

CONSORTIUM OF NATIONAL & UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Senior Library Staff Colloquium
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The Future Academic Library
Indigenous Issues and Infrastructure Development Policies

Within the university the library is often one of the largest departments both in terms of the pay and non-pay budgets. In size, spend and staff it may equate with a large research-oriented science department, whereas the library's outputs are not so easily quantified. The library, at significant cost to the university, has resources to offer thereby aiding teaching, learning and research. The extent of these resources is often not readily apparent either internally or externally.

One of today's indispensable marketing tools is the website. Libraries recognised their significance early on. Many had sites in the mid-1990s before their parent institution. Most Irish university libraries now have a direct link from the home page. This is by no means the case in many UK sites where the library or resource centre is hidden a number of levels down under services. The emphasis and function of library sites had changed since the early days. Sites then were more text-oriented and closely resembled the print documents on which they were based. Many sites now give priority to the opac and electronic resources – the first link is frequently to these specific resources. Other collections are not given the prominence they deserve and their research potential is not flagged.

Our university libraries' collections are largely restricted to our own user communities. Successful cooperative schemes such as ALCID 'Academic Libraries Co-operating in Dublin' offer inter-library access. The scheme has been extended to include Cork, Galway and Limerick. Some libraries offer commercial services to the business sector. All of us are to some degree under pressure to provide a service to our local community. The *Joining*

forces report explores ways in which the whole sector can cooperate towards access for all.¹

At present, external demands are very costly in terms of staff time. Also seating and pc access are at a premium year round. As more material is available electronically over the web it might be possible to satisfy a certain level of enquiry in this way. Licensing and copyright are significant factors.

With our websites concentrating on opac and electronic resources it is time to provide information over the web about our collections and their research potential. Item level description of most of our collections is available through individual opacs or consortia such as IRIS.² Optimum collection exposure requires a new level of description. Collections strengths are not revealed by opac searching. Early and rare collections may be well known whereas modern and archival material may be neglected. Broader definitions are needed to flag unique groups of items. UKOLN located at the University of Bath is the focus for much research into thesauri, metadata, architecture and standards for digital information management.³ Work on collection description methods, tools and schemas is funded in the UK by JISC⁴ and DNER – Distributed National Electronic Resource⁵, RSLP the Research Support Libraries Programme⁶ and the British Library. We can benefit from shared information which is freely available from their sites. The RASCAL ‘Research and Special Collections Available Locally’ project at Queens University is funded by RSLP - Research Support Libraries Programme. The database is due to be launched in Spring 2002. A sample and survey can be seen on their site. A repository has been established for all Northern Ireland publications in the absence of a national library.⁷

Cooperation already exists formally and informally between all CONUL libraries. A North-South ongoing project is PADDI ‘Planning Architecture

¹ *Joining forces: delivering libraries and information services in the information age*, Dublin: An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, July 1999.

² IRIS The Consortium of Irish University and Research Libraries

³ UKOLN provides policy, research and awareness services to the UK library, information and cultural heritage communities www.ukoln.ac.uk/cd-focus/

⁴ JISC Joint Information Systems Committee

⁵ DNER www.dner.ac.uk

⁶ www.rascal.qub.ac.uk; www.rslp.ac.uk

⁷ NIPR Northern Ireland Publication Resource www.nibook.org

Design Database Ireland' jointly produced by Queen's University and University College Dublin.⁸ Another collaborative working party ALCID and CONUL, reported in 1999 on overlaps, gaps and duplication of periodical holdings. No outcomes resulted partly perhaps because the periodical scene was on the cusp of electronic delivery. At present there are three working groups:- Theses, Legal Deposit and Preservation. Two further groups are planned:- 'Copyright and Related Rights', and 'Cooperative Storage/Collection Coordination'.

There is room for cooperation, in the spirit of *Joining forces*, in the development of the COLICO Special Collections project.⁹ To date special collections in public libraries, north and south can be accessed from the Library Council's website.¹⁰ A special collections project proposal is under discussion by COLICO. Primarily the project's objective is to identify special collections in libraries, archives and museums. Information regarding scope, status and accessibility will be collected.

Collaborative collection management of legal deposit material was investigated by the CONUL group. Most libraries are selective in acquiring copyright material for reasons of relevance, space and resources. Only Trinity College and the National Library aim for comprehensive coverage. Galway, Limerick and Cork aim to collect local publications as widely as possible. The importance of acquiring and retaining the national print archive needs to be stated and understood. As the volume of print grows so does the strain on cataloguing departments whose staff have acquired other responsibilities in addition to maintaining bibliographic standards. Irish publishing's annual output is well in excess of 2,000 items.

The Higher Education Authority's PRTLI (Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions) cannot deliver new buildings or extensions to all university libraries. In this we are in competition with each other and within our institutions the library must compete for funding. In future we will still be competing for capital funding and for demographic reasons we will be competing for students, amongst ourselves and with the Institutes of Technology.

⁸ www.paddi.net

⁹ COLICO Committee on Library Co-operation in Ireland

¹⁰ An Comhairle Leabharlanna/Library Council www.librarycouncil.ie

We must see off the thinking that believes that electronic resources do not require bricks, mortar and staff. In a situation where space is tight and the print archive is growing it is vital that we know what each of our libraries is acquiring and retaining whether by purchase, legal deposit or gift. Libraries policies – their collection management tools – should be available on their websites.

There is much to be learnt about the nature of our island's print archive. Bodies and platforms already exist – NIS National Information Server, IRIS, CONUL and COLICO. Through collection descriptions such as utilised by the RASCAL project at Queen's and with cooperation from UK bodies such as UKOLN, we should be able to make the first steps towards resource discovery in the island of Ireland – a 'Mapping Ireland' project.

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