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Cataloguers
are no longer
solitary creatures!

Cataloguing the Fermoy Gaelic Manuscripts

Interactive Processes at Maynooth University Library

In September 2014, a collection of 50 unique handwritten Gaelic manuscripts from St. Colman's College, Cork dating from the 18th & 19th centuries were originally catalogued based on aspects of DCRM(MSS) at Maynooth University Library in a social context

Social Cataloguing



Alerted MU conservation team to damaged material



Enrolled in MOOC on Reading Paleography



Engaged with students through online forum in identifying inscriptions

The Collection



Covers aspects of Irish literary heritage

Features tracts on cryptology, the Ogham alphabet & Irish mythology

Challenges



Deciphering script

Creating detailed original records

Outcome



Collection embedded to support teaching and research aims of MU

Consolidating collection related to social history of Ireland



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Abstract

Cataloguers are usually solitary creatures...

This poster will outline the processes involved in cataloguing the Fermoy Gaelic manuscripts from St. Colman's College Cork held in MU. This collection of 50 manuscripts covers aspects of Irish literary heritage - Irish grammar, poetry, adventure tales, religious tracts, genealogies, Irish mythology and historical works. The collection was relocated to the Russell Library, Maynooth in August 2013 for preservation and safe-keeping.

Cataloguing the collection involved a number of collaborations. This included engaging with online communities (MOOCS) in related palaeography courses and collaborating with our conservation team in highlighting materials for repair. The methods used to promote the collection – once catalogued – include the MU Library Treasures blog (<https://mulibrarytreasures.wordpress.com/>), the MU Library website (<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/library>) and embedding and exploiting our Unique and Distinctive Collections (UDCs) in support of the teaching and research aims of the University. Future plans include digitisation of the manuscripts.

This poster highlights the interactive aspect of this project. Lessons learned will have applicability to other libraries interested in exploring the production of high quality metadata for unique and original manuscripts.

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Introduction

Cataloguing began on the collection of fifty manuscripts in 2014. A fresh approach to resource description in a social environment was adopted for original and historic manuscripts. Recommendations will be made in this regard for future cataloguing of special collections material.

The manuscripts cover aspects of Irish literary heritage including: Irish grammar, poetry, adventure tales, religious tracts, genealogies, Irish mythology and historical works, many of which was written by the scribes, Éamonn Ó Mathúna, Seán Ó Murchadha and Seán Mac Domhnaill, among others.

The St. Colman's College manuscripts are searchable online via the MU LibrarySearch discovery tool.

Social Cataloguing

❖ MU Library

During the cataloguing phase it was determined that the majority of the manuscripts were in good condition with a handful requiring special attention. A survey was conducted into the condition of the manuscripts as cataloguing progressed and a spreadsheet was drawn up identifying areas to address.

Cataloguer alerted in-house conservators to loose bindings, pages and suitable storage for the more fragile materials.

❖ Online Communities

One of the biggest challenges cataloguing Gaelic manuscripts is deciphering the script. In order to help with this - I thought it might be useful to enroll in a number of online courses from Edx on paleography used in manuscripts. This proved to be an effective and new way of being a social cataloguer by discussing and seeking advice from experts and students from around the globe on deciphering different types of scripts found in manuscripts in a relaxed and social atmosphere through a discussion forum. Results were then applied to the cataloguing processes.

1001	a O Conaill, Tadhg e Scribe
24510	a Leabhar Rua Ráth Chormaic : b scéalaíocht de gach cineál.
260	a [Cork], c circa 1816-1833.
300	a iii, 609 p. ; c 22 cm.
500	a Gaelic Ms. Vol. 34.
500	a Title from Clár Lamhscribhinní Gaeilge (Dublin 1978).
500	a Miscellaneous tales in Irish, mainly historical.
500	a Written by Tadhg Ó Conaill in Tobar Rí an Domhnaigh (Sunday's Well), Cork in 1816 and on 1-12-1827 (cf 103i, 406i) and completed by Séaghan Mac Aodhgáin = John Egan in Baile an Dúradh i bparóiste Charraig na bhFear from 1832-3 (cf 471i, 609i).
561	a On long-term loan from St. Colman's College, Fermoy.
563	a Deerskin binding with red hair
563	a Loose binding
563	a Watermark; heraldic
500	a Notes in pencil on loose endpapers
561	a "John Moore"
650 4	a Gaelic Manuscripts
650 4	a Irish literature x Tales x Historical.
650 4	a Irish literature x Miscellaneous.
650 4	a Manuscripts x Gaelic z Fermoy.
7001	a Mac Aodhgáin, Séaghan
852	j CF34 St. Colman's College Fermoy (RUSSELL LIBRARY)

Figure 1: Example of high quality metadata used for CF34 Leabhar Rua Ráth Chormaic

Challenges

- ❖ Many manuscripts written in early Irish so deciphering script and language proved quite difficult.
- ❖ Original manuscript cataloguing for all 50 manuscripts time consuming.

Impact

- ❖ Cataloguing was completed on the manuscripts which act as a further consolidation of collections relating to the religious and social history of Ireland in the early modern period from the late 17th to the mid-19th centuries.
- ❖ Future recommendations made for the detailed and collaborative cataloguing of historic materials
- ❖ Fermoy Gaelic manuscripts embedded and exploited in support of the teaching and research aims of Maynooth University

For further information, please contact the Russell Library |

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Poster created using Piktochart: <https://piktochart.com/>