



Ireland

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Policy

Policy scenario for digitisation

In Ireland, responsibility for cultural heritage is divided between three main departments:

- the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, through its Cultural Institutions Division, provides the legal and policy framework and the Exchequer funding for the operation of Ireland's national cultural institutions. It promotes the development of these institutions through many initiatives including digitisation programmes;
- the Department of Environment and Local Government which has responsibility for libraries, museums and archives at local level as well responsibility for the natural and built heritage;
- the Department of Education, which has responsibility for academic libraries including third-level institutions.

Branching Out

These stakeholders are united by their membership in the Branching Out Steering Committee, a co-ordinating body with responsibility for implementing the recommendations of the 1999 *Branching Out report* (available from <http://www.environment.ie>). This report sets out a range of recommendations for cultural heritage policy in the library sector, including substantial coverage of digitisation aspects. The most significant policy development in 2002 was the setting up of a Cultural Heritage Panel by the Branching Out Steering Group with the remit to examine the whole area of digitisation and digital preservation and to make recommendations in relation

to a national funding programme. In October 2002, the Cultural Heritage Panel began a six-month pilot project, which has three main thrusts:

- a) establishment of national nodes of expertise in the digitisation of diverse forms of cultural content (newspapers, 3-D material, manuscripts, audio, video, etc.). This is being achieved by five pilot projects, each focusing on a particular type or types of content and addressing issues such as selection criteria, hardware and software requirements, handling and conservation of originals, preservation of digital master material, Web publication, meta-data and IPR/copyright. Libraries, archives and museums are carrying out the pilot projects. Training and site set-up is complete for these projects; as are the phases of selection, copyright investigation and digitisation systems set-up;
- b) a national programme of digital content generation on a single theme, with each local authority (32 bodies in all) participating. The "national thematic network" is a vehicle for establishing essential fundamental skills in digitisation and Web publication at a grass-roots level in the local cultural bodies, as well as showcasing highlights of the rich local studies material held in the institutions. Training has taken place, with significant uptake by local bodies;
- c) databases or gazetteers of information relevant to digitisation. Three databases are available for (public) online searching and (access controlled) editing. These cover:

- online digitised content held by cultural organisations, including meta-data profiles of the content and links to the online item;
- profiles of special collections of particular



significance held by cultural bodies; the information held includes overviews, links to copyright statements, contact details, cataloguing status, keywords, etc.;

- a national profile database of all digitisation and related initiatives in which cultural bodies are involved. Like the other databases, this can be edited and viewed in real-time, thus addressing the problem of a rapidly changing landscape in this active area. This will also provide profiles of, and links to, other relevant policies and programmes.

The Web templates are in place and training on their use has been undertaken. The content generation and population phase is now operational. When fully completed, the project and its Website will be an important national asset to the ongoing digitisation objective and will deliver guidelines on standards and best practice for a national programme. Already, the project provides a valuable and focused forum for the exploration and discussion of national priorities in digitisation.

The project Website
<http://www.askaboutireland.com>
will be launched in March 2003.

Other programmes

ORION
The National Museum of Ireland, under the umbrella of the Department, is a participant in the ORION project. The ORION project is a Fifth Framework funded EU project. It comprises a consortium of six archaeological museums in different European countries. The project is led by the National Museums of Scotland and the museum partners

are joined by a number of high profile technical participants who are researching at the cutting edge of new development in the world of 3D. The museum partners are currently networking in their own countries with other museums and with interested professional practitioners in the interests of producing a research roadmap with which to brief the technical partners. It is hoped that this will lead to an expanded programme with concrete results for the participants. The Irish ORION partner is the National Museum of Ireland, which is joined in the project by major archaeological museum partners in Scotland, France, Germany, Spain and Greece. An Irish national ORION workshop was held in the National Museum of Ireland on 5 December 2002 and featured forty technical, museum and academic delegates, several presentations and a discussion forum. The National Museum will host an E.U. Commission review of the project on 7 February 2003. This will serve to review progress and to focus the research roadmap towards the upcoming Sixth Framework, which holds prospects of funding in the area of 3D research. The ORION Website can be viewed at <http://www.orion-net.org>.

