

The Library Ireland Week (LIW) job swap initiative

Experiences from Maynooth University Library

Each year, as part of Library Ireland Week (LIW), Irish libraries are encouraged to engage in job swaps. This initiative, championed by the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) (<https://libraryassociation.ie/>) is straightforward, with individual libraries organising swaps and absorbing any costs involved. This article describes the experiences of six library assistants from Maynooth University (MU) (<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/library>) Ireland, who participated in job swap.

While LIW is in November each year, MU has scheduled exchanges outside this period, as this is a particularly busy time close to start of term. All job swaps were with libraries within easy access of MU, which is 17 kilometres outside Dublin. The swaps were with public, health sciences and a special library.



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I've worked in MU Library since 2015 as part of the desk services team. In November 2015, I had the opportunity to take part in the Library Association of Ireland (LAI) Library Ireland job swap initiative. My one-day swap was with Kildare County Library and Arts Service (<http://www.kildare.ie/library/library/maynoothlibrary>) in our local Maynooth branch. Keith, from the public library visited Maynooth University Library the following week. Kildare Library Service has a county-wide network of fifteen branches of which Maynooth is one.

After giving me a warm welcome to the library, Keith, my 'job swap', gave me a guided tour of the library. We discussed the sourcing and ordering of new material, how the inter-library loan service works, the type of events the library hosts and the range of community groups served by the library in its catchment area and beyond.

The library is widely used by children, from pre-schoolers to older teens. Community groups make good use of the resources, and there is a meeting room for diverse groups / sessions including the local knitting group, the Spanish and Polish conversation classes, the creative writing group and lots more. Ireland has many new nationalities, which are reflected in the events and the collections.

Next we took a look at the inter-library loans. A delivery had just arrived that morning, so Keith processed a number of these items, explaining to me the steps involved in inputting the information on the library system and notifying patrons that their requested material was now available.

In addition to traditional printed material, the library provides e-books, e-language learning, e-learning online courses and e-services. Other online facilities include *eHistory*, which provides a wide range of material relating to the history, archaeology and heritage of County Kildare. This is of particular interest to local and family history groups and has underpinned the significant amount of research currently being undertaken about Kildare families in both the 1916 rising and their involvement in World War I. *eMagazines* provides online access to 35 popular magazines and periodicals, while *eLearning* provides members with access to over 500 unique online continuing education courses.

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The SMS texting service is popular with library users, as is the monthly e-mailing service, which provides information about upcoming events both at the local branch library and country-wide. The Libanywhere app allows members to manage their accounts on the go.

I signed up as a member of the library and borrowed a book on my brand new library account! Keith talked me through the steps involved and issued me with a library membership card along with a key-ring version. I was also given a PIN for online use and a bookmark depicting their slogan 'There is time for everyone at Maynooth Community Library.' We rounded off my visit with some relaxed discussion on reading preferences, and I discovered that one of my favourite authors, Martina Reilly, would be visiting Maynooth in the coming days. My visit to Maynooth Public Library was an enjoyable, informative and memorable occasion and I will definitely be paying a return visit there in the near future.



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I've worked in MU Library since 1997, having previously worked in the library at University College Dublin (UCD) (<http://www.ucd.ie/library/>). I currently work in Collection Management Services at MU. I was delighted to have the opportunity in November 2012 to visit the health sciences library at Tallaght Hospital (<http://www.amnch.ie/Departments-Clinics/Departments-A-Z/Tallaght-Hospital-Library/>), which is a large teaching hospital located in south-west Dublin. The library is open to all staff in the hospital, staff of the Irish Health Service Executive, Psychiatric Unit, and Trinity College Dublin (TCD) (<https://www.tcd.ie/>) staff and students based in the Trinity Campus located on hospital grounds. The library receives some funding for books from TCD.

On arrival I was given a tour by the Librarian, Anne Murphy. I was introduced to library staff and familiarised with the Library Management System (LMS), Heritage. It's an LMS for mid-sized libraries, quite different from Aleph, our LMS in Maynooth.

