. *ibid*
6. *ibid*
7. *ibid*
8. *ibid*
9. *ibid*
10. *ibid*

11. Lennox Robinson, *Curtain up* (autobiography), pp 84-5.
12. Glimpses at the Rural Library Problem in Ireland (Part 1 and 2), *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust Reports* (1915-17).
13. *ibid*
14. John Redmond and William Smith O'Brien were rival Irish politicians at this period.
15. Glimpses at the Rural Library Problem in Ireland (Part 1 and 2), *Carnegie United Kingdom Trust Reports* (1915-17).
16. Irish Library Council. Set up as a result of the Public Libraries Act of 1947. Its purpose is to maintain and operate a central library and to assist local authorities in improving their library services.

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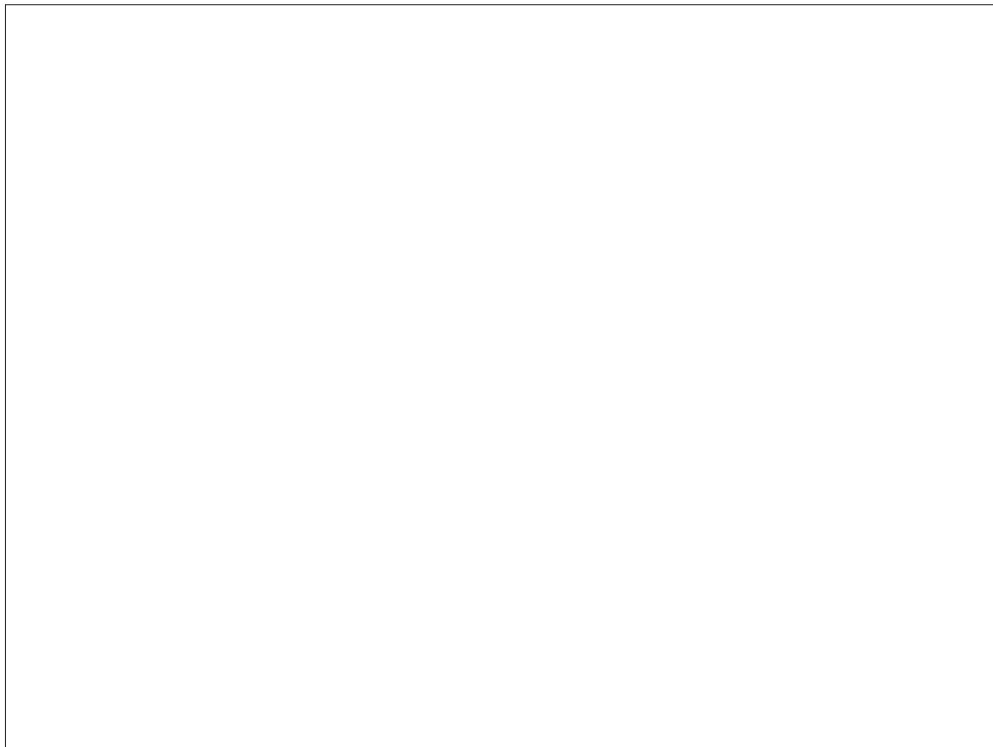
Miscellaneous CUKT papers including Annual Reports held in the archives of An Chomhairle Leabharlanna in Dublin.

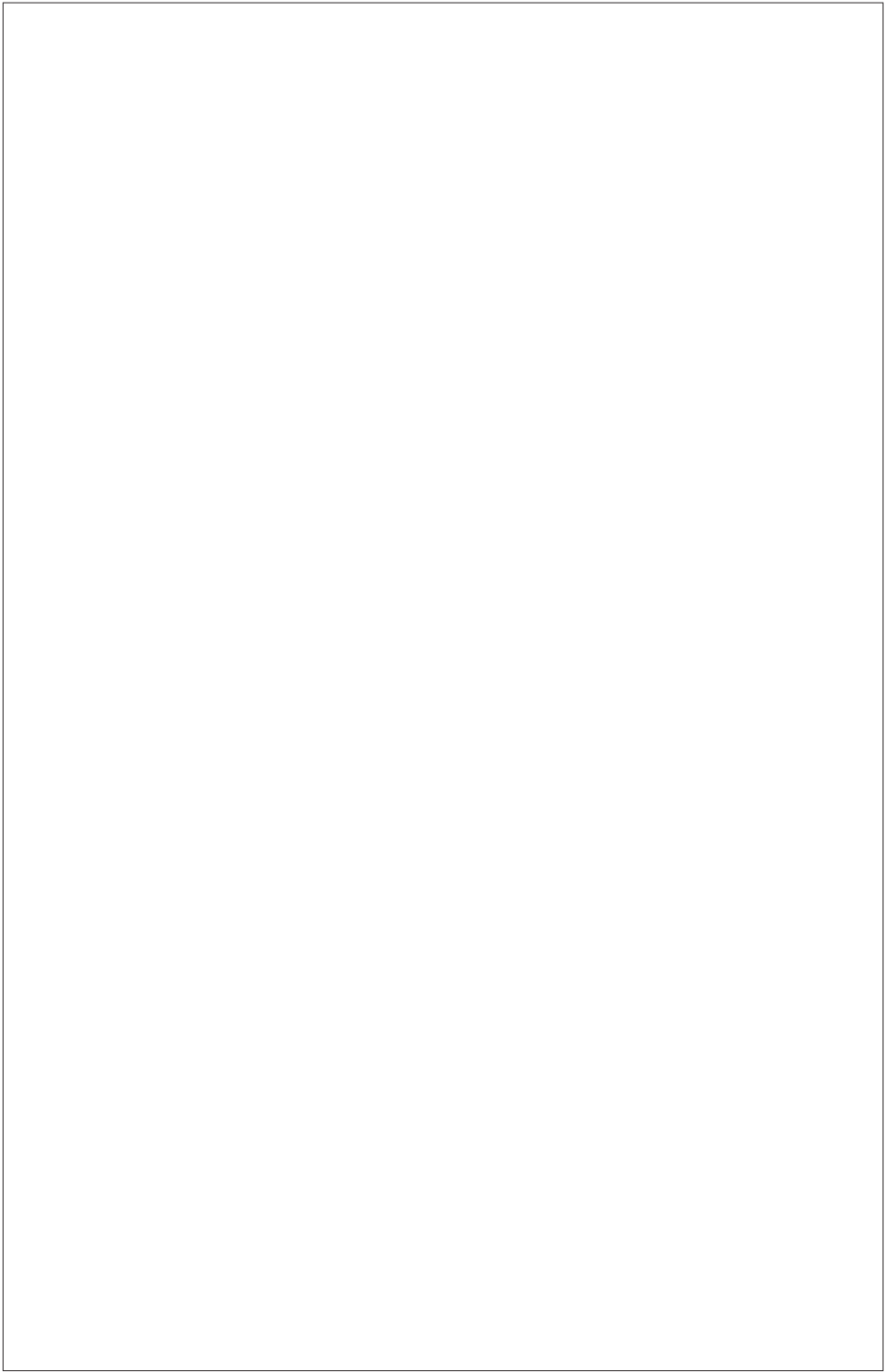
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INFORMATION MATTERS

