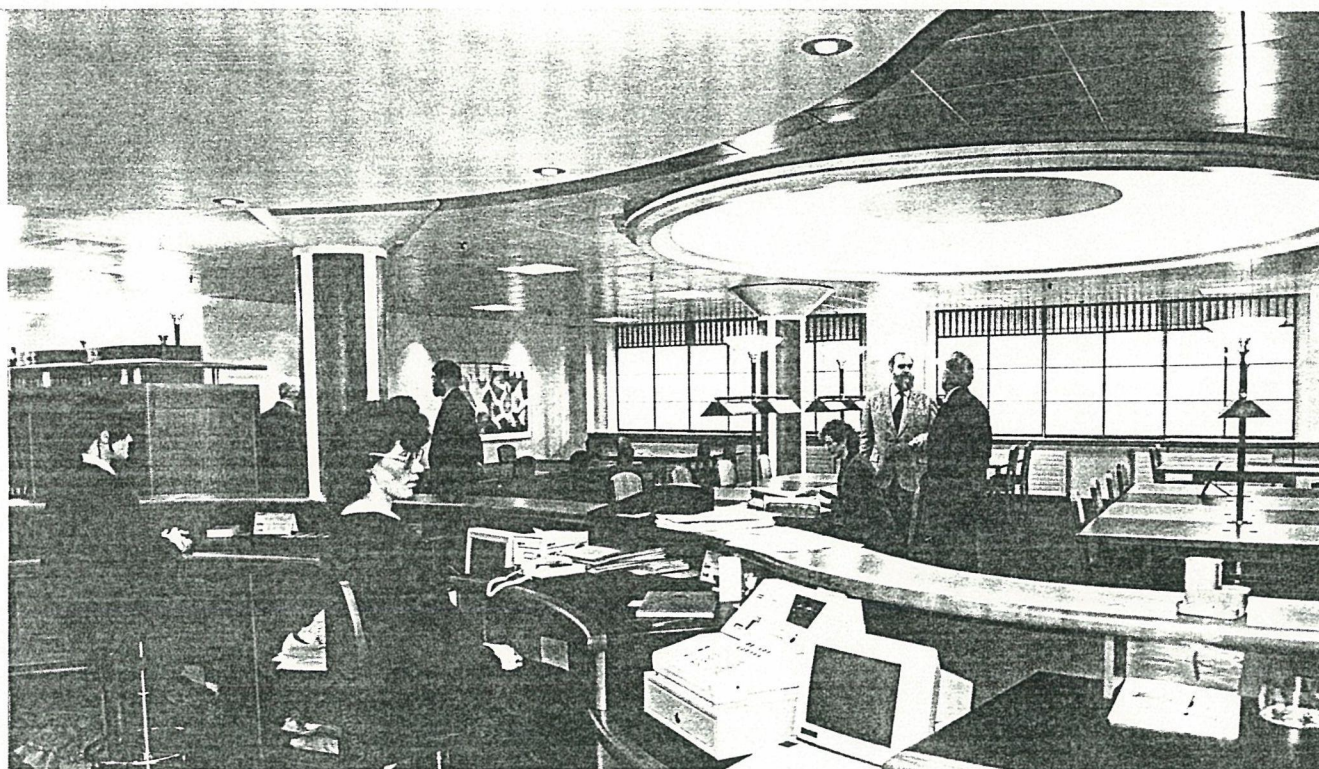




VISIT TO THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

by Maedhbh McNamara

'He had travell'd over Greece to peruse the archives of every city.'
Dryden, *Plutarch* 63 (1683)



Reading Room of the National Archives: visit of President Mary Robinson, 10 March 1992 (Photo courtesy of the Director)

On a wet and windy Wednesday in October the Government Libraries Group braved the elements and the urban wasteland that is Bishop St to visit the National Archives.

The warm and well-designed interior of the building contrasted agreeably with the inhospitable weather and projected a user-friendly image which would be strengthened by our encounters with the staff and their account of the services on offer to scholars and researchers.

