Active Speech

Critical Perspectives on Teresa Deevy

Edited by
Úna Kealy and Kate McCarthy

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Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

Cover image: Photo by Jed Niezgoda (www.jedniezgoda.com). © All rights reserved. Suzanne Savage and Lianne Quigley performing in Teresa Deevy's *Possession* which was created and directed by Amanda Coogan in collaboration with Lianne Quigley, Alvean Jones, Linda Buckley, Dublin Theatre of the Deaf, and Cork Deaf Community Choir. Creative producer Lynette Moran produced *Possession* at the Project Arts Centre 21–24 February 2024, while Susan Holland produced the production at the Granary Theatre for the Cork Midsummer Festival performances, 21–23 June 2024. *Possession* was funded as part of ART:2023: A Decade of Centenaries Collaboration (the Arts Council and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media).

2. The Teresa Deevy Archive and the Development of Collections and Curation in Maynooth University Library

Hugh Murphy

Maynooth University (MU) (formerly National University of Ireland Maynooth) is located twenty kilometres west of Dublin. MU provides library services to over 14,000 students registered in both MU and Saint Patrick's Pontifical University, which was founded in 1795 (with the abolition of anti-Catholic penal legislation) as the headquarters of Ireland's Catholic hierarchy and which is commonly referred to as Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth (SPCM). Library services are housed in the John Paul II Library and the Russell Library with the Russell Library acting as a repository for the historical collections of SPCM. Consequentially, Maynooth University Library (MUL) constitutes a key resource for the history of religion in Ireland. Collections conserved in the Russell Library, some of which date to pre-Christian times, include Mesopotamian tablets, medieval manuscripts, early printed books (the earliest printed in 1468), and works published by leading scholars across Europe from the sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. However, in recent decades, MUL has developed its curatorial holdings and special collections focusing on figures who positioned themselves, or were positioned by others, as outside the parameters of the powerful or the popular. This central tenet of collection development in both policy and practice has led to the creation of a unique archival collection bringing together individuals whose contributions to social, cultural, and political life both within and beyond Ireland's shores is significant. MUL's collections reflect both personal and institutional curatorial biases revealing the legacy of the institution's

history and, following a brief contextualising of MUL and MUL archives and special collections, the chapter discusses the rationale for collecting in this manner, the benefits of open access, and the need to acknowledge curatorial bias in the Library's archival work.

MU has a long-standing commitment to social justice established by the work of MU lecturer Father Michael McGreil in the early 1970s and continuing up to the 2020s, which constitutes an exemplary testament to pioneering sociological research into Irish Traveller and Irish prison communities. MU's Department of Applied Social Studies is the longest established provider of education and training in youth and community work in Ireland and seeks to 'promote human rights, social justice and equality, nationally and internationally'.[1] MU's Department of Adult and Community Education is similarly committed to increasing diversity of educational access for all parts of society.[2] This contemporary focus and commitment to social justice both nationally and internationally is rooted in a tradition of social engagement within SPCM, one example of which was the Maynooth Mission to China in the early twentieth century. The Mission aimed, as *The Irish Monthly* reported in 1920, to 'build churches, chapels and schools, […] provide for the teaching of the orphans, and of the young […] higher education for the sons and daughters of the Chinese: [and] a college for the education of native students who will be the future priests and Bishops of China'.[3] While clear aspects of cultural imperialism are evident in the endeavour, it is also recognised that the Maynooth Mission was notable (and untypical) in its clear focus on humanitarian issues and relief work, rather than 'spiritual salvation'.[4] The long-standing commitment to social justice that informed the fabric of research and public engagement within both SPCM and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth has informed the contemporary ethos and activities of MU and, by extension, MUL.

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1   Maynooth University, 'Maynooth University Department of Applied Social Studies' (2023).
2   Maynooth University, 'Maynooth University Department of Adult and Community Education' (2023).
3   'The Maynooth Mission to China. Sixteen Priests Leave for China in March. Appeal for Ireland's Help', *The Irish Monthly*, 48.561 (1920), 168–170.
4   Peter Kelly, 'An Misean sa tSín [The China Mission]', *History Ireland*, 25.4.