The library had undertaken a major review of their journal collection shortly before my visit. The decision was made to hold print versions only of journals that are not available electronically. This freed up valuable space for casual seating and an area for training and demonstrations from database suppliers etc. I was fortunate that a demonstration of Ovid Technologies was scheduled for the date of my visit. I gained an insight into Medline, multiple searching across different databases and using the medical thesaurus and other features. Looking at the Medline database brought back memories of a former life, when I was working as a library assistant in the Medical, Civil & Agricultural Engineering Library, UCD, at Earlsfort Terrace (https://www.ucd.ie/news/may07/052107_farewell_to_the_terrace.html).

At that time Medline was available on CD-ROM. The demonstration reinforced how extensive the electronic collection is for current library users. Representatives of the Emerald suite of online journals were also on site that day and their talk, 'Accessing Emerald e-journals and e-books', was very informative.

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In addition to medical books, the collection includes a wellness and good read section. Not surprisingly the library is popular as a quiet study space. I spent a short period at the Reader Services desk and noticed the warm rapport between library staff and their users. I gained some familiarity with the daily routines, including the processes involved in receiving new acquisitions, cataloguing and inter-library loans. I learned about the freely available Cochrane Library, an evidence-based database (<http://www.cochranelibrary.com/>). Not having a medical background, I found the plain language summary particularly useful.

Because of staffing constraints (there are just three staff in the library) there wasn't a formal return visit to MU as part of the job swop. However, valuable links were established and the Librarian is now on our events guest list and has attended a number of events in MU Library.

This was a really worthwhile day and one that I will remember.



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I've worked in MU Library since 2001. I'm part of the desk services team. I haven't worked in a library other than MU, so I was pleased to have the opportunity to visit the John J. Jennings Library at Stewarts Care Ltd, (library@stewartscare.ie), which is only six miles from MU. Stewarts Hospital is a charitable foundation and provides care for people with learning difficulties. The library was officially opened in 2000 and is a partnership between the Irish Health Services Executive (<http://www.hse.ie>), Stewarts Care Ltd. (www.stewartscare.ie) and South Dublin County Council (www.sdcc.ie). It addresses the information needs of both staff and clients in Stewarts and provides a public library service to the wider community in Palmerstown, a large town on the outskirts of Dublin. It was wonderful to be able to visit what is essentially a public library – a library for healthcare practitioners and a library for the residents.

I set off with slight trepidation wondering what lay ahead. The Librarian, Siobhan McCrystal, took me through the normal morning procedures, logging on to their library management system, Open Galaxy, which is used by all South Dublin County Council libraries. Checking emails, answering phone calls and dealing with face-to-face queries from service users and staff were all part of the routine. The post was delivered by a very happy and chatty service user accompanied by his guide dog.

Patrons registered with Stewarts library can request books from any South Dublin County Council Library. The onsite library collection consists of current fiction, arranged alphabetically by author's family name, while medical and course books for students are organised by the Dewey Decimal Classification system and shelved accordingly. Library holdings can be accessed from <http://library.sdublincoco.ie>. There are daily newspapers and magazines, alongside a range of topical brochures and pamphlets. Printing and photocopying facilities are available for a nominal charge, while Internet access is free to all patrons. Assistive technology is also available.

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The library has a dedicated children's section, which includes books (including talking books), a multisensory collection, DVDs and other media. Stewarts subscribes to thirty medical journal titles and has access to hundreds of other journal titles through their membership of the Irish Health Care Libraries Group (a co-operative of Irish healthcare libraries sharing journals), via the IDAAL website (www.idaal.com).

The morning included a visit from local school children who were celebrating ECO Week with songs about the environment 'as Gaeilge' (in Irish). That evening the library was hosting a music appreciation class for the local community, and a monthly book club meeting was scheduled to take place the following week.

Prior to my visit, I was a little concerned and the thought floated through my mind: 'It's very small compared to our library – It could be a long day with little happening.' How wrong I was! The John J. Jennings Library is a hub serving the wider Palmerstown community as well as staff and service users at Stewarts Hospital. It is a library first and foremost, but it is also a place where people can relax and feel welcome, whether on their own, with a group or just taking time out to chat or sit and reflect. A wonderful atmosphere of belonging prevails in this library, one that I reluctantly left. I learned so much about a library service that is quite different from MU Library; it was certainly a very enriching experience.