We were welcomed in the hall by the Director, Dr David Craig, who began with *un peu d'histoire* — the amalgamation of the Public Record Office and the State Paper Offices into the National Archives. The transfer took place under

the National Archives Act 1986. The Act provides for the preservation of records of Government Departments and agencies and for their transfer to the National Archives when they are 30 years old. This work is proceeding on a gradual basis — some Departments are very advanced in transferring their archives; others less so. →

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Dr Craig's introduction provoked many questions from GLG members such as 'What's the difference between a State Paper and a Public Record?' (Briefly, State Papers were documents inherited from the British Administration, commencing around the turn of the seventeenth century; Public Records are all other Department documents, court documents, parochial documents and so on.) He professed himself a little surprised at the basic nature of the questions, which reminds us that these visits foster two-way communication.

Dr Craig continued his talk in the main reading room — a large modern well-lit award-winning room. We marvelled at the power points in the centres of the tables which enable users to put material straight into their computers. This technology was cheek by jowl with walls and bays shelved with ancient leather-bound indexes and ledgers on open access to readers.

Next Dr Philomena Connolly showed us Cabinet files and explained to us how these were organised and numbered in Departments and showed us the lists which readers use when tracing files. We then broke for tea during which we were joined by other archivists including the senior archivist, Ken Hannigan, who was most forthcoming on the workings of the organisation.

Afterwards Aideen Ireland demonstrated other types of archives and their indexes, annual

calendars of wills and administration, catalogue of quitrent office records, parochial records of the Church of Ireland, catalogues of private papers and much, much more.

Ms Ireland also showed us the temperature-regulated storage rooms with their specially made acid-free powder-blue boxes.

A guide book to the National Archives is not yet available as some archives have yet to be transferred from the Four Courts. It is planned to publish one shortly. We were told that if we had a query relating to archives, an archivist would check out the answer for us over the telephone.

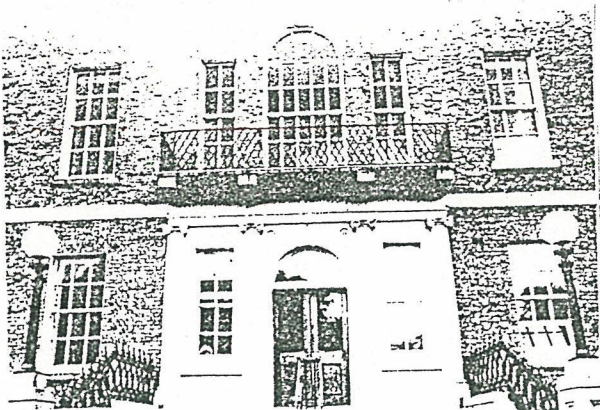
We plunged into the rainy puddles with a very positive impression of an institution which facilitates its users in every way. If Plutarch or his successor had to travel over Ireland instead of Greece he would no doubt be pleased that so many archives will be centralised at the National Archives.

Postscript

By a happy coincidence a letter arrived on my desk next day from the International Council of Archivists inquiring about our parliamentary records (which are excluded from the National Archives). Because of my freshly-acquired knowledge I was quite clear about the meaning of an archive and of the issues involved. This helped greatly in assembling the information. I knew these trips were useful, but this is ridiculous!

NEWS AND EVENTS

Valerie Ingram of the Department of Agriculture and Food will shortly be taking over responsibility for the libraries of The Office of Public Works. She will attend initially on a part-time basis, while also continuing to work in the Department of Agriculture and Food. We have worked happily together for 17 years, so I will be particularly sorry to see her go: she is a good friend as well as a good colleague, and fortunately she is not moving too far away. She faces an exciting new task, and I am sure you will all join with me in wishing her well. Until further notice Valerie will be in the HQ Library of OPW on Tuesdays and Fridays and in the Library of the National Botanic Gardens on Thursdays — *Mary Doyle*



Office of Public Works, 51 St. Stephen's Green

Training Course

Anna Gethings and Claire Devlin of D & G Information Consultants are organising another of their popular training courses — a two-day workshop 'Introduction to Information and Library Work' to be held on 27 and 28 January 1993.