Irish Census of Population Returns for 1901 and 1911
The National Archives of Ireland and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland are co-operating in work related to the proposed Internet publication of the Irish Census of Population Returns for 1901 and 1911. The original returns for all 32 counties are held in the National Archives, but microfilms already exist and duplicates of the microfilms for the 6 counties of Northern Ireland are held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. In addition to the existing North-South co-operative element of this project, there is also scope for East-West co-operation with the British Public Record Office and the Scottish



General Register Office, and for international co-operation with the National Archives of Canada, which will enable the Irish partners to benefit from the experience gained in digitising census returns in other countries.

Irish Social Data Archive
The recent establishment of the Irish Social Science Data Archive within the Institute for Study of Social Change at University College Dublin fills a long recognised need in Ireland. It will hold, process and harmonise machine-readable data from surveys, census material, geographical data bases, election results and other sources, and will make them readily available to users in the academic, public and commercial sectors. University College Dublin and the Economic and Social Research Institute manage it jointly. The National Archives and the Central Statistics Office were also actively involved in work leading to its establishment. It is a member of the Council of European Social Science Data Archives and the International Association for Social Science Information Service & Technology.

Dúchas the Heritage Service
Dúchas is the State body charged with the protection and presentation of the natural and built heritage in Ireland. A recently redesigned Website offers major heritage data sets and is available at <http://www.heritagedata.ie> in digital format. This site provides a simple way of accessing the heritage information managed by Dúchas, including information relating to the following:

- sites and monuments record;
- recorded monuments record;
- monuments in State care;
- natural heritage areas;
- special areas of conservation;

- special protection areas (Birds' Directive);
- nature reserves and national parks.

As the Website is not designed for the general public, it does not offer browsing or viewing facilities. The data comprises the key data sets resulting from Dúchas activities as legal custodians of the national heritage and is therefore aimed at researchers, academics, consultants, planners, developers and other such organisation or individuals who are involved in physical change in the landscape in the widest sense. It will be expanded to include the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage - Town and County Surveys. One county, County Clare is already on the Website and five more will follow shortly.

The National Library of Ireland
The National Library of Ireland has concentrated its digitisation work on the visual collections, photographs and prints. To date about 5,000 digital images are available through their Website at <http://www.nli.ie>. Also of note are the Library's Gaelic manuscripts. Selected manuscripts have been included in the "Irish Script on Screen Project", managed by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. They can be viewed on the ISOS Web site at <http://www.isos.ie>. A review of the Library's digitisation programme and procedures is currently in progress. The aim is to advance from putting a representative selection of items online to a programme covering large parts of collections, with benefits for access and conservation.

Terms of reference and the National policy profile

The formal adoption of the terms of reference of the NRG is ongoing. However, awareness of the Lund



Principles and consensus building at a practical level is progressing well, with significant dissemination in this area well established.

The national policy profile is under construction at the [http://www. askabouti rel and. com](http://www.askaboutireland.com) Website. Metadata fields and content are being finalised and will be available when the site goes live. The project has identified up to thirty major digitisation projects involving national, academic and cultural organisations. All these bodies are supplying data on their progress of their initiatives which incorporated into the Website.

Co-operation activities

Co-ordination of national networks

Co-operation and co-ordination has been achieved on two levels; a national high-level policy network and a grass-roots network of co-operating digitisation centres. The Branching Out Steering Committee Cultural Heritage Panel is a high-level policy network, which is concerned with digitisation issues. This is an active panel of the national policy committee mentioned earlier and includes:

- a county librarian, representing the Library Association of Ireland;
- an assistant keeper of the National Library of Ireland, representing the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism;
- The director of the National Centre for Technology in Education, representing the Government's Department of Education and Science;
- representatives of the Department of the Environment and Local Government;
- representative of the Branching Out Steering Committee;

- representative of the Heritage Council;
- the assistant director of an Chomhairle Leabharlanna/Library Council (Chair).