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.

LISC (NI)

.....

The Library and Information Services Council (NI) has produced the fourth issue of its newsheet LISC News. The newsletter outlines the on-going work of the Council in the promotion of quality information and library services throughout Northern Ireland.

The new website for the organisation will be available from January 1999 at www.liscfreereserve.co.uk

LISC(NI) Working Party on Services to Young People has recently published two reports on Children and Young People. *Improving School Libraries in Northern Ireland: The Impact of the School Library Guidelines: A Report to LISC* (Northern Ireland) discusses the use and impact of the 1995 Guidelines for Good Practice for primary and post primary schools in Northern Ireland. Future revisions of the 1995 guidelines are planned.

The second report examines the relevance to Northern Ireland of the LISC (England) report *Investing in Children*.

Copies of both Working Party reports and a promotion leaflet on the publication *Improving School Libraries* are available from the Council's Executive Officer, Gail McKinley
Tel: 01662 244821 Fax: 01662 246716
e-Mail: gailmckinley@welbni.tfnnet.org

Access to scholarly and research material in Northern Ireland

.....

Arising from the Government Green Paper on legal deposit of publications, LISC(NI) commissioned an investigation into access to material to support scholarly and research work in Northern Ireland. The project, co-funded by the British Library Research and Innovation Centre and the Department of Education Northern Ireland, aimed to assess the way in which the demand for access to such material is currently being met and how the situation could be improved. A one day seminar took place in Belfast on 30 November 1998 to discuss the main report findings produced by Information Management Associates.

Recommendations were based on a survey of academic and postgraduate research staff at the two NI universities, an analysis of the inter-library loan statistics of the main NI libraries and small scale analysis of British Library coverage of Northern Ireland material. The report included the following recommendations:

- the implementation of a university library – Trinity College Library link to encourage the use of copyright materials at TCD
- the creation in at least one Northern Ireland library of a node to facilitate access to

electronic materials deposited under proposed changes to legal deposit legislation

- an acceleration in progress towards a joint computer catalogue in all Northern Ireland libraries
- a reconsideration of levels of funding and support for the two local university libraries.

The report will be published early 1999 and will be known as the Streatfield Report. It will be available from the LISC(NI) Executive Officer.

Sourcelist of material on the United Irishmen in Counties Down and Antrim

.....
 “*The Spirit of the North is High*”: A sourcelist of material on the United Irishmen, their aims and ideals and the Rebellion in Counties Antrim and Down

(ISBN 0 9533380 02) has been written and compiled by SEELB’s Deirdre Armstrong.

Priced at £4.00 it can be purchased from the Irish and Local Studies Section, Library HQ, Windmill Hill, Ballynahinch County Down BT24 8DH.

Tel : 01238 566400 Fax : 01238 565072

Books across the Border

.....
 President Mary McAleese officially launched the Books Across the Border project on the 4th November 1998 in the Carrickdale Hotel. The cross-border project is run by Dundalk and Newry libraries and is funded through the EU’s Peace and Reconciliation Special Support Programme. The project promotes peace and reconciliation by encouraging schoolchildren to read quality Irish fiction, especially that written for teenagers and dealing specifically with “the

Troubles”. The two libraries, run by different authorities on opposite sides of the border, had no contact with each other until they became involved in the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme. Both libraries will hold a series of talks by well known authors and educationalists and transcripts of the speeches will be published. Details of the project have been written up by Christina Sloan and Rian McKay. See *Public Library Journal* Vol 13 (3) 1998.

For further information contact Ciaran Mangan, Louth County Library, Roden Place, Dundalk, County Louth, Republic of Ireland Tel : +353 42 35457 or Christina Sloan, Newry Library, 79 Hill Street, Newry, County Down BT34 1DG

Tel : 01693 64683.