Bringing Order Out of Chaos: Formulating the MUL Collections Management Policy

Pius Olatunji Olaojo and Modupe Akewukereke note that 'a collection development policy can help bring order out of chaos' and that encapsulating a planned and strategic approach to collection development in a formal collections management policy is critical to focus and articulate intent and drive practice.[5] Typically, libraries utilise three primary methods of acquiring collections: donation, long term loan, and purchase. Each has merit, but each also brings challenges. The challenges of funding have ensured that for most Irish libraries, the words of Peter Fox, who notes that 'for the most part it is not the purchases that have made [the Library of Trinity College Dublin] great, but the donations that it has received', remain true.[6] Purchasing archives and archival documents and/or artefacts depends on the financial capability of an organisation, while donations and loaned items depend on the generosity of donors and a degree of synchronicity between donors' wishes and the role and/or capabilities of the library in question. With limits on purchasing and the unpredictability of loans and donations, a clear institutional view on what a library will purchase and/or accept as donations, or on loan, is key.

Historically, MUL's approach to acquiring and developing archival collections was, though never explicitly stated, guided by an ethos that prioritised historical collections associated with the founding institution of St Patrick's College. This approach to primary sources was complemented by the acquisition of secondary source material, which supported the teaching aims of the various departments previously noted. However, aligning with national and international trends recognising the unique role archival collections play in contributing to 'institutional goals for research, learning and public engagement', MUL focused, from 2010, on acquiring primary source material in support of broader teaching and research needs.[7] Such practice had begun in the

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5   Pius Olatunji Olaojo and Modupe A. Akewukereke, 'Collection Development Policies: Ground Rules for Planning University Libraries', *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 9.1 (2006).

6   Peter Fox, *Trinity College Library Dublin: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 350.

7   Research Libraries UK based on field work carried out by Alison Cullingford,

early 2000's with MUL's acceptance of the donation of the Denis Faul Collection and the Desmond Forristal Archive. While both collections were small, they represented a departure from previous practice, which had focussed on augmenting the existing institutional archive, accepting donations (typically of theological materials), and acquiring specific antiquarian items.

In 2011, a review of MUL services recommended that a collection development approach be codified resulting in a plan to 'develop, curate and open access to collections that meet and anticipate the needs of the academy'.[8] Creating a collections management policy facilitated, within MUL, a process of critical reflection and strategic development. Formulating the policy involved the library team and stakeholders reflecting on strengths and weaknesses of existing resources informed by a thorough review of library collections and their intended audiences. While it may sound axiomatic for an academic library to consider its purpose in this way, such reflection and professional analysis ultimately allows the distillation of certain themes in librarianship and archival practice into policy and the synthesis of these distillations with university ethos. For example, in Maynooth, these include the need for MUL to reckon with and accommodate themes of social justice, decolonisation, and marginalisation, which had become, and remain, central to teaching and research activity within the MU community.

Devising a collections management policy necessitated reflection on how MUL actioned institutional values such as access to the spaces and resources of the university, how to mitigate against bias and threats to academic freedom in relation to the selection of what archival material to collect and, how collections are framed within MUL curatorial practice. This process of reflection and decision-making emphasised the reality that libraries and archives are not neutral spaces. Randall C. Jimerson's argument regarding the political potency of archival collections whereby 'Archives can serve the interests of entrenched power, but they can also empower the marginalised in society'[9] seems increasingly prescient in

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Unique and Distinctive Collections: Opportunities for Research Libraries, ed. by Caroline Peach and Mike Mertens (RLUK, 2014), pp. 1–57 (p. 5).

8   Maynooth University Library, *Maynooth University Library Strategic Plan, Ollscoil Mhá Nuad An Leabharlann Plean Straitéiseach 2016–2018* (Maynooth University, 2016), 1–16 (p. 3).

9   Randall Jimerson, *Archivists and the Call for Justice*, webcast, University of British

light of recent trends towards the defunding of libraries in countries such as the United States of America.[10] Collection management policy statements that clearly articulate a commitment to academic freedom as a defence against censorship can, as Peggy Johnson argues, help librarians and universities defend and protect intellectual freedom.[11] More practically, as special collections teams encounter an ever-increasing variety of collection, artefact, and document types, the need for an overarching rationale for what to collect is increasingly important. The act of collecting and making archival documents and artefacts available is an act of proactive engagement that is not neutral. As Terry Cook notes, 'claims for that evidence of impartiality and objectivity, of being a mirror of "Truth" to reveal the past as it really was, must ring hollow at best'.[12] More pragmatically, while it is important that a library collection development strategy aligns with the strategic aims of the broader university, it is also critical that it is created in consultation with and serves the user community. By involving a broad cohort of stakeholders in discussion and review of such policy, MUL can flex what soft power is available to it, to encourage consideration of issues of marginalisation and othering from those who teach and research in MU.

