

PAC-R-1677 Correspondence 3C.2

Meeting 149 29/01/15

Briefing for Public Accounts Committee meeting 29 January 2015.

**2012/13 Financial Statements of the National Library of Ireland**

## **Briefing 1: Loss of materials from the National Library of Ireland (NLI)**

### **Incident**

In August 2013 NLI senior staff discovered the loss of certain items from the Library's collections. The matter was reported immediately to the Gardaí. The Library Board, along with officials of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht were also immediately informed. Detectives from the Art and Antiques Unit of the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation commenced an investigation and in November 2013 reports appeared in the media of the arrest of an employee of the Library in connection with the theft of material from the Library. During the course of the Garda investigation, a significant number of items believed to have been stolen was recovered.

The matter is still under investigation by An Garda Síochána and we are not in a position therefore to provide any further information lest it prejudice that investigation.

### **Response**

Immediately following the discovery of the loss the Library took steps to enhance the security of the collections by further limiting access, where possible, to storage areas, expanding access control systems and undertaking stock checks of particular collections. Items which are designated of exceptionally high value were already stored in the most secure areas, with strict access controls. The Library also set up an internal cross-departmental security group to examine and advise on security issues on an ongoing basis. For obvious security reasons it would be ill advised for the NLI to disclose publicly specific details of the arrangements made to improve security. However, should the PAC or members of the Committee wish to view the Library's storage areas Catherine Fahy, the Acting Director of the Library, would be happy to provide them with a tour and overview of Library facilities.

The NLI subsequently requested both the Crime Prevention Unit of An Garda Síochána and two internationally recognised library security experts from the Royal Library in Copenhagen to conduct reviews of the NLI's security, both of which were carried out at no charge, apart from travel and subsistence expenses for the Danish experts which amounted to €2122.70. The resulting security reports have been reviewed by the Library's Board and management, and have been submitted to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Office of Public Works, which owns and manages the upkeep of the Library's premises.

On foot of the findings of the two reports, in September 2014 the NLI submitted a business case to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for the appointment of a Head of Security and Facilities Management, at Keeper level (roughly equivalent to the Civil Service grade of Assistant Principal). This post would fill a gap which has arisen in our organisational structure due to retirements and the effects of the moratorium on recruitment in recent years and would enable the roll-out of the recommendations of the two reports.

## **Context**

To give some idea of the scale of the security reviews it should be noted that the National Library holds heritage collections, numbering in all about 10 million individual items (books, newspapers, manuscripts, maps, prints, photographic) housed on 37.7 kilometres of shelving and in over 3,000 large plan chest drawers. The Library's collections include over 2,000 named special collections including, to name just a selection, the literary and family papers of William Butler Yeats, the literary papers of Seamus Heaney, the archives of the Ormond and Inchiquin estates as well as the related family papers, and collections of political and/or personal papers such as those of William Smith O'Brien, Daniel O'Connell, Thomas Clarke, Éamonn and Áine Ceannt and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington.

The collections are dispersed through 7 buildings on Kildare Street, 1 building in Temple Bar, and 3 offsite stores. These buildings also include exhibition areas, a lecture room, a café, reading rooms, where over 55,000 items per year are supplied for consultation by readers, and staff offices, similarly dispersed. This configuration, as well as the differing conditions in the various premises on Kildare Street, some of which are little changed since 1890 and others of which have been refurbished in the last decade, poses significant challenges from both a security and an operational point of view.

It is clear that the Library's premises on Kildare Street require significant capital investment, redevelopment and rationalisation. An 8-phase redevelopment plan was drawn up in the late 1990s in collaboration with the Office of the Public Works. However it never proceeded beyond phase 4. Phase 5 was to have been the building of an environmentally controlled secure store or repository. This would have remedied the fact that none of the Library's storage areas meet internationally recognised standards for the storage of archival and library materials.

Most recently, the NLI has been working with Trinity College and UCD on a proposal to build a shared purpose built environmentally controlled secure storage facility that would house all our library collections. A joint feasibility study was prepared and a working group was established to develop this proposal.

Library management is currently considering how best to advance this, as well as the redevelopment of the Kildare Street buildings, in collaboration with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

## **Briefing Note 2: Special Studentship Programme 2011-12**

The NLI has operated a studentship programme since 1998 when the first Research Studentship was awarded to Dr. Marie Coleman (now lecturing in Queen's University, Belfast). In 1999, an Archival Studentship was established (in association with UCD's Department of Archives) and then, in 2000, the first Library Studentship (in association with UCD's Department of Library and Information Studies) was awarded. A Conservation Internship (with the Heritage Council) has also been in place for a number of years. The studentships and the internship are offered every year and continue to be offered. The Library and Archives studentships are designed to meet the requirement of the Archives and Library courses in UCD that applicants have library and archives experience. These studentships are funded from 'own resources' rather than the exchequer funded payroll and the annual salary is €17,100 which is just above minimum wage. These studentships did not historically require sanction from our parent department or from the Department of Finance as they were paid for from 'own resources'.