Bookstart Scheme

.....
 The launch of the first Northern Ireland Bookstart Scheme took place on 19 October 1998 in SEELB’s Downpatrick Library. The scheme, which began in Birmingham in 1992, encourages parents/carers to share books with babies from a very young age. The parent/carer is given a welcome pack consisting of a brightly coloured board book, information on how to share books with your baby, an invitation to join the library and basic health information. The scheme is a joint venture between SEELB’s Library and Information Service and the Down and Lisburn Health Trust.

ICT Training for School Librarians and Teachers

.....
 The Government has allocated £230 million of lottery revenue to the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) to support Information and Communications Technology training for

school librarians and teachers in the UK. Training is due to start in April 1999. The initiative will end in 2002. Training providers are currently being sought by the Teacher Training Agency and the appointment of approved training providers for Northern Ireland is pending. A pre-tendering information meeting was held in Belfast in October 1998.

The ISTAR Project and WELB

WELB is the only Northern Ireland public library to be included in the ISTAR project. ISTAR (Information Society Training and Awareness Raising) is one of a number of EC projects aimed at bringing about the Information Society. It is funded by the European Commission under the European Programme for Inter-Regional Co-Operation and Regional Economic Innovation. WELB is one of three regions running a pilot scheme (the other two regions are in Germany and Greece). The aim of the project is to test and develop the role of public libraries in partnership with other local organisations as a provider of information and training services to small businesses, individual teleworkers, the self employed and and lifelong learners who need access to open and distance learning facilities.

The participants will receive computer hardware and software so that each region will be able to use a range of information and communication technologies. Omagh, Lisnaskea and Derry will shortly be in a position to offer facilities such as browsing, e-mail, DTP, web site management and software applications. For further information contact Leo Crossey, Assistant Chief Librarian, Library HQ, Spillars Place, Omagh, Co. Tyrone BT78 1HL Tel : 01662 244821 Fax :

01662 246716

e-Mail : webmaster@welbi.tfnnet.org
Website : www.welbni.demon.co.uk/istar/

Major photographic archive for the Northern Ireland Political Collection

The Linen Hall Library has acquired the 55,000 photographs of the Pacemaker Press 1966-1977, an important photographic archive covering the early years of the Northern Ireland Troubles. Limited access only at present. Direct enquiries to Yvonne Murphy, Librarian of the Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, 17 Donegall Square North, Belfast BT1 5GD

Tel : 01232 321707 Fax : 01232 438586
e-Mail : info@linenhall.com

Linen Hall Library's Theatre and Performing Arts Archive secured

The Theatre and Performing Arts Archive has been put on a secure footing following an Arts Council of Northern Ireland Access to the Arts Programme grant plus additional matching funding from Belfast City Council. Anyone requiring research advice or who wishes to offer material for the collection should contact Ophelia Byrne, Theatre and Performing Arts Administrator, Linen Hall Library, 17 Donegall Square North, Belfast BT1 5GD Tel : 01232 321707 Fax : 01232 438586 e-Mail : info@linenhall.com

Heritage Lottery Fund for Linen Hall Library Extension Project

The Heritage Lottery Fund has provided a further £1,822,000 for the Linen Hall Library's Extension project. While the the new grant is

encouraging, the library still faces a considerable fund raising challenge. The total project cost is estimated at around £3,191,009. A further £528,698 is required to fully fund the project. A public appeal will be launched in January 1999. Building work will commence in Spring 1999.

The Kaleidoscope Project and Border Directions – Building stronger links between the public library service and others in the cultural sector in Portadown.

The Kaleidoscope Project is a cross community arts initiative which was established in 1995 with the aim of developing a visual and written arts centre in Portadown in the Old Markets Centre. One million pounds of Lottery funding was obtained for the development of the Old Markets building centre. Due to delays the building project will not now be ready to open until the year 2000. In the meantime, two groups have been formed which will form the basis for future activities in the new centre once it is open. The fine arts group has had an exhibition of work in a local shopping centre and the writers' group meets regularly and has already published a collection of members' poetry. Writing workshops are held in a number of local libraries. The second project, Border Directions, is a cross-border arts project based in Portadown with financial assistance from Co-operation North and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The arts project aims to establish links with both the local community and the community in Monaghan. The aim is to work with young people in a variety of arts activities. Myriam Fearon, an artist in her own right, has been appointed Art Development Officer. She visits local libraries and was

involved in the production of a mural on the wall of Brownlow Library, a venture which included not only the local library but the Open Learning Centre in Craigavon, the Chrysalis Women's Centre in Brownlow and a number of local schools, parents and children. Adrian Rice, a Belfast poet has also carried out a number of successful workshops in Lurgan and Armagh libraries. It is hoped to get some of the childrens' work into print as part of the SELB's contribution to the Year of Reading. For further information contact Gerry Burns, Chairman of the Border Directions Project. He is Divisional Librarian at Craigavon Divisional Library HQ, 113 Church Street, Portadown, Co Armagh BT62 3DB Tel : 01762 335247/335296

EDnet goes live

The website EDnet, the Economic Development Network for Northern Ireland acts as a single point of reference for all aspects of information relating to economic development. The site is organised into broad subject categories such as start up information, company information or sector information. The Starting Up section includes information on aspects of setting up a business, funding sources, training, product development and regulatory requirements relating to business standards, employees, premises and health and safety issues. The Resource Library section includes detailed guides on choosing agents and distributors, effective selling, quality, credit control and sources of funding. The Marketing and Sales section gives details of LEDU and IDB programmes. The Sector Information Section gives information on many industrial sectors in Northern Ireland.