It can be argued that there is an obligation on any institution such as a library to endeavour to collect and represent the full breadth of life, but for an academic library this has to be balanced with the requirement to curate and host collections which have some link to the teaching and research endeavours of the university. In 2016, what began as a collections acquisition practice aligning with established MU and SPCM religious, educational and ethical tradition within MU was codified in the *Maynooth University Library Collection Development Policy 2016–2023*.[13] This policy placed traditional collection strengths in the Humanities, Natural Philosophy and Sacred Music, Philosophy, Theology and Canon Law alongside 'more recent strengths' in

Columbia Library and Archives, 27 January 2010.

10 Madeleine Carlisle, 'Public Libraries Face Threats to Funding and Collections as Book Bans Surge', *Time,* 7 September 2022.

11 Peggy Johnson, *Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management*, 2nd edn (Chicago, IL: ALA, 2005), p. 72.

12 Terry Cook, 'Evidence, Memory, Identity and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms', *Archival Science*, 13 (2013), 95–120.

13 Maynooth University Library, *Maynooth University Library Collection Development Policy 2016–2023* (Maynooth University, 2016).

Sociology and Anthropology.[14] The policy, in support of teaching and research aims and 'informed by the research themes of the University (both distinct and interdisciplinary) and the unique research heritage of both Maynooth institutions', proposed the 'multidisciplinary theme' of 'The Outsider'. The theme of 'The Outsider' encompasses 'figures from various backgrounds, who were either marginalised or viewed as existing on the fringes of contemporary society, but whose impact in areas such as literature, history, or social movements is considerable'.[15] This plan encapsulated current practice and formalised it. Thus, while some of the archives which could be considered 'outsider' had already been acquired, the 2016 collection development policy was the first time MUL articulated its intent to develop archives along this broad theme. Informed by the work of the International Council on Archives Section on Archives and Human Rights, the collection development plan sought to put a clear value on archival documents relating to individuals whose life and work connected with social development and justice.[16]

'Outsiders': Pearse Hutchinson, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and Teresa Deevy

While it is important to try to formalise curatorial practice in this regard, the reality is that arriving at a conclusive definition for 'outsiders' is impossible and unhelpful as the term and what it can represent is mutable, inherently contentious, and exclusionary.[17] MUL broadly defines 'outsiders' as individuals of any and all nationalities who, during their lifetime, resisted or dissented from mainstream or popular social or political life and those whose work or social/political contribution was marginalised either during, or after, their lives. MUL's ethos of inclusivity motivated this deliberately broad definition which is also informed by Jimerson's encouragement to attend to 'marginalized voices' and open

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14   Ibid., p. 5.
15   Ibid., p. 6.
16   For more on the Section on Archives and Human Rights within the International Council on Archives, see International Council on Archives, 'Section on Archives and Human Rights—SAHR' (2023).
17   Niall Lucy observes that 'every community is always a gathering of only some at the exclusion of others'. See Niall Lucy, *A Derrida Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 164.

'the door to the stranger whose concerns enable us to understand the diversity of society'.[18] Arguably, focusing on those who are, or were, regarded as existing on the margins of society is, as Lisa Stead argues, a form of reclamation and, by securing and curating these collections, MUL provides a platform whereby the life and work of such people is brought to increased critical attention and, as a result, can contribute to a better understanding of societal diversity.[19] It should be noted, however, that given how quickly certain trends emerge, a policy can never fully anticipate developments, or be considered fully responsive. As an example, issues of coloniality in library collections have become prominent in recent years, stimulated, in part, by broader discussions of decolonising the curriculum.[20] Consequently, it is important that any collections management policy links to both an overall library and university strategic plan. Doing so reinforces and strengthens the strategy, embedding it in a broader landscape, but equally making it likely that broader developments will need to be reflected in revisions.