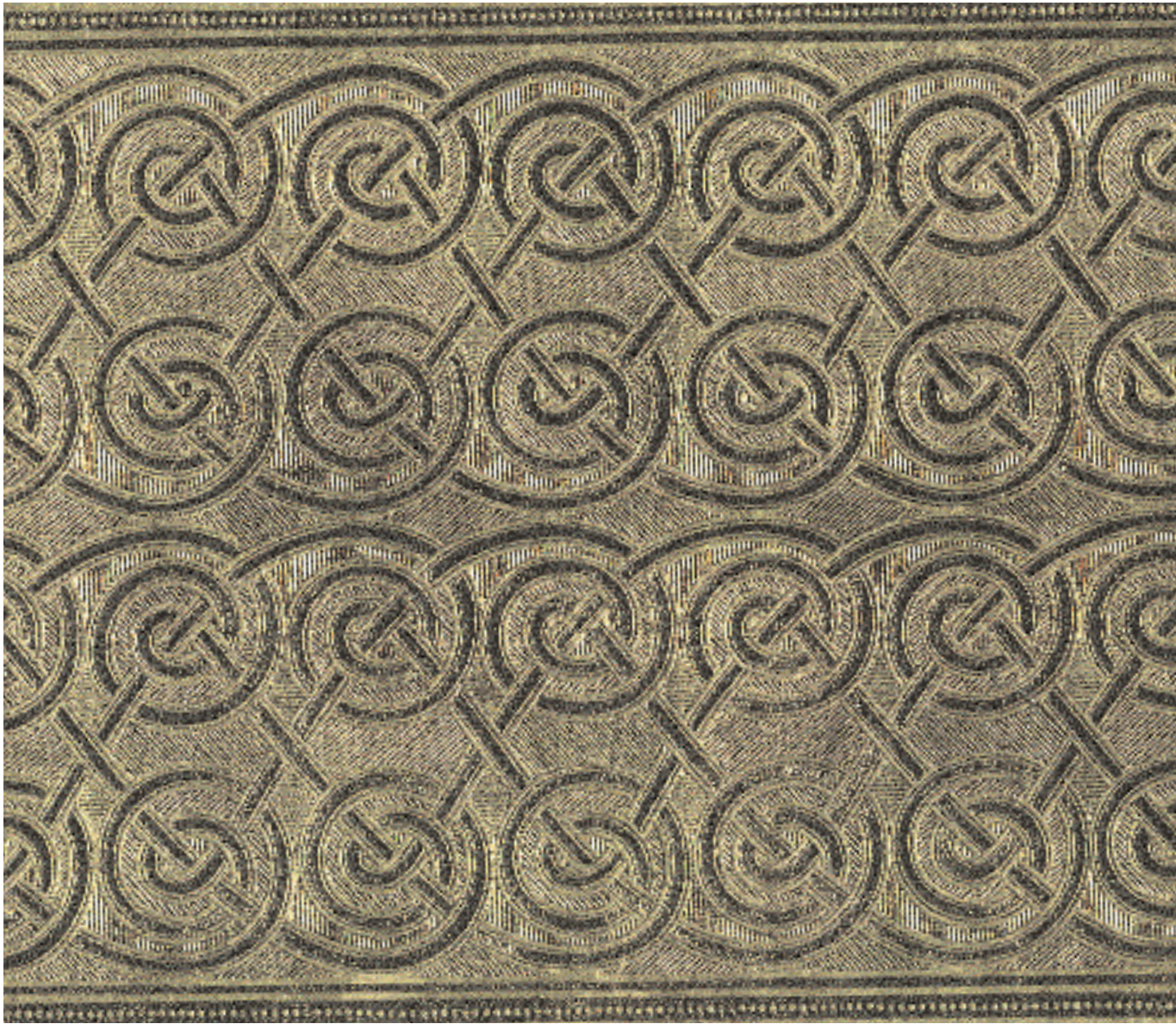
The Panel thus includes representatives from all aspects of the cultural sector, from those whose primary focus is on policy through those who focus on innovation and new services to those whose major emphasis is on service delivery to the end user.

At the grass-roots level, the Cultural Heritage Project outlined above is enabling the active involvement of the personnel of cultural bodies across the country in practical digitisation and Web publication of unique material. This serves both to underline the value of digitisation as an avenue for access to rarely used material and its potential for contributing to the preservation of delicate or over-used items. The project, the Website templates and the tools which it provides to all those involved, provide encouragement and facilitation to cultural bodies who are taking their first steps in digitisation.