EDnet is supported by LEDU, all the district councils, local enterprise agencies and a

range of other bodies. It is available through the Internet, local LEDU and district council offices and a number of selected public libraries including Belfast Central Library.

Website : www.ednet.ledu-ni.gov.uk

The Business Information Forum Northern Ireland

The second issue of the Business Information Forum NI Newsletter includes a supplement on ISO 9000 which deals with the practicalities of introducing a quality system in the information sector and a paper by Dr. George Chambers on developments in the provision of business information. This edition of the newsletter contains the annual report for 1996/1997 and a Web Watch column of useful web sites for business information. Contact the secretary Malcolm Buchanan for further information or copies of the newsletter. He is Reference and Information Librarian, SEELB, Library HQ, Ballynahinch, Co Down BT24 8DH.

Tel : 01238 566431 Fax : 01238 565072

Directory of Business Information for Northern Ireland

The second edition of the Directory is available in print form and on the Internet. The website allows access to a database of 2000 Northern Ireland companies which can be searched by company name or product. The print Directory can be obtained from the Administrative Department, Central Library, Royal Avenue Belfast BT1 1EA

Tel : 01232 243233.

Website : www.ednet.ledu-ni.gov.uk

DERAL Project

SEELB's Linda Hassard has recently been appointed research officer of the DERAL project. DERAL - "Distance Education in Rural Areas via Libraries" is a collaborative project with partners in Sweden, Austria, Spain and Ireland and is funded by the European Commission as part of its research programme, Telematics for Libraries. Many rural public library users have difficulties in accessing courses of study. DERAL sets out to encourage libraries to act as brokers between users and the providers of distance learning courses thus allowing people to continue to develop knowledge and skills. As research officer, Linda will be researching into user requirements, developing Web-based software tools to act as a gateway to distance learning materials on the internet and disseminating the research results. She is based in the University of Ulster at Jordanstown's Faculty of Infomatics. The only public library service in Northern Ireland to be involved in DERAL is the North Eastern Education and Library Board who will act as a test site.

Further information on the project can be obtained from Mary Shapcott

Tel : 01232 368886 or Dr. Adrian Moore

Tel : 01265 324317

Public Library Policy Review

Ireland's Department of the Environment and Local Government has launched its review of the public library service. *Branching Out: A New Public Library Service* (ISBN 0 7076 6174 9) costs £5.00. The report is available from the Department of the Environment and Local Government or Government Publications. It is also available on the Internet.

Website : www.enviro.ni

C.S. Lewis and Belfast Public Libraries

A life-sized bronze statue has been unveiled outside Holywood Arches Library, Belfast to mark the 100th anniversary of C.S.Lewis's birth.

The library, part of Belfast Public Libraries, is located near Lewis' birthplace in Strandtown, East Belfast. The sculpture, by Ross Wilson, is a bronze statue of Lewis's fictional alter ego, Digory Kirke, entering the kingdom of Narnia through the magic wardrobe. The unveiling was performed by Douglas Gresham, son of the American poet, Joyce Gresham whose marriage to Lewis was dramatised in the film *Shadowlands*. Belfast Central Library also opened an exhibition on his life and writings to kick off a month long centenary celebration of Lewis's life and works.

Community On-Line

Bettina Yirtz has been appointed the co-ordinator of Community On-Line. This is an inter-agency initiative involving the Community Relations Council Northern Ireland, the BBC, the Ulster People's College, the Worker's Educational Association and An Crann/The Tree. Bettina is responsible for managing and developing a web site and resources attached to the BBC's CD Rom 'A State Apart' which chronicles the most recent histories of NI communities. She will assist schools and community groups to develop activity programmes around the new educational materials. The primary focus of the initiative is on activities involving local people. For further information contact Bettina Yirtz at the Community Relations Council, 6 Murray Street, Belfast BT1 6DN. Tel : 01232 439953

The Local Identities Project

The Northern Ireland Museums Council has recently appointed a Researcher/Project Manager of the Local Identities Project. The project is designed to increase cross-community knowledge and understanding of personal and group identity. It will draw on the resources of the regional and local museums. For further information contact Craig McGuicken, Researcher/Project Manager, Northern Ireland Museums Council, 66 Donegall Pass, Belfast BT7 1BU Tel : 01232 550215

The Library Association and the Royal Charter Centenary Medal Awards

The Library Association awarded special medals to 100 members to mark the Royal Charter Centenary year. Five people in Northern Ireland received special medals at a special ceremony on the 10 December 1998 at the British Library. These were **Ian Montgomery**, former Chief Librarian of Belfast; NEELB's **Angela Crane**, Team Librarian, Carrickfergus Group; **Anne Crawford**, Principal Library Assistant, Greystone Library, Antrim, **Liz Weir**, member of the NEELB library committee, and Deborah Shorley, Pro-librarian, The University of Ulster.

People

Lynn Buick BLIB, ALA has been appointed to the post of Information Development Officer of the North Eastern Education and Library Board. She will lead the service in developing networked information resources. Lynn has worked for the library service for many years as the Area Local Studies Librarian.