Contact D & G Information Consultants,
25 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.
Tel 618866; Fax 618914

We are delighted to be able to report on the establishment of productive new links with our colleagues in Northern Ireland. This began with the visit of Kirby Porter to Dublin in August 1991. Having recently been appointed as Government Librarian in Northern Ireland he was eager to find out what the situation of Government libraries in the Republic of Ireland was.

He also outlined the situation in Northern Ireland where many Departments are small, resources and funds are inadequate and no career structure is possible — doesn't it sound vaguely familiar?

Following a proposal to have regular North/South meetings of Government Librarians we were pleased to welcome both Kirby Porter and George Woodman to our AGM in April 1992. Prior to the AGM they visited the libraries of the Departments of Education and the Marine, then went to Oireachtas where they were joined by members of the Committee for a tour of the Houses and for lunch.

Three members of the committee (Mary Moore, Aisling Judge and Mary Doyle) paid a return visit to Belfast on May 18th. There we visited the Library

of the Department of Agriculture — of special interest to me and where I was delighted to meet Noel Menary and his staff and to put faces on the always helpful voices at the other end of my phone after so many years. We had a quick look at the Library and saw their computer system SYDNEY in action. This was followed by a visit to Stormont Castle where George Woodman welcomed us to his beautiful library where the wealth of material (including early meteorological reports from the Botanic Gardens in Dublin) is matched by the lovely furniture.

After lunch with other members of the Government Libraries Panel we attended the AGM of the Library and Information Services Council of Northern Ireland. The guest speaker was Brian Lang, Director of the British Library, who gave a most entertaining and informative talk on his role.

The contacts made during this exchange of visits have already borne fruit and we hope to arrange more visits, when it is hoped we will be able to spend a longer time in individual libraries than this initial exchange of visits allowed us.

Mary Doyle

Farewell to Aisling

Unfortunately the GLG has lost a good friend and colleague, as **Aisling Judge**, our hardworking Secretary, who has also filled many other positions in the GLG since its foundation, moved to Wales in October. She has been appointed to the post of Information Systems Librarian at the University of Glamorgan. Aisling has been an inspiration to the GLG and will be sadly missed. I am sure you will all join with me in wishing her well in her new job. (Next time we meet her she will almost certainly have a strong Welsh accent!)

The position of Secretary has been split.

The new Minutes Secretary is:

Ann Stewart,
Library,
National Gallery,
Merrion Square,
Dublin 2.
Tel: 615133 x109

The new Correspondence Secretary is:

Maedhbh McNamara,
Library,
Oireachtas,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
Tel: 789911 x264.

NATIONAL BIBLIOGRAPHY PROJECT — HOW IT RELATES TO GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

Summary of talk given by Virginia Mulvihill at the Group's AGM on 9 April 1992

The 1992 annual general meeting of the GLG was held on 9 April 1992 at the Department of the Marine. We were particularly pleased to welcome our Government Library colleagues from Northern Ireland, Kirby Porter and George Woodman, who combined visits to some of our libraries, with attendance at our AGM. Our guest speaker this year was Virginia Mulvihill, Project Researcher at the National Library, who spoke about her work on the National Bibliography Project and how it relates to Government Publications. The following is an outline of her talk.

Current developments at the National Library

The National Library has entered a phase of development termed 'The National Bibliographic Preparatory Project'. The Library in conjunction with UCD and TCD is computerising its catalogue. Part of the project involves researching bibliographic needs and control in Ireland, North and South. Coordination of the work in the South is being done by the National Library, while Queen's University are responsible in the North.

The work was divided into seven work packages as follows:

Workpackage 1:

A study by TCD of the requirements for the extraction of the relevant Irish Publishing Record records from its Dynix database.

Workpackage 2:

A study by UCD of the requirements for the downloading of records relevant to the IPR from its BLCMP database.

Workpackage 3:

Specification of requirements for the pilot system at the National Library.

Workpackage 4:

Implementation of the pilot project.

Workpackage 5:

Development of prototype conversion software from UKMARC to UNIMARC.

Workpackage 6:

Identification of dissemination of publication options.

Workpackage 7:

Feasibility study of technical implications of long term strategies for cooperation.

