

Ireland

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The national cultural institutions, public libraries, galleries and county museums were involved in various digitisation projects and programmes throughout the year. A brief summary of the main activities carried out is provided below.

Projects and programmes

Culturenet.ie

The Euro Focus on The Cultural Heritage, comprised of representatives of the key national cultural institutions of Ireland, has developed the Irish national cultural portal. The site focuses on users and content.
<<http://www.culturenet.ie>>

Culturenet.ie acts as a gateway to Irish cultural resources online, primarily the Websites and online databases of institutions from across the cultural spectrum (libraries, museums, archives, galleries, performance art, theatre, etc.). The portal provides the end user (a tourist, a researcher, a member of the interested public) with a range of services, including:

- a profile of the online cultural resource and what can be found there
- a centralised search facility, allowing searching of all participating Websites and databases (including, for example, library catalogues).
- a centralised events and 'what's-on' guide for the cultural sector

Culturenet.ie provides a valuable service to citizens, tourists, students, researchers and the interested public, in helping them to find cultural information about Ireland. A single point of access to cultural information, combined with searching capability across all Websites, will also meet Information Society objectives, by encouraging new users to the Internet to view cultural information.

Cultural Heritage Project Phase 3

The Cultural Heritage Project, Phase 3 began in January 2005 and was planned to have a year's duration. Building on the considerable developments of the first two project phases, Phase Three has concentrated on the following elements:

• *Public Library Content Development*

Fifteen library authorities have developed substantial quantities of content, in line with their individual proposals negotiated with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Several of these projects involve the addition of cultural content to existing topics on the <<http://www.askaboutireland.ie>> Website, while others have expanded the topic selection with the addition of new areas. The Website has now a substantial body of content under seventeen topic areas.

New Features: the content for two new features has been developed; the Physical Landscape and Postcards of Ireland. The Physical Landscape has been created by a noted Geographer from University College Dublin, while Postcards of Ireland is the first element of North-South island co-operation and has been created by the Linen Hall Library, Belfast. The content is based on the Linen Hall's substantial collection of postcards from across the country.

• *Primary School Education Content*

A number of topics have been created in conjunction with the Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. These topics have been developed to be utilised in Primary School classroom settings, initially in History and Geography subjects and will coincide with new curricula which are being rolled out in 2006. The education topics have been developed for the Student Zone of <<http://www.askaboutireland.ie>> by a number of teacher and local study librarian teams and there will be a selection available across primary school age groups. It is anticipated that this initial number of topics will form the basis for continued development in the future.

Website enhancement: in order to incorporate all of the additional material on the Ask About Ireland site, both structural and design modifications and enhancements are in train at present. The existing content management system has been expanded to incorporate additional functionality, primarily for the development of the highly interactive cultural content for the primary school.

<http://www.askaboutireland.ie>

In order to maintain and enhance the ongoing existence, currency and value of <http://www.askaboutireland.ie> as a cultural and educational resource, a programme of content consolidation and further development has been established for 2006. Existing content will be reviewed and revised and new content in exiting topics and in new topics will be added. Additional topics are also planned for the Student Zone area, building on the initial phase in 2005 and embedding the resource further into the education curricula.

Phase three of the Cultural Heritage

Project has seen the number of cultural digitised assets grow to over 7,000. This represents substantial progression in the digitisation and digital preservation of the local studies collections of public library services. The creation of digital versions of many delicate documents and the provision of online access enables the protection of the original from exposure and potential deterioration. In the digitisation of cultural assets, library authorities have adhered to the recommended practice of creating and storing a master version and have factored in an upgrade strategy to ensure that digital copies are migrated to new technologies as they arise, thereby avoiding obsolescence.

Throughout all phases of the Cultural Heritage Project, the project team and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government have monitored the progress of content development and continue to do so into 2006. For the development of Primary School Education content, a Steering Group has been set up, consisting of representatives from the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the Primary Curriculum Support Programme, the National Council for Technology in Education, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna – The Library Council and the Library Association of Ireland. The Steering Group monitors and evaluates the content developed once online, in order to ensure its educational value, presentation and usability.