Ian Montgomery Chief Librarian, Belfast

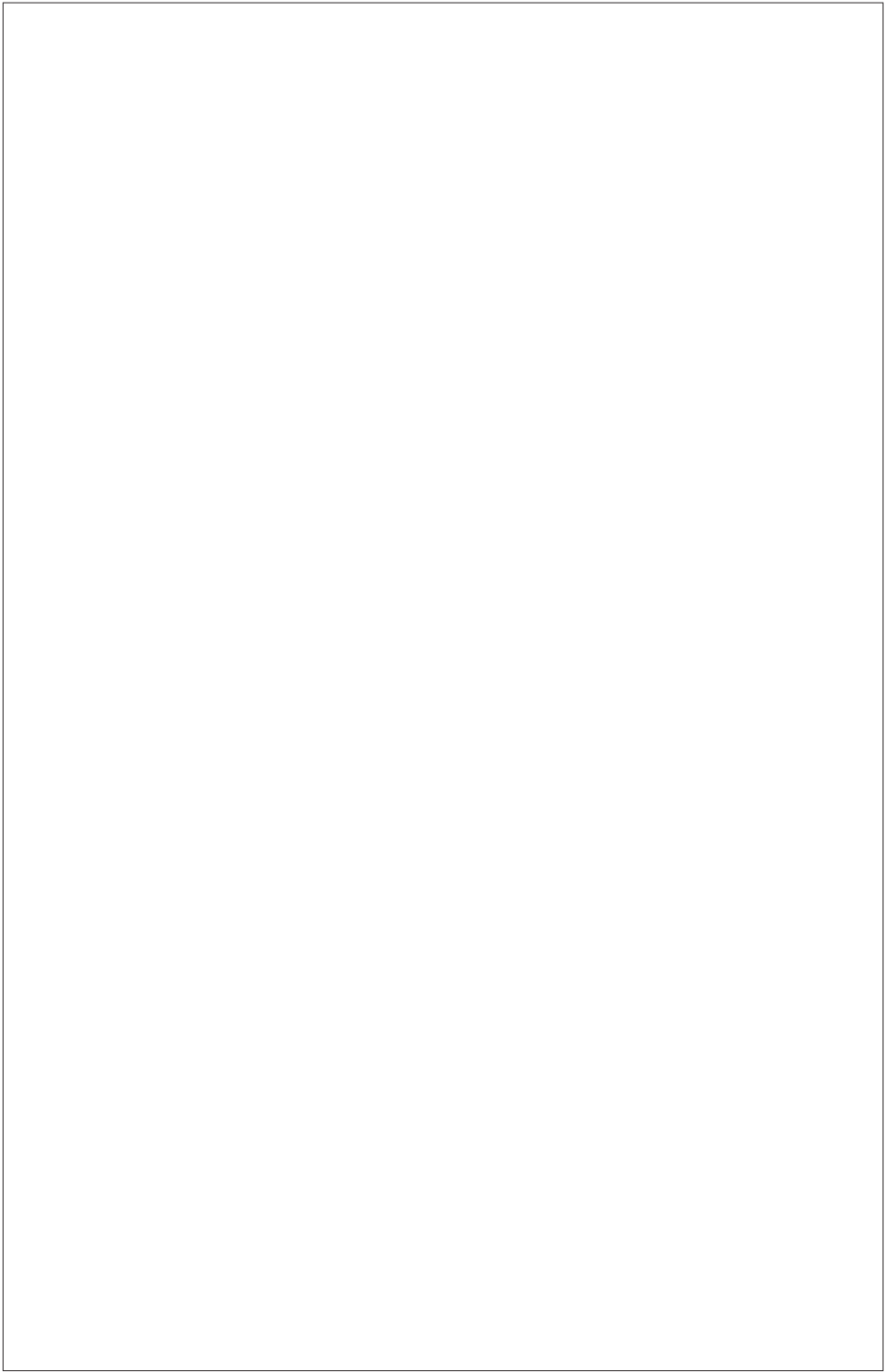
Public Libraries has retired. He first joined Antrim County Library Service in 1956. He moved to Belfast Public Libraries in 1969 as an area librarian and became Assistant Chief Librarian, Lending Services in 1973. He succeeded Ivor Crawley as Chief Librarian in 1985. Ian served on COLICO from 1990-1998 as the representative of LISC(NI) and on Northern Ireland's Newsplan Committee

Elga Logue, BLIS, ALA has taken over from Kevin Quinn as part time Executive Secretary, Library Association (NI) Branch. Elga joined the WELB in 1985 where she presently employed as Senior Schools Librarian. She previously worked with the SEELB and BELB. She can be contacted the Central Library, WELB, 35 Foyle Street, Londonderry BT48 6AL Tel : 01504 272307.

Beth Porter BA, ALA has succeeded David Welch as Chief Librarian of the South Eastern Education and Library Board. She began her

library career in SELB's Schools Library Service in 1975. Beth moved to the SEELB in 1980 where she obtained promotion as District Librarian, Downpatrick District, Assistant Chief Librarian, Education and Young People and Assistant Chief Librarian, Public Services. Beth is the Northern Ireland representative on the Public Libraries Group. She is on the committee for Northern Ireland Informations Systems Strategy (NIEISS), is Chair of the Library and Arts Group, National Year of Reading, and is a member of Down District Council's Museums and Arts Advisory Committee and the Strategic Management Group for Educational Technology Strategy (NI).

Tom Watson became Chief Librarian of Belfast Public Libraries on 2 November 1998 following the retirement of J N Montgomery. He was formerly Assistant Chief Librarian with responsibility for reference services and general administration.