In 2023, MUL archival holdings were increased by four hundred percent and included documents relating to artists and activists who dissented from, or focused their personal and/or professional life and/or work outside of mainstream society, ideology, and/or politics. Important MUL archival holdings now include the archives of Irish poet, translator, and broadcaster Pearse Hutchinson (1927–2012), and writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa (1941–1995) acquired by MUL in 2013 and 2011, respectively. Hutchinson's archive references his homosexuality, his experience of living in both Ireland and Spain, his empathy for those who did not conform to contemporary expectations and laws relating to sexual orientation, and documents his activism in relation to social justice, racial oppression, and sexual freedom. The archive of Ken Saro-Wiwa, a member of the Ogoni ethnic group from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, documents his commitment to exposing corruption and environmental damage, until his execution in 1995. His letters, written during his military detention and smuggled out of prison in breadbaskets, manifest what Verne Harris

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18 Jimerson, *Archivists*, p. 309.

19 Lisa Stead, 'Introduction', in *The Boundaries of the Literary Archive: Reclamation and Representation*, ed. by Carrie Smith and Lisa Stead (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 1–14.

20 Elizabeth Charles, 'Decolonizing the Curriculum', *Insights: The UKSG Journal*, 32.24, 1–7 (p. 24).

refers to as the 'ghosts' that change the nature and imperative of archival work for all who conserve, curate, and/or access archives.[21] In 2011, the Teresa Deevy Archive containing manuscripts of stage and radio plays, other literary writings, and correspondence was donated by the Deevy family to MUL.[22] In recent years, there has been productive engagement with academic colleagues, which has led to the addition of more archival material related to Deevy.[23] Harris contends that, in providing access to archives, archival documents, and artefacts, librarians, conservators, and special collections library staff do more than simply 'take responsibility for' archives but, rather, take responsibility 'before them', working so that archives can be made meaningful, respected, remembered, and framed for those who access them.[24] The Teresa Deevy Archive was a foundational pillar in MUL's appreciation of how a collection development policy can both provide direction in ensuring a library has a broad representation in its collections, but also in how to engage with colleagues on campus on such matters, particularly as regards trying to mediate the various diverse views on what a library should collect and why. As an example, when the Teresa Deevy Archive came to Maynooth, it was seen primarily as a literary archive, whereas now it can, quite rightly, be regarded through a lens of inclusion and accessibility also. By securing, conserving, and curating such collections, MUL seeks to make available and contextualise the collections and the life and work of their creators, and facilitate the collections to be accessed, considered, and critiqued by scholars and researchers: as stated above, such a strategy is regarded by MUL as a form of reclamation.

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21   Verne Harris, 'Antonyms of Our Remembering', *Archival Science,* 14 (2014), 215–229 (p. 218).

22   This donation contains the majority of Deevy-related archival holdings. MUL acknowledges the support of Chris Morash in facilitating the donation of the Teresa Deevy Archive.

23   In MUL, newer Deevy-related archival material is contained in the James Cheasty Archive, which was donated to MUL by the Power family in 2022, and in Eileen Kearney's scholarly archive donated in 2023. MUL acknowledges the involvement of Úna Kealy in facilitating the donation of the Cheasty Archive.

24   Harris, 'Antonyms', p. 218. The full quotation is as follows: 'The ghosts demand that we take responsibility before them. Not responsibility *for* them—responsibility *before* them, in front of them, seeing them, seeing them again, and re-specting them. They demand that we work to make our lives meaningful by working to make their lives meaningful. The work of memory, and the work of archive, in these framings, is about just such a taking of responsibility [emphasis in the original]'.

The Teresa Deevy Archive

Living in the 1930s, a time when Irish society was insular and dominated by the Catholic Church's influence on social values, behaviour and politics, Teresa Deevy—an unmarried woman who was deafened in her early twenties and increasingly faced financial hardship— could be defined as an outsider. Born into a family where education, literature, religion, and politics were valued and actively pursued, and living through the First World War, the 1916 Rising, the Irish War of Independence, and the Irish Civil War, as a young woman, it is perhaps unsurprising that Deevy was inspired to explore and critique Ireland's changing social landscape through literature, drama, and theatre. She began her career writing short stories and one-act plays and, by the mid-1930s, was a successful playwright with a number of plays produced and staged at Dublin's national theatre, the Abbey Theatre. In 1937, the Irish Government revised Ireland's constitution, distilling the nascent State's opinion of women's roles and duties into a reductive Article (41.2.1 and 41.2.2) asserting: 'In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved', and 'The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home'.[25] As Chris Morash has observed, the portrayal of women in Deevy's work stood in contrast to this ideological positioning of women as homemakers located within domestic spaces and, through her work, Deevy challenged and exposed the consequences of such a restrictive view of women's contribution to social and political life.[26]

Deevy's critique was, by the standards of the day, radical.[27] Such criticism was not simply manifest in her literary work as is attested to by a letter to the *Irish Times* dated 20 October 1936, in which she questioned the role and competence of Ireland's censors. Eloquent in its brevity, the

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25 Government of Ireland (2023), *Bunreacht Na hÉireann* (Dublin: Government Publications Office, 2003), p. 164. Two constitutional referenda concerning the Family [sic] and care in the Irish Constitution took place on 8 March 2024. The second referendum proposed to delete Article 41.2 and replace it with a new text (Article 42B).