Borrow Books.ie

Building on the InterSearch single point of entry search across public libraries online catalogues and Websites developed in Phase Two of the Cultural Heritage Project in 2004, <http://www.borrowbooks.ie> has been created and the search facility has been enhanced to provide an online request service. This service focuses on the areas below.

Users will now be able to search across catalogues, locate an item in any online public library service catalogue in Ireland and request it of their own library service.

Website development: the Borrow Books Website was created to provide library service members in Ireland with the facility for cross-catalogue searching, locating and requesting a book or other item which is not available in their local library service. The user first accesses the front page of the site, where they select a search type and enters some search terms. They then have the option to search all (25+) online catalogues, or to select just one or more of the catalogues to search. When this choice has been made, the search is sent, by the BorrowBooks system, to the online catalogues. This works by having the BorrowBooks system open multiple parallel HTTP sessions, one to each online catalogue, and parse the results returned in order to establish the number of 'hits' from each catalogue. These results are then flushed in real time to the screen of the user. The number of hits for each catalogue appear, in the order in which the online catalogue servers respond, on the user's browser screen. The user then clicks on the name of any of the catalogues that has returned a non-zero result. This opens a new window. The new window consists of two areas - an upper one, which shows the form which the user may fill in if he wishes to request a book as an inter-library loan, and a lower one, which contains shows the online catalogue results page for the query which the user has made. Thus, the BorrowBooks page shows the form above, and the online catalogue results page directly below. The user fills in the form online and submits it. A suite of programs on the BorrowBooks system updates a database of open requests and allows ILL librarians to access and process the requests in an online environment. The system also sends alerting emails to the librarians involved, and to the member of the public, as the request goes through various stages of completion. A Steering Group of County and City Librarians, the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna is

monitoring the initial pilot phase of the BorrowBooks service and is to review the service on the basis of the pilot findings in the Spring of 2006.

The National Museum of Ireland Projects

The Natural History Division of the National Museum of Ireland further developed its joint programme with the school of Biological Sciences in University College Dublin entitled *Collections-based Biology in Dublin* (CoBiD). A number of catalogues of vertebrates, invertebrates and fossil vertebrates in PDF format are available through its Website <<http://www.ucd.ie/zoology/museum>>. In 2005, the CoBiD project won the Best Access and Outreach Initiative award at the Museum of the Year Awards for 2004 and was also a winner of the University College Dublin President's Grants for Teaching 2005.

Another joint project which was between the Natural History Division of the National Museum of Ireland and the Ulster Museum, Belfast resulted in the publication, *Catalogue of the Irish and British Marine Mollusca in the Collections of the National Museum of Ireland – Natural History 1835-2005*, compiled jointly by J. D. Nunn and J.M.C. Holmes and is accessible at <http://www.habitas.org.uk/nmi_catalogue/index.html>

During the year the accession registers of the Art & Industrial Division of the National Museum on respect of 1870-1948 were scanned, as were the Irish Antiquities Divisions accession registers for 1859-1928. This continues to facilitate better knowledge access for research, curatorship and for the public at all levels.

Throughout 2005, the National Museum of Ireland continued to seek new digitisation tools and technology to help make museum documentation and collections presentation more effective. With a view to improving the means and quality of knowledge access to a wider public and in order to assist in key areas of museum based scientific research, the National Museum of Ireland has already been involved in a number of Information Society funded European projects in the area of 3D, laser scanning etc. Such projects included ORION and the Cultural Heritage Project. Building upon this experience, the National Museum of Ireland has now developed a research association and project agenda in the area of digitised collections recording in partnership with

Mitsubishi Electric Research Laboratories, Cambridge, Massachusetts (MERL) and with the Centre for Digital Video Processing, Dublin City University (DCU). This project work and research commenced during 2005 and will continue throughout 2006.