REVIEWS

Books beyond the Pale: aspects of the provincial book trade in Ireland before 1850. Edited by Gerard Long. Dublin: Rare Books Group of the Library Association of Ireland, 1996. 154pp, ISBN: 0946037310, £10.50

It may as well be said at the outset: this, the first publication of the Rare Books Group of the Library Association of Ireland, is one of the most interesting, most readable, and most attractively produced professional publications to have appeared in Ireland.

It consists of the proceedings of a seminar in 1994, in which various aspects of the development of the book trade in Ireland are explored. The editor, Gerard Long, sets the scene in a concise introduction, in which he draws attention to the hitherto largely metropolitan focus of research and study into the history and development of the book trade in Ireland. By contrast, and redressing the balance, the perspective of these papers is provincial and regional, though of course still essentially urban.

The activities covered by the term “book trade” include marketing and distribution in addition to printing, publishing, and bookselling. The scope of the papers is, accordingly, comprehensive, and their range of interest is varied geographically, chronologically, and thematically. The first paper is a study by Raymond Gillespie of the importation of books through southern Irish ports in, roughly, the first half of the seventeenth century, based on an analysis of the records of the port of Bristol. Four papers follow, each dealing with some aspect of the book trade in one of the four provinces: a review by Hugh Fenning of the printing of Catholic religious works in Cork, Limerick, and Waterford; a study from contemporary sources by Joanna Finegan of the book trade in Georgian Drogheda and its relationship to the educational and cultural background of an upper and middle class readership; a survey by Vincent Kinane of the historical development of the book trade in Galway, with particular reference to the perplexingly late beginnings of printing there; and a paper by Wesley McCann on subscription as a method of publication and distribution, based on a study of lists from Belfast. Niall Ó Cíosáin deals with printing in Irish through the study of a single nineteenth-century work, the Pious miscellany of Tadhg Gaelach Ó Súilleabháin, which was something of a best-seller, running to eighteen editions or more, probably uniquely for a work in Irish. Finally, in what must surely be an expanded version of the paper actually delivered at the seminar, Kevin Whelan discusses the dissemination of the radical newspapers and popular political literature of the 1790s.

In the treatment of their topics, these papers move well beyond the enumerative and descriptive aspects of historical bibliography (though their fundamental importance is recognised in the editor’s tribute and in occasional textual references to the pioneering work of McClintock Dix and Ó Casaide) towards the interpretation of bibliographical evidence in the economic, social, cultural and political contexts. They are linked, ostensibly, by the book trade theme of the sub-title, but for this reviewer at least the collection is

given added coherence by another and more significant common thread which is discernible throughout – the development of literacy in Ireland. Kevin Whelan puts it neatly in the final sentences of his contribution, and of the book: “Irish work in this field has been heavily orientated towards the production side, on the book as artefact. We need to move beyond this into the challenging world of ideas, and the role of the book as their vector. The history of the book, after all, must equally be a history of the reader”.

Indeed it must, and while these papers take the book-as-artefact, or more accurately the publication-as-artefact, as their starting point, all provide interesting and thought-provoking material, and very often fascinating sidelights, on the history and development of literacy and readership in Ireland. To take a few examples: Whelan’s own analysis of the significance and use of printed literature for the development of public opinion and political change will carry a particular resonance for librarians reflecting on the democratic, egalitarian and radical background to the public library movement some half a century later. Similarly, Ó Cíosáin’s paper demonstrates the transformational role of wholly different material, a collection of popular religious poems in Irish, on social custom and religious practice in the early nineteenth century. The comparison in the editor’s introduction of the vigorous activity described in the papers with the modern-day renaissance in the provincial Irish book trade is intriguing.

The papers combine, almost effortlessly, authoritative knowledge of detail with an easy and lucid style which will appeal to the general reader without diminishing their interest for the specialist; exploring various aspects of the book trade from the historical and social perspectives has in fact enormously enhanced the attractiveness of this book for the non-specialist. The book itself is very handsomely produced, appearance complementing content.

With this stimulating, attractive, and stylish publication, both the editor and the Rare Books Group have done the profession proud. They have produced a high-quality, and highly-readable, contribution to our understanding of the historical development and significance of printed material in non-metropolitan Ireland, and, in so doing, have set other professional groupings, and indeed the Rare Books Group itself, a hard act to follow.

Sean Phillips, Librarian, University College Dublin

McDonnell, Joseph **Five Hundred Years of the Art of the Book in Ireland 1500 to the Present**, Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, in association with Merrell Holberton, London, 1997. 176pp. ISBN 0903162989 IR£75.00.

To consider this handsome volume simply as a catalogue is to greatly underestimate its worth. Yet a catalogue it is, issued to accompany the National Gallery of Ireland’s exhibition “500 Years of the Art of the Book in Ireland”, held in the summer of 1997. The author, Joseph McDonnell, is well known as an expert on bookbindings, in particular for the valuable *Gold-tooled bookbindings commissioned by Trinity College Dublin, in the eighteenth century* (1987).

The exhibition was an aesthetic *tour-de-force*, unashamedly favouring bookbindings.

For those unable to view it this catalogue to a large extent recreates the pleasure of that experience. Beautifully produced on fine quality paper, the reproductions are very faithful to the originals, showing the items in their beauty and diversity. One of the advantages of a high-profile exhibition such as this is the bringing together of items from inaccessible collections and private holdings. To have these rarely-seen books permanently recorded here in the catalogue is very much to be welcomed.