26 Chris Morash, 'Teresa Deevy—an Introduction', *The Teresa Deevy Archive*.

27 Ibid.

letter offers a clear rebuke to official Ireland.[28] Under the directorship of Ernest Blythe, the Abbey Theatre, Ireland's national theatre, disinclined to continue staging her plays, a decision that seriously reduced her ability to reach theatre audiences. Although her work continued to be produced in smaller studio theatres, albeit sporadically, she increasingly focussed her dramatic practice on creating radio plays.[29] As many scholars have recounted, subsequent to Deevy's work being rejected by the Abbey post-1940, her creative output changed direction and was less subject to critical attention and analysis. Despite this, Deevy never disappeared from the critical lens and a revival of interest in her work over the last two decades—and the donation, by the Deevy family, of her archive to MU in 2011—has acted as a clear stimulus to theatremakers and academics to explore her work through practice and research.[30]

The act of archiving is partly one of preserving and partly an act of appraisal: deciding *what* to archive is making a determination. Thus, by accepting the donation of the archive of Teresa Deevy, MUL made a decision to add this material to what Rebecca Schneider calls 'privileged remains'.[31] In this context, the decision to purchase, or accept a donated archive, is significant. Put simply, by making such a decision, albeit one that may be guided by a policy and ethos, a library makes a determination on the merit and value of the artefacts and/or documents, a corpus of work, and the status of the person or people who created it. In the case of the Teresa Deevy Archive, acquired as a donation rather than through purchase, there was no immediate financial implication. However, the subsequent cataloguing and outreach has incurred considerable investment. Thus, by agreeing to take custody of her archive, MUL, and MU by extension is, in essence, endorsing the life and work of Teresa Deevy.

Coupled with this is the reality that library resources are limited. The hard reality is that collections reflecting the life or work of canonical figures in any discipline are in great demand and will inevitably end up being

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28   Teresa Deevy, 'The Censorship', *Irish Times*, 20 October 1936, p. 4.

29   See Chapter 6 in this volume.

30   It is worth noting that Deevy's text, *The King of Spain's Daughter,* is listed as one of the prescribed drama texts on the Junior Cycle English (2024–2026) curriculum. See Department of Education, 'Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English, Circular Letter: 0014/2022'   (2022),   https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/65046-prescribed-material-for-junior-cycle-english/

31   Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

acquired by institutions with higher profiles, which are typically more financially well-resourced.[32] This means that, for library management teams, there must be an element of pragmatism when devising a collecting strategy as even a donation brings with it significant cost in terms of staff time and expertise, conservation, and ongoing curatorial overheads.[33] As such, there is a clear obligation on curators to make archives visible and frame their contents. To quote Harris, 'The work of memory, and the work of archive, in these framings, is about just such a taking of responsibility'.[34] Framing the lives of those who have been marginalised is a privilege and a responsibility, particularly as, given financial limitations, when a library chooses to acquire, conserve, and share one archive that choice often involves a decision not to acquire another. Thus, there is always a gain and a sacrifice—and the consequences are lasting as, typically, a collection is unlikely to be curated a second time.

The role of the curator has become contested in recent years with the long-held conviction of the importance of aspiring to neutrality, if not objectivity—or more accurately, perhaps, the longstanding diminution of bias is no longer considered by many to be the *sine qua non*.[35] As suggested by Michelle Carswell and Marika Cifor, the relationship between curator and collection requires recognition that the former has an 'affective responsibility' to the latter.[36] In this theory, the archivist or curator is no longer primarily concerned with the authenticity of the collection (which requires detachment and objectivity), but more invested in the collection and the subjects contained, and is willing to engage with them on a deeply empathetic level, acknowledging that this 'radical empathy' hinges on the personal.[37] Issues of curator bias are deeply challenging and important for the MUL team and, as

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32 The purchase of some 500 letters between W.B. Yeats and his wife Georgiana Hyde-Lees by the National Library of Ireland for some €750,000 in 2017 is an example of an acquisition which would simply be beyond MUL's financial reach.