There are one full-time member of staff and one volunteer working in the library. Because of this, the librarian wasn't in a position to return the visit. Instead of participating in the swop she was given a free place on an academic writing workshop run by the MU Library as a thank you gesture. The workshop may have helped her write about the exciting events at Stewarts, including an article on the celebration of Dublin writer James Joyce on pages 19–23 of *An leabharlann: the Irish library*, available at https://libraryassociation.ie/system/files/private%3A/leabharlann/An_leabharlann_23_1_0.pdf

I would definitely recommend a library exchange visit. Go for it, you never know what you will discover.



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I've worked in Maynooth University Library since 1989. I work in Special Collections, and have a keen interest in local and national history. I was pleased to have the opportunity in 2015, through Library Ireland Week job swop, to spend a very pleasant and interesting day with [Kildare Library and Arts Services](#) – Local Studies Section in Newbridge, a town about twenty miles from Maynooth.

I met both the local studies librarian, Mario Corrigan, and James Durney, historian-in-residence for 2015–16. I was invited to view the [Teresa Brayton Archive](#), which was lent to us in 2014 for an exhibition in Maynooth University Library. Brayton was a local poet and nationalist, and I am a member of the Teresa Brayton Heritage Group which promotes her work and memory. Later in the morning the local studies librarian gave a talk to students from the local school on topics for Leaving Certificate history.

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In the afternoon we drove to Donnelly's Hollow in the nearby Curragh of Kildare to commemorate the 200th anniversary of a famous boxing match between the English champion, George Cooper, and local hero, [Dan Donnelly](#), which took place on 13 November 1815. A good crowd assembled around the stone memorial. This included representatives from local history groups and schoolgirls who read a short piece about Dan Donnelly and the boxing match. It's hard to believe that in 1815, twenty thousand people packed into this natural amphitheatre. As bare knuckle fighting was illegal, the fight was held at 8.00 a.m., with the crowd somewhat shielded from the view of the authorities. These fights were brutal affairs with little adherence to any rules. Fights could last up to fifty rounds and usually only ended when one of the opponents was so injured or exhausted they could no longer continue. Dan Donnelly won the fight and walked back up to the rim of the hollow to a waiting carriage. His fanatical followers carved out his footsteps and they have been maintained ever since. Donnelly died in 1820 aged 32. Grave robbers stole his body for an eminent surgeon who was later prevailed upon to part with it. He did so on condition that he could keep his right arm. For many years the arm was displayed above the fireplace in a local hostelry!

A wreath-laying ceremony and some talks followed. The group was then invited back to the library for refreshments and a presentation on Dan Donnelly's life.

It was a privilege to be part of this event. Although I grew up having an awareness of Dan Donnelly, I learned so much more about him and why it was important for poor ordinary people of the time to have a hero to celebrate. The local studies section of the library works with local groups to mark events and people who have made a contribution to the fabric of Kildare life.

James, my job swap, made a return visit to Maynooth University Library a few weeks later. Both of us found the job swap experience very enriching and we are presenting a poster on our swap at the national CONUL conference.



[Saoirse Reynolds](#)
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I work in Maynooth University Library as part of the desk services team. I was pleased to get the opportunity to participate in Library Ireland Week job swap. I felt it would be good to get some insight into a public library as I'm very open to working in different types of libraries. I visited [Celbridge Public Library](#). On this day they were closed to the public in the morning, but were open in the afternoon. Because of staff shortages, hours are much more restricted than what I am used to in the university setting. When the library is closed to the public, other events are happening, such as group meetings, classes, toddlers' reading groups and support groups for new mothers.

I was given a tour of the library building, and I helped to sort, issue and return items on the Library Management System, Horizon. In MU we use ALEPH, so it was interesting to experience a different system. [Open Door Time](#), [Scheduled Time](#) and [All the Time](#) (online resources) were explained to me.

I was also told about the fantastic [TTT \(Toys, Technology and Training\)](#) project which allows children with special needs to borrow sensory toys. Another great initiative is the Shelf Help project, which is a shelf dedicated to books on

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wellbeing, meditation and mindfulness. It is a brilliant idea, as people who are looking for information can be directed to the shelf without fuss and can easily find what they need.