As an exhibition catalogue its range of coverage is limited to the items chosen for exhibition; it does not presume to be a history of 500 years of the book in Ireland. The items chosen are well situated in context, numerous examples are cited for comparison and are well referenced in each catalogue entry. The short introduction gives a bird's eye view of book production in Ireland which will serve to make the volume accessible to the general reader.

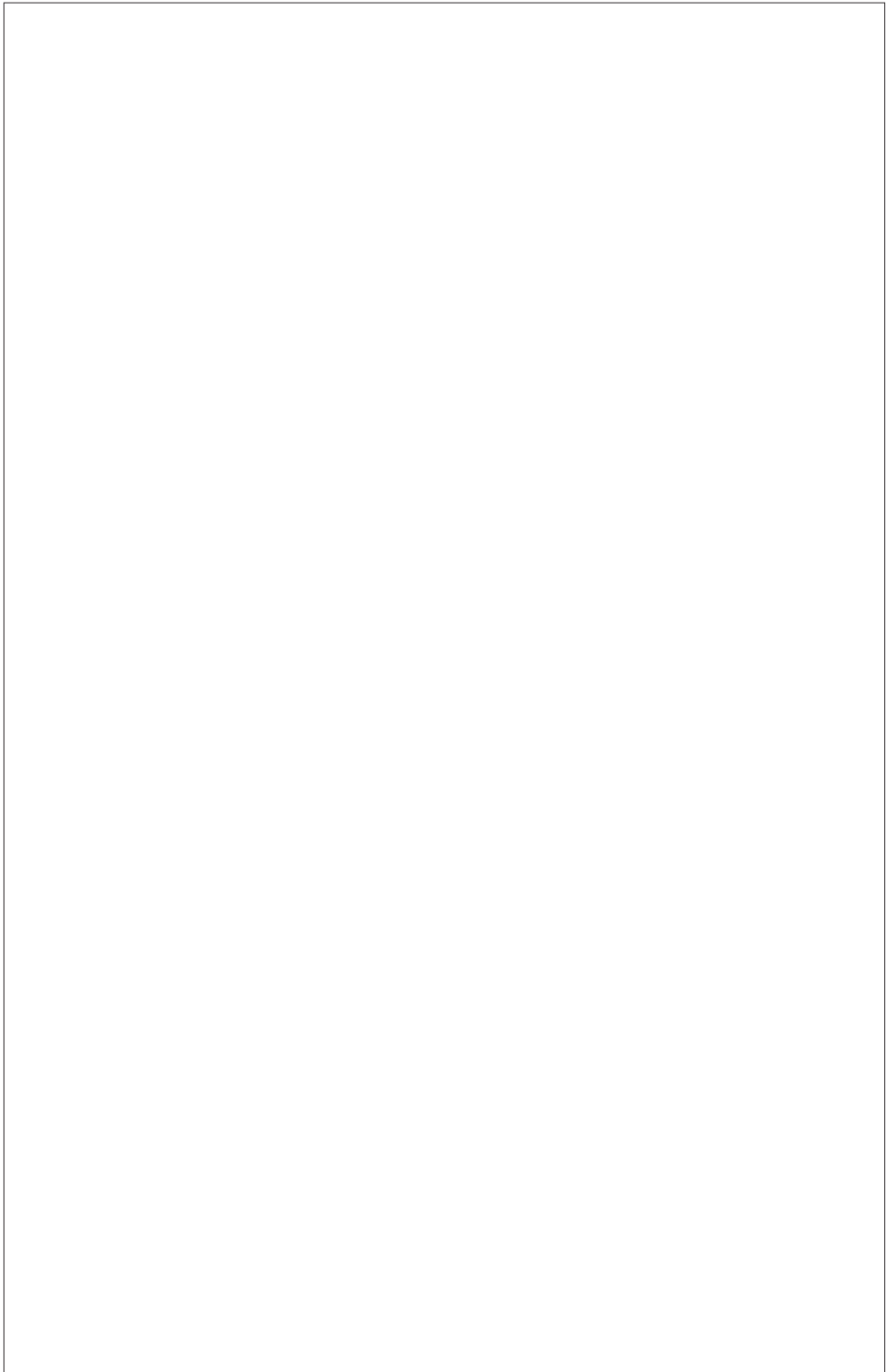
The arrangement is in broad chronological sequence, with the colour plates grouped together in the first half of the volume, followed by the catalogue. This layout causes a minor irritation as it becomes necessary to flick back and forth; it would have been easier to compare plate and description if they could have been accommodated on facing pages. The descriptions themselves are very well laid out. Full bibliographical details are given at the head of each entry, also giving the provenance of the item, literature in which it is featured and the collection from which it comes. The inclusion of provenance is a very important discipline in rare book descriptions, and one which is all too often absent. The descriptions of bindings are detailed and technical, geared towards the specialist. Reference is made to other bindings, which show similarities with the exhibited items, or which come from the same bindery. Their holding libraries and call numbers are given, thus making the catalogue a useful reference tool. Throughout the catalogue the debt to earlier bookbinding specialists, such as Sir Edward Sullivan and Dr Maurice Craig, is obvious, especially in cases where bindings no longer survive. The bibliography is good, giving a sound starting point to anyone interested in the topic.