In 2010 a decision was made to build on the success of the existing studentship programme, and to run a Special Studentship Programme to be paid from the Annual Grant.

The Library did not believe that a discrete sanction was required from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) for the interns who were appointed under the Special Studentship Programme in 2011 and 2012. The Library was advised by DAHG in September 2010 that because the studentship programme "did not constitute recruitment, promotion or an acting appointment to a management or administrative grade or to any other grade within the public sector", and because there was a commitment in the Programme for Government to promote internships, then the programme could not be opposed.

The Special Studentships were initiated by the Library during the course of a fundamental phase of digital library development, an ambitious (and very successful) events programme and the upgrading of research and reference services. The Studentships, which ran through 2011 to 2012, focussed therefore on professional developmental areas including Catalogue Development, Software Development, Digital Collections, Research and Reference, Manuscripts, Learning/Exhibitions and Marketing. The rate of pay for those on the Special Studentship programme was €17,100 per annum.

In 2010, 7 Studentship positions were advertised, 156 applications were received in total and 30 candidates were called for interview. The 7 successful candidates commenced their internships during 2011.

In 2011, 7 studentship positions were advertised, 153 applications were received in total and 34 candidates were called for interview. 4 of the successful candidates commenced their internship during 2011 and the remaining 3 successful candidates commenced their internship in 2012.

In 2012, 1 Studentship Position was advertised, 23 applications were received and 5 candidates were called for interview. The successful candidate commenced the internship in 2012.

The Studentships were advertised on the National Library website. They were also widely advertised through 24 Universities and Institutes of Technology and on Grad Ireland by the Careers Departments of the Universities. All advertisements for the studentship positions were at nil cost to NLI. Previous holders of studentships in the Library were ineligible to apply.

The eleven people who commenced their studentships in 2011 stayed for periods varying from one year to three months. The four people who commenced their Studentships in the year currently being examined, 2012 included one who was with the Library for a year, two for 9 months, and one for 4 months. Two of the 2011 Studentships were extended by 3 and 5 months respectively.

The Software Development Studentship holder 2012 (9 months) gained experience in:

- international collaboration to integrate hierarchical, archives display into a leading open source discovery interface
- Integration of high-resolution image viewers into the NLI's online catalogue to accommodate the release of the James Joyce manuscripts online
- Integration of location-based content filtering to accommodate the release of the James Joyce manuscripts online
- Various new features/improvements to online catalogue: Map view, Flickr Integration, Authority recommendation module
- Deployment of new online order form which facilitates users in ordering materials in advance of their visit to the NLI Reading Rooms

The Catalogue Development Studentship holder 2012 (1 year) gained experience in:

- work on a variety of projects, most significantly the library's major Guard Book and Music Catalogue Conversion Projects and Card Catalogue Conversion Project
- management of a cataloguing project undertaken by a group of volunteers from the Federation of Local History Societies (FLHS) and the Federation for Ulster Local Studies (FULS). The two photographic collections catalogued during the course of this project, the work of local historians from towns and cities all over the island of Ireland, had been donated to the NLI in the 1990s. As a result of this project almost 2,000 images were catalogued and digitised and are now available to the public via the NLI's online catalogue.

The Research and Reference Studentship holder 2012 (9 months) gained experience in:

- Carrying out an extensive analysis of customer enquiries at the NLI,
- researching Customer Relationship solutions in use across the library sector in Ireland,
- Producing video and other guides to the NLI's resources

The Education and Outreach Administration Studentship 2012 (4 months) gained experience in:

- the collection of WWI memories and memorabilia through Europeana 1914-1918 collecting days at the Hunt Museum in Limerick., and at the NLI's Kildare Street premises,
- all aspects of the administration of NLI's annual verse speaking competition Poetry Aloud , a partnership with the Poetry Ireland, in which students from all over the island of Ireland participated.)

The aim of the studentship programme was to both assist the Library by resourcing projects which did not fall within the normal job descriptions or capacity of anyone working in the Library and to provide good experience for the holders of the Studentships which would be of assistance to them in furthering their careers. We understand that all the holders of the Studentships did in fact go on to secure employment. The Programme provided valuable experience to the participants and was excellent value for the public funding allocated to it by the Library The cost of the Special Studentships Programme in 2012 was €113,662.

All studentships and internships have had DAHG approval since 1st January 2013.