It didn't take me long to figure out how to use Horizon as it wasn't too dissimilar to our own Aleph LMS. I really enjoyed meeting the children who visited after school – they were very different from the library users I was used to! Children of course need to be supervised at all times and are allocated time on computers if they wish to use them, subject to their parents having given written permission.

I got to learn about the different types of resources in the library, such as large print and audio books. I have tried audio books before and found them great as I drive so much! English language classes are held in the library free of charge and are very popular with all our growing new communities.

As a Master of Library and Information Studies student, I was delighted to get the opportunity to work in a public library. It gave me a great insight into the services they offer and what an important role they play in the community. The highlights of the day were learning about the children's books and events for children in the library.



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On a sunny February morning, I had the pleasure of going to Celbridge Public Library as part of an exchange organised through the Library Ireland Week job swop scheme. Celbridge is a bustling town just three miles from Maynooth, whose library is part of the Kildare Public Library system. I've worked in [Maynooth University Library](#) for twelve years, so this was a great opportunity to gain an insight into the public library.

The sense of community is very much part of [Celbridge Library](#), and with nearly 6,000 registered users, it is a very popular place. Méabh, the person I was doing the exchange with, described the facilities offered by the library and outlined the many events happening throughout the year. This was really useful as we have a large number of events in MU library since a major extension was built in 2012, and many of these are open to the public.

The Celbridge library has a series of performance indicators that must be met, and footfall is of increasing importance to justify funding.

Children are very much at the heart of the library, and there are many events for them throughout the year. There are story packs, which include books and cuddly toys. They have a new project 'Play to read', which they hope to promote to pre-schools to encourage children to read. They stock audiobooks, DVDs and CDs for children and have hosted visits by children's authors. These have proved very popular – in fact more popular than visits by authors of books for adults.

I was delighted to hear of the strong relationship Celbridge Library has built up with the local schools. In MU library we are involved in a school library project, which provides information literacy training to students in two secondary schools, with a third to be added in March. In Celbridge public library, various

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classes come in on a Tuesday to work on school projects. The library hopes to develop this further.

The library runs a course called *Touch Type Read and Spell*, specifically aimed at children with dyslexia. This course runs over two years and is free of charge. Children work through the modules, with library staff assisting them in the initial setup. Another wonderful facility in my opinion is the catalogue of Assistive Technology aids / toys for children. Parents / teachers / assistants can order the tool of choice, borrow it, and if it is useful they may decide to buy it. This is an excellent service as these products are expensive. The library also stocks online language courses, e-books, magazines and e-learning courses, all of which are free to the public.

The open space upstairs holds seventy people and is mostly used for classes, including TEFL, and for showing movies to the school children. It has been used to host artwork and musical events as the acoustics are excellent. A small meeting room hosts a Citizens' Information Centre for the public and literacy classes for visitors from a local special needs school. The library has a 'shelf help' section, a feature of all the public libraries in Kildare, and hosts sessions on dealing with stress and general life skills.

Public libraries will soon have a universal library card, so users will not be restricted to certain counties, and there will be a standard LMS called *Sierra*. As we have also transitioned to a new library discovery tool in MU Library, I could definitely relate to this! I am very interested in marketing and felt that they were at a slight disadvantage to not have their own library Facebook and Twitter account to advertise their events.

I am a huge fan of public libraries, and this opportunity gave me a new insight into how they are run. The staff really are multi-skilled, as they deal with the public, administration, courses and IT issues. Their passion for their job is so evident and they are committed to keeping the library as an important community service. The staff all love Saturday morning, when families come in from the minute they open.

Méabh visited MU library soon after and was really impressed at the size of the building and the array of services offered to our users. She found it a great experience to see how an academic library works.

I really benefited from this experience. I would definitely recommend the Library Ireland job swop scheme. Already I'm wondering about where I might go when Library Ireland Week comes around again!

Conclusion

The job swop initiative is an interesting way to gain an insight into how a 'different' type of library operates. It is also a good way to meet library colleagues and learn about different users and services. The visit is just one day, so there are no overnight costs, and as MU has organised swops in Kildare and the Greater Dublin region, travel costs are insignificant. This is a useful initiative which MU will continue to support.

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