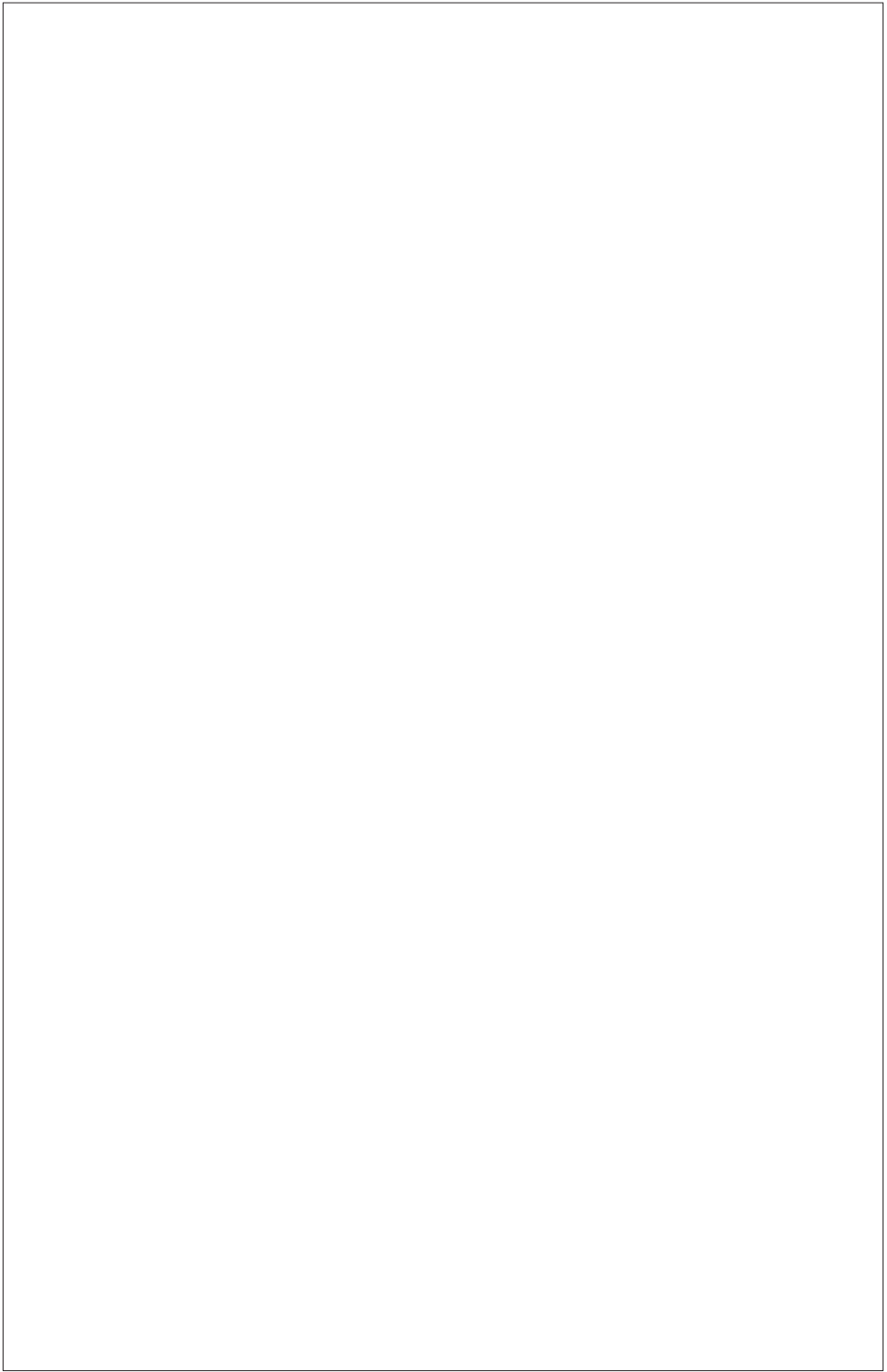
The catalogue spans the period from the early sixteenth century, with a manuscript of an Irish *Life of St Columcille* in a decorated binding from Ulster, to 1991 and Seamus Heaney's *Squarings* with illustrations by Felim Egan. The largest section of the catalogue (44 of the 78 entries) is concerned with the eighteenth century, a period of great expansion and productivity in the book trade, which also catered for an important luxury market. While the bindings of this period are acknowledged as reaching the highest standards, the art of printing is sometimes ignored. Books issued from the Dublin presses are often thought of as poor-quality reprints of more expensive London editions. This was not always the case. While many poor-quality, small-format, cheap editions were run off in Ireland, several members of the book trade were committed to high standards of book production, making use of good type, ink and paper, and concerning themselves with questions of design and layout. For example, in 1776 James Williams, printer of Goldsmith's eight-volume *History of the Earth*, informed the public that it was his principal desire to put a work of merit, beautifully printed, into everyone's hands, and in this

way to promote the art of printing in Ireland. The fine art of printing, exemplified by printers such as George Grierson, Samuel Powell and John Chambers [Cat. 54], is referred to in the introduction, but this aspect of book production is not explored in this volume. The art of engraving, however, is shown by a number of examples of title-pages and cartouches.

This book is a visual feast for the specialist and non-specialist alike. It will also serve as a reference and source work for librarians and future researchers, although the absence of an index is to be regretted. The cost of the volume, unfortunately, will put it beyond the reach of many. It very successfully highlights the richness of the art of the book, which is often overshadowed by works of Irish art and architecture. It is important that these manuscript and printed works of art are celebrated and brought before a wider public.

Dr Máire Kennedy, Dublin Corporation's Gilbert Library.





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