33 Chela Scott Weber, Martha O'Hara Conway, Nicholas Martin, Gioia Stevens, and Brigette Kamsler, *Total Cost of Stewardship: Responsible Collection Building in Archives and Special Collections* (Dublin: OCLC Research).

34 Harris, 'Antonyms', p. 218.

35 Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration Including the Problems of War Archives and Archive Making* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922).

36 Michelle Carswell and Marika Cifor, 'From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in Archives', *Archivaria*, 81 (2016), 23–43 (p. 24).

37 Ibid., p. 25.

practitioners, there is an increasing awareness that it is incumbent upon us to curate, frame, and represent a collection in ways that make the framing and representation process transparent. Globally, such a dramatic recalibration of practice emerged in relation to human rights collections, initially, and can be seen by some as contentious. There are, however, several salient lessons for a library like MUL, notably the realisation that bias of any form that might have impacted curatorial choices should be acknowledged, that the lived experience of those who created the archives within MUL will differ from those who curate it, and, importantly, that views, opinions, and values expressed within existing and future archives may not chime with the personal beliefs and/or values of a curator. Acknowledgement of this is critical in terms of informing the practice of curation on a day-to-day basis.

The act of curatorship is rooted in power, more specifically the power of representation. As such, it is never neutral. Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan rightly note that 'through arrangement and description of their acquisitions, archivists impart or relay narratives and knowledge structures to explain the relationships among records in a collection', and acknowledging this is critical in MUL's collection management approach and curatorship.[38] To tease this out further, at a very basic level, the gender of the curator of the Deevy archive *will* affect their engagement with the collection, as will the fact that they will most likely not suffer from Ménière's disease. Understanding and acknowledging differences of historical context and language is becoming increasingly common with many repositories in the United States, Canada, and Australia, in particular, making public statements and investigating ways in which descriptive language (which is heavily standardised to ensure consistency) can be remediated.[39] The first steps for MUL were enacted in a public statement related to 'potentially harmful language in cataloguing and archival description', which commits MUL to continue to eliminate and address harmful language, as well as understanding how particular communities describe themselves, while also acknowledging that:

38   Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan, 'Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections,' *Archivaria*, 63.1 (2007), 87–101 (p. 88).
39   See Sustainable Heritage Network, 'Protocols for Native American Archival Materials with notations by NAAS', March 2019 and Sustainable Heritage Network, 'Protocols for Native American Archival Materials'.

> Some of the materials in our holdings contain offensive, derogatory
> or harmful language. Our archival descriptions also include historical
> language of their time-periods that by today's standards may be
> considered racist, sexist, or otherwise harmful to racialised and
> marginalised populations.[40]

Importantly, the statement acknowledges that 'description is not neutral,
nor are the individuals who create it', but, naturally, finding ways to
further acknowledge and account for such bias is far more challenging
than publishing a statement.[41] An adoption of Caswell and Cifor's
approach of 'radical empathy' is compelling, and it could be argued
that some small steps have been taken in the case of the Teresa Deevy
Archive by close liaison with family and friends, as well as engagement
with groups such as the Dublin Theatre of the Deaf, but it has to be
acknowledged that this remains an organic rather than an embedded
process.[42]

Material Documents within the Teresa Deevy Archive

MUL positions Teresa Deevy within the 'outsider' context, as loosely
defined above, a category that incurs the risk of framing her as a subject
with limited power or agency. The work by various actors (including
MUL) to, as Eileen Kearney says elsewhere in this collection, shine a light
on Deevy contributes to a reframing of her artistic and social contribution
to Irish life and culture.[43] MUL aspires to continually enhance the
conditions whereby archivists and scholars can stand before, respect,
remember, and contextualise archives that were created as a result of a
commitment to a political or aesthetic project in the conservation and
curation work applied to all of the archives in the University's collection,
none more so than in the conservation, curatorial, and commitment
to access applied to the Teresa Deevy Archive. If, as Barry Houlihan
suggests, the theatre archive 'is a social history of modern Ireland', then
it follows that understanding the lives of those who may have existed on

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40   Maynooth University Library, 'Statement on Harmful Language in Catalogue
     Description' (2023).
41   Ibid.
42   Carswell and Cifor, 'From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics', p. 25.
43   See Chapter 1 in this volume.