Relationships and co-ordination with other national initiatives in connection with eEurope, e-government and e-learning

The Cultural Heritage Project is funded by the Information Society Fund through the Department of the Environment and Local Government. The project addresses several of the points made in the third report of the Information Society Commission, as well as the new report on Building a Knowledge Society (available from the Information Society Commission Website at [http://www. i sc. i e](http://www.isc.ie)).

Members of the Panel listed above are working closely with and within the relevant Government Departments





and also with the working groups of the Information Society Commission in the areas of e-learning (especially adult education and life-long learning), cultural and community services.

European and international co-operation

The Euro-Focus on The Cultural Heritage is the Irish National Node with responsibility for the dissemination of information on the European Digital Heritage and Cultural Content of the Information Society Technologies (IST) programme.

The Euro-Focus on The Cultural Heritage represents libraries, museums, galleries and archives in Ireland as well as the relevant Government Departments. The Euro-Focus is a core member of the Cultural Heritage Applications Network (CULTIVATE) initiative, which links representatives of the cultural communities across Europe and Israel. In addition to Euro-Focus itself, its constituent bodies are themselves active in sectorally relevant initiatives, activities, projects and networks in Europe and beyond. The following are among the Euro-Focus members which have established international profiles in their own right:

- National Museum of Ireland;
- National Library of Ireland;
- University College Dublin;
- An Chomhairle Leabharlanna;
- Trinity College Dublin;
- Enterprise Ireland.

Ongoing activity such as the Cultural Heritage Project outlined above has also led to spontaneous contact being made with external cultural bodies, such as the National Library of Australia.

Benchmarking

The aims of the NRG working group on benchmarking are closely mirrored by the objectives of the Cultural Heritage Project in the collection of information about ongoing and proposed digitisation policy programmes and projects. The Cultural Heritage Project has implemented a data gathering solution based on a Web-enabled database, which allows any authorised body to create, update and edit record, which are relevant to the benchmarking process. This database is being validated at present, and its fields and profile elements brought into line with the NRG survey, as appropriate.

The Cultural Heritage Project team is undertaking a consultative process with all relevant cultural heritage institutions in relation to their digitisation programmes and also to investigate opportunities for collaborative work such as shared access to digital collections. The project team has also been invited to play an active role in the EU's MINERVA project's benchmarking group.

Inventories and resource discovery

Available inventories

The **Cultural Heritage Project** Website provides three types of inventories, from a gazetteer of digitised online objects to a database of existing special collections (not yet, or not yet fully, digitised or even catalogued) to the profiling of digitisation initiatives outlined above. All of these inventories are available and active at present. Population of the initiatives is ongoing, with the initial focus on the special collections inventory.

ACTIVATE is a one year EU project (ended July 2002) managed by An Chomhairle Leabharlanna. It established a national thematic network in the area of local studies and cultural material, and created templates and procedures which facilitated the creation of digital collections, and the showcasing of non-digital material on the Web. The project was a significant success, with takeup from bodies in Ireland and abroad who wished to establish themselves online. The project provides templates, procedures and tools for the creation of simple portals and content sites, linked in a thematic network, for any purpose, including cultural applications. ACTIVATE can be accessed at <http://www.activate.ie>

RASCAL (Research and Special Collections Available Locally) is a project hosted by Queens University Belfast. It includes a valuable inventory of special collections held in libraries in Northern Ireland. Links are provided to the content providers, some of whom have significant accessible online material. The RASCAL project provided valuable input to the Cultural Heritage Project in specifying the inventory for special collections.

Metadata and interoperability for resource inventories

Each of the five pilot projects which are spearheading the Cultural Heritage Project is examining the issue of meta-data in its own particular area (libraries, museums and archives). This work is reflected in the structure of the online resource inventories, which have been, and will be, adjusted in response to best practice and standards which are judged to be relevant by the project.

Import and export of data to and from the online databases is available (export) or planned in the immediate future (import). This facilitates both the participating cultural bodies, who in some cases have MARC or other records which they do not wish to duplicate, and also bodies which might wish to amalgamate the Cultural Heritage Project records with their own.