National Gallery of Ireland Digital Archive Project – ARTseARCH

ARTseARCH is a database developed to provide instant access to material from the National Gallery of Ireland's various archives and library collections by offering the user high quality images, associated information and multiple retrieval options.

The primary objectives of the ARTseARCH system are to facilitate the preservation of and to increase access to archive and special collections by the provision of high quality digital surrogates. The system also encourages the reinterpretation and further study of these collections through its diverse functionality.

The ARTseARCH system was developed under the auspices of the National Gallery of Ireland by a team comprising the NGI Library Department and an external partner, and with the cooperation of the NGI Prints and Drawings Department and Rights and Reproductions Department.

The Library Department launched the pilot project in 2004.

The pilot project focused on the digitisation of a unique collection of William Orpen letters and the end result was launched to coincide with the William Orpen exhibition held in the gallery from May 21st to August 14th 2005. Following the successful completion of this pilot project the focus has been extended to include a selection of Jack B. Yeats sketchbooks, NGI Minute Books, small collections from the CSIA and items from the library Special Collections.

The ARTseARCH facility is currently available to all members of the public who visit the research facilities of the National Gallery through the many public access PC's. In addition ARTseARCH is also available to all staff members accessible on the intranet. This will have a major impact on the preservation of the minute books as they are used by staff on a continuous basis.

Each archive item is catalogued according international standards namely a combination of ISAD(G) and Dublin Core. A constantly expanding subject index also allows for cross reference searching of collections, thesauri used include the Union List of Artist Names (ULAN), the Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) and the Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN). Care has also

been given to mirror bibliographic standards used in cataloguing the NGI library collection.

Material from the collections is prioritized for inclusion on ARTseARCH according to condition and demand, copyright and other legal considerations. Appropriate care is taken in the handling and digitization of source material, as determined by the condition and nature of the items in question. All images are scanned or photographed to a high resolution, according to best practice. Master copies of all images are saved separately, thus ensuring long-term preservation of the collection content.

At present ARTseARCH contains a total of 1,198 items, including 1,062 images, 50 related biographies and 73 entries for related information. The user can browse by collection, artist, subject or A-Z index. A simple free-text search, as well as an advanced search facility, is also operational. The system allows for the images to be viewed in up to four different levels of resolution and the user can focus on various areas of the digital image through the use of a 'tracker' tool. Users are offered additional information relating to both the item, the creator and in some cases the subject of each item. ARTseARCH incorporates material from the archive collection of the ESB Centre for the Study of Irish Art, the NGI historical archive, the Yeats Archive, and rare and early publications from the NGI Fine Art Library. This material spans a period from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century, and includes such disparate material as correspondence, photographs, sketches, notes, notebooks, personal effects, video files, and other ephemera. The archive collections of the National Gallery are extensive in both subject content and volume. It is envisaged that this project will be ongoing for the foreseeable future.

National Archives of Ireland Projects

The National Archives of Ireland digitisation projects have been focusing mainly on users and content, technologies for digitisation and digital preservation. A brief description of each initiative is provided below.

Digitisation of 1901 and 1911 census household returns

The household returns and ancillary records for the censuses of Ireland of 1901 and 1911, which are in the custody of the National Archives of Ireland, represent an extremely valuable part of the Irish national heritage, and a resource for genealogists, local historians and other scholars which has not as yet been developed to its fullest potential. The Irish diaspora is estimated to

amount to 70 million people in all parts of the globe, and many of these have an interest in their family and local history. The digitisation of the equivalent records for England, Wales and Scotland has proved hugely popular with users, as has the digitisation of Canadian and United States census records. The National Archives of Ireland has established a research partnership with Library and Archives Canada to facilitate the digitisation and indexing and contextualisation of our 1901 and 1911 census records. Preliminary work has commenced on capturing ca. 2 million images linked to two searchable databases (for personal names and placenames) and surrounded by illustrative and contextual material.