the fringes of that social history is critical.[44]

The arrival of Deevy's archive, housed in a battered green suitcase and containing documents dating from the early twentieth century, presented MUL with both an opportunity and a challenge. Modern archives are compellingly resonant, the material within them is often within the lived memory of those who engage with them, which can add an additional dimension to such engagement. Suzanne Keen argues that archives, like important physical sites (such as a birthplace, work or social space, or grave site), are situated: unlike people and events, archives, like physical places, continue to exist within geographical locations through time.[45] Like a birth or death place, archives can be visited and, like geographical spaces, resonate with meaning and atmosphere despite the fact that time, situation, context, and life have passed on and/or the geographical location of an archive may have changed. Geraldine Higgins, building on Keen's work and focusing on the materiality of archives, suggests that archives have a conductive connection to the past, which she terms as the 'frisson of "the real thing" [that is] inherent in the materiality of the manuscripts themselves'.[46] Despite the limitations of access and use, archives offer a degree of resonance not necessarily present in their digital equivalents. Higgins writes of 'the shiver I felt',[47] while Sandra Roff writes of the 'thrill of [historical] discovery' when working with original material documents.[48] This charge, thrill, and sense of discovery and the situatedness of documents and artefacts in their materiality ensures that archives continue to be sought by libraries and scholars. Archives provide that direct connection to the archive creator, the people they knew, and the times and the places they experienced, some, or all, of which have may have passed away, or are otherwise inaccessible. Physically holding Deevy's letters, for example,

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44 Barry Houlihan, *Theatre and Archival Memory: Irish Drama and Marginalised Histories, 1951–1977* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2021), p. 26.

45 Suzanne Keen, 'Magical Values in Recent Romances of the Archive', in *Libraries, Literatures and Architects*, ed. by Sas Mays (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 115–129 (p. 116).

46 Geraldine Higgins, 'The Place of Irish Archives', *Irish University Review,* 52.1 (2022), 9–21 (p. 16).

47 Ibid., p. 9.

48 Sandra Roff, 'Archives, Documents, and Hidden History: A Course to Teach Undergraduates the Thrill of Historical Discovery Real and Virtual', *The History Teacher*, 40.4 (2007), 551–558 (p. 551).

can allow those who read them to travel imaginatively back in time, sit inside her home in Landscape, Waterford City, or at her desk in Waterloo Road, Dublin as she mentors her friend and fellow playwright James Cheasty on writing dialogue.[49] As a counterpoint, however, modern archives are often subject to copyright legislation, which can restrict what is permissible to make publicly available. That frisson facilitating an imagined conduit to the past can be interrupted, muted, or obscured by what must be redacted or withdrawn from public view while family, friends, or associates are still alive.[50] The frisson of archival research into Teresa Deevy can be experienced in MUL not only because MUL holds Deevy's archive but also because, in recent times, MUL has acquired the archives of her friend and mentee, Waterford playwright James Cheasty, which contains the largest known extant collection of correspondence authored by Deevy, and of Eileen Kearney, whose pioneering work and crucial scholarship into Deevy's life and dramaturgy in the 1980s is germinal to Deevy scholarship.

Open Access (OA) to Digitised Documents within the Teresa Deevy Archive

OA promotes active scholarship and active citizenship and plays a role in ensuring equity of access to collections that is particularly advantageous to those in the Global South.[51] Furthermore, the potential to disseminate the work of those considered as having existed, either by accident or choice, on the fringes of their communities is accentuated by the possibilities of OA. MUL seeks to engage beyond the walls

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49 Deevy's letters to James Cheasty are contained within the Cheasty Archive donated by the Power family to MUL in 2022. For more on this archive, see Kate McCarthy and Úna Kealy, 'Writing from the Margins: Re-framing Teresa Deevy's Archive and Her Correspondence with James Cheasty c.1952–1962, *Irish University Review*, 52.2 (2022), 322–340.

50 In the case of Deevy's archive, all documents that arrived in the green suitcase are available to scholars, however, as McCarthy and Kealy note ('Writing from the Margins'), archival documents relating to Deevy are widely dispersed in several different archival collections.