The involvement of the Cultural Heritage Project team in the MINERVA project has proved of value in the area of interoperability.

Good practice and skills

A key focus of the Cultural Heritage Project is to establish best practice and guidelines for the anticipated growing population of digitisation and digitisation-related projects in the cultural sector. To that end, the five Pilot Projects within the Cultural Heritage Project have been instructed, as a key objective, to establish methodologies and best practice reports for their particular types of content and media. The following are the major areas to be addressed by each project:

- selection of material to be digitised, including relevant selection criteria, and justification for the criteria;
- verification of copyright status and IPR issues;
- investigation of particular digitisation requirements (e.g. particular hardware or software needed, digital cameras versus scanners, etc.);
- scanning, including handling and conservation of rare materials, specialised environments, management of the scanning process, digitisation tracking systems and workflow;



skills are made available as needed. Informal competence centres include An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, Trinity College Library, Dublin, and the National Library of Ireland.

Main digitisation training initiatives for cultural heritage institutions

The Cultural Heritage Project has set up and delivered a digitisation training programme for each of the five pilot projects. Regional training for the participants in the national thematic network has also been delivered. In addition, the Cultural Heritage Project team provides support and assistance to those involved in the project, as they come to grips with digitisation. The progress of the Pilot Projects, in particular, in the creation of expertise in digitisation has been impressive to date.

European added value and content framework

Quality and accessibility for Websites

The Cultural Heritage Project portal site has been designed with universal access as an objective. Validation against the relevant ('Bobby') criteria has identified certain areas of non-compliance, which are being addressed. The project team are confident of compliance with the fundamentals of universal access by the time the project is completed. This also applies to the sites of the Pilot Projects and the national thematic network, both of which are hosted by the project team server and use templates and tools provided by the Cultural Heritage Project.

- profiling and tagging the scanned material, including identification of appropriate meta-data and analysis of standards in this area relevant to the project;
- long-term storage of digital masters, including hardware media and use of appropriate standard file formats with long life expectancy;
- preparation for Web publication (copyright again, file formats for download, creation of delivery versions of large digital masters, etc.).

The following action lines are being addressed (one Pilot Project per action line). The action lines are those, which are most relevant in a Irish context to the material available in Irish cultural organizations:

- automated indexing of old newspapers;
- digitisation of printed text, manuscripts and maps;
- digitisation of images, audio and video;
- digitisation of archival records;
- digitisation of 3D articles.

An important output of the Cultural Heritage Project will thus be set of practical guidelines, focused on the needs of other, similar projects in the future. This will be an important driver of the anticipated National Digitisation Programme, which is envisaged to digitise and publish online significant portions of local and special heritage materials, as recommended by the Information Society Commission reports.

Competence centres

There are no formal digitisation competence centres in Ireland at present. However, given the small size of the country and the well-established networks of contacts across the cultural and academic sectors, the necessary



Long-term sustainability

There is a strong consciousness of the risks involved in the creation of digital material, and failure to ensure that the material will be accessible after five, ten or more years. The lessons of, for example, the Doomsday book in the UK, have been taken into account. A focus of the cultural heritage project Pilot Projects, as noted above, is long-term storage of digital material (whether digitised or born digital). The project will provide guidelines on appropriate storage media, as well as on file formats with a long life expectancy and promising migration paths to new standards as they emerge.

Research activities on digitisation

The most significant new research development in 2002 was the establishment of the Humanities Institute of Ireland under the Higher Education Authority's Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions. It aims to provide a new environment for research in the Humanities. A series of interdisciplinary research programmes is being developed under the theme of *Identity, Memory and Meaning in the Twenty-First Century*. The programme will be supported by the development of an innovative Irish Virtual Research Library and Archive. Research in the digitisation of physical landscapes, both outdoor and indoor, has been a strong focus in the Digital Media Centre of the Dublin Institute of Technology for some years. Three-dimensional objects and new techniques for efficient 3D modelling of the outdoors have been particularly emphasised. The ACTIVATE project (outlined above,

Website at <http://www.activate.ie>) includes an example of this type of digitisation, in this case the digitisation of a sensitive historical environment (physical cultural heritage).