Digitisation of the Bureau of Military History statements

The Bureau of Military History was established in the late 1940s to collect reminiscences and documents from people active in the national revolutionary period from 1913 to 1921. It collected 1,770 statements, some 6 pages long, some 200 pages, from people ranging from Ernest Blythe, Kathleen Lynn and Maude Gonne to ordinary men and women who were involved. The total page count of these records is 35,000. They were released in 2003, and have been constantly in demand by researchers. At present, the statements can only be accessed by the name of the person who made the statement. The index also contains information about rank or office held, and location. However, there is no way to know, except by trawling through the lot, how many times, say, Collins or DeValera are mentioned, or where other people, subjects or places may appear. Scanning the statements and placing an optical character recognition index behind the scans would allow the statements to be searchable by word to 99% accuracy. The scans and index could be placed on a Website or CD-ROM. This would be an immensely popular project, both to scholars of the period all over the world, to local and family historians, and particularly to pupils and teachers currently implementing the new Leaving Certificate History syllabus, which places a strong emphasis on primary sources, and requires students to carry out a research study, which can be on a local issue or event. Hard-pressed teachers are very excited at the prospect of getting a resource, which would solve many of their problems. Funding approval has been received and a request for tenders is to issue shortly.

18th Century Proclamations

Proclamations are formal announcements by the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council (ie the Irish Administration) concerning the maintenance of law and order and other matters in 18th Century Ireland. Approximately 500 printed Proclamations have been scanned for content, using OCR (Optical Character Recognition) technology for mounting on the National Archives Website.

Papers of Sir Edward Baker Littlehales

The papers of Sir Edward Baker Littlehales, who served as Military Under-secretary in the Irish Chief Secretary's Office during the period immediately after the 1798 Rebellion, contains in excess of 900 documents, including correspondence with the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel and Lord Cornwallis (the British general who surrendered to the Americans at Yorktown and who later served as Governor General of India). The papers span the period 1798 to 1818 approximately and are rich in information about the administration of the army in Ireland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The papers also include a small quantity of correspondence on social matters and on property of the Littlehales family in Canada.

An in-house preservation project is currently in hand to scan these documents and link the images to a database finding aid which has already been compiled. Once this has been done the papers will be made available only in electronic format, both in our Reading Room and online on our Website.

The papers will prove of great historical interest, particularly with respect to research into the administration of the army in the aftermath of the 1798 Rebellion and during the later rising of Robert Emmet. The papers complement other sources of information in the National Archives, such as that contained in the official archives of the office of the Chief Secretary, the official who served as head of the British administration in Ireland until independence in 1922.

NRG and MINERVA results

As part of MINERVA Plus, Ireland has produced the *Assessment Report on the Co-ordination of Digitisation in Europe*. This document is the result of the review and monitoring of the coordination of digitisation initiatives in Europe undertaken by the Assessment Steering

Group established under the Irish Presidency in 2004. The assessment process was then continued and completed by The Library Council (Ireland) under the MINERVA Plus project.

The assessment covers the lifetime of the coordination of digitisation initiative in Europe up to October 2005. It examines the work of the initiative vis-à-vis the Lund Principles and Action Plan, the *Dynamic Action Plan* and role and structure of the National Representatives Group (NRG). The report also considers the strategic relationships of the coordination initiative with other organisations. An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), based on a survey of stakeholders, for the period 2001-2010 completes the assessment. Benefits achieved by the Member States to date from the NRG at national level:

- better awareness of some digitisation issues, e.g. long-term preservation
- promotion of co-operation and networking
- creation of national inventories of digitisation projects and initiatives
- national funding
- hosting international conferences and meetings.

Future focus:

- funding, especially for smaller countries
- links with eLearning and Tourism
- public/private partnership
- more extensive promotion of good practice in digitisation
- better awareness at political level
- audiovisual
- cultural content for education purposes.

How coordination of digitisation will be achieved:

- formal establishment of the National Representative Group
- *Dynamic Action Plan*

The NRG and MINERVA results were circulated throughout the year to The Euro-Focus on The Cultural Heritage. This Committee which comprises of representatives of the key national cultural institutions of Ireland, will reply to the European Commission consultation on Digital Libraries.