51 Hugh Murphy, 'Whose Story: Working Towards Diversity in the Maynooth University Library Collections', in *I Am a Man of Peace: Writings Inspired by the Maynooth University Ken Saro-Wiwa Collection*, ed. by Helen Fallon (Quebec: Daraja Press, 2020), pp. 116–122.

of the academy: Belinda Battley's point that 'Archival institutional custody can build boundary walls that communities find opaque or even impenetrable' is apposite, and the potential paradox of a library aspiring to highlight 'outsiders', but only within the university walls, is both counterproductive but, more importantly, deeply hypocritical.[52] Unsurprisingly then, MUL's current collections management policy espouses the merit of OA, and future iterations of the policy will, most likely, further that commitment. As part of MUL's commitment to enabling a deeper access to collections, the Library commissioned three online exhibitions examining Deevy, Hutchinson, and Saro-Wiwa through the lens of equality, diversity, and inclusion, making these archives online and OA, in part. MUL aspires to ensure that, in so far as is possible, the Teresa Deevy Archive is accessible, an aspiration informed by MUL's strategy to endorse the merits of OA, generally, and as it applies to scholarly endeavour. By making Deevy-related material more accessible through digitisation, MUL provides access to her work to a wider and more diverse readership, on a global scale.[53] Ensuring that as much of the Teresa Deevy Archive is openly available is indisputably a good thing, although, as noted earlier, the thrill of engaging with the physical object is removed when the document or artefact is digitally accessed. There is also a tension between simply enabling open digital access via images of documents within Deevy's archive, and offering a platform that is truly accessible to a diverse array of readers, using transcription, text to speech, and Irish Sign Language interpretation, for example. OA has, historically, focused on opening up *content* rather than the media to engage with it and has been found lacking in terms of visually impaired user requirements.[54] However, by having far less rights management, OA content should, in theory, lend itself to being engaged with via assistive technologies that reduce or eliminate barriers to people with disabilities. As noted earlier, a relatively modern collection such as the

52   Belinda Battley, 'Archives as Places, Places as Archives: Doors to Privilege, Places of Connection or Haunted Sarcophagi of Crumbling Skeletons?', *Archival Science*, 19 (2019), 1–26 (p. 3).

53   MUL note that, to date, this access has been limited to digitising documents so that they can be accessed visually. There is currently no access to digitised Deevy archival material for those who are visually impaired.

54   Raj Kumar Bhardwaj, 'Availability and Preferences for Information Services to Visually Impaired Tertiary Students in Delhi', *Journal of Enabling Technologies*, 16.1 (2022).

Teresa Deevy Archive is comprehended by copyright legislation, which imposes a certain level of restriction upon access, mainly on what can be reproduced, rather than what can be consulted in person. However, it has been possible to ensure that sizeable parts of the archive, and the scholarship which is emerging from it, are becoming available digitally to a broad cohort, which is a very welcome step.

Conclusion

While librarians and archivists have a key role in sourcing, curating, and opening up archival and special collections, they are not and cannot be alone in these endeavours. In a university environment, the support of academic colleagues is essential. Given the nuances across disciplines represented in archives, the involvement of disciplinary experts adds credibility and greater scope for interpretation of archives and collections. Furthermore, such involvement is central to underpinning these collections in teaching and research. As such, it is essential that communities represented and cross-disciplinary scholars, educators, and practitioners are as involved as possible in collection and curatorial decisions from the outset. In many ways, this is an attainable aim, especially in the case of donations which will often come about as a result of representation from such communities and will often involve in-depth discussions about the collections before agreement to accept and conserve a collection is reached. For material acquired in other ways (such as purchase), things may not always be quite as clear, and it may be that the library must proactively find groups with an interest in and relationship to the collection. MUL has seen some success in this regard, using archives in conjunction with local community groups.[55] The very welcome growth in engagement with the Teresa Deevy Archive in recent years, for example, could be said to be reframing both the playwright and MUL special collections. It is a satisfying irony that a collection management policy and strategy that identified 'The Outsider' has resulted in positioning both MUL and Teresa Deevy more centrally

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55 A leading example is the Saro-Wiwa Archive, which MUL has used as a key tool for engaging with new communities of Nigerian ethnicity by integrating the archive into an undergraduate programme, hosting exhibitions, and welcoming visiting groups of schoolchildren.

into the narrative of twentieth-century literary figures. As far back as 1975, Howard Zinn contended that institutions are ignoring experiences outside of the history of the more powerful in society: as part of its stewardship of collections, MUL is actively working towards redressing that imbalance.[56]

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