Workpackage 6

The objectives of Workpackage 6, which was undertaken by the National Library, were to establish how best in Ireland a national bibliographic utility might most appropriately be marketed to the bibliographic community nationally and internationally and how best it might be used to the advantage of potential user categories.

The tasks to be carried out within the workpackage included:

— Consultations with the library community, publishers and booksellers, individually and collectively, to establish their bibliographic needs and how best these might be met; and also to establish how they might contribute to the utility (e.g. county libraries for records of local or regional interest, special and industrial libraries for records of ephemeral or 'grey' material, publishers for pre-publication data.

— Exploration of the possibilities of links with Whitaker in order to draw Government publications into the ISBN net.

— Exploration of the possibility of record-sharing with the British Library and for shared dissemination of records with the British Library and other EC national libraries.

— Exploration with the British Library, the National Libraries of Wales and Scotland, the Bibliotheque Nationale, the appropriate regional libraries and organisations in Scotland, Wales and France, the possibilities for creating and making available a shared database of Celtic interest.

A statistical analysis of the Irish Publishing Record (IPR) was carried out.

Comparison of bibliographic control of Irish publications for 1989 by the Irish Publishing Record and a BLAISE-line search

A BLAISE-Line (BL) search on publications for the thirty-two counties in 1989 was conducted. The search results were compared with the IPR for 1989.

The 1989 IPR has 1,114 entries, of which 103 are new serial titles, 13 are Government Stationery office (SO) and 8 are HMSO publications. The BL search resulted in 531 records of which 4 were new serials, 7 were Government Stationery office and 3 were HMSO publications.

181 items appeared in the BL search that did not appear in the IPR and 764 appeared in the IPR that were not available on BL.

Bibliographic coverage of Irish publications is not adequately controlled by BLAISE Line and the Irish Publishing Record is a more complete record of those publications. Inclusion of items in the BL search absent from the IPR can be accounted for in a number of ways. The inclusion of new editions and certain school texts in the BL search are the two main factors.

Government publications

Of the 21 government publications in the IPR, 9 were listed in the BL search and one SO publication appeared in the BL that was excluded from the IPR. In total only 22 government publications were listed between both sources, i.e. 14 SO and 14 HMSO. Coverage is more extensive in the IPR.

Government publications traditionally present problems to librarians

The National Library would like to make recommendations to the Stationery Office based on the area of expertise that it possesses in relation to accessing information on publications. Research conducted by the Library strongly indicates that librarians and booksellers are anxious to further improve their access to government publications.

Previous discussions between Virginia Mulvihill and Tom Costello of the Stationery Office indicate that the Stationery Office is developing its marketing, stock control and computerised accounting systems. The National Library would like the Stationery Office to take its recommendations on board and would like the two organisations to develop cooperative procedures to improve bibliographic control.

Catalogues of Government Publications — Stationery Office and National Library

One of the recommendations relates to the Catalogues of Government Publications.

The Catalogues of the Stationery Office are used in a variety of ways and are highly significant in that they are the initial source of information on government publications.

The Stationery Office Catalogues would have increased value if:

(1) Indexes were expanded to include,

- (a) Subject index,
- (b) Chairperson index,
- (c) Common name (unofficial) report name index,
- (d) Cumulative index,
- (e) ISBN /ISSN index
- (f) Irish /English variant title cross-reference index.

(2) Bibliographic details were expanded to include:

- (a) The allocation of ISBNs and ISSNs,
- (b) Pagination and size of document,
- (c) Chairperson or report or personal author where relevant.

(3) Items published by Government Departments, not through the Stationery Office, were included in the SO catalogue, e.g:

Sectoral Development Committee Reports.

The last presents particular difficulties and the Government Libraries Group is working on the preparation of a catalogue of publications not published through the Stationery Office.

Computerisation of the National Library collection involves cataloguing SO publications. The level to which it catalogues is the internationally recognised standard Anglo-American Cataloguing Cataloguing Rules (AACR2). The records will be retained in MARC format, an internationally transferable record structure.

These developments at the National Library may increase awareness of SO publications. The National Library and the Stationery Office overlap in some areas of responsibility and closer examination of each other's systems might facilitate increased cooperation. It would be

especially useful to cooperate in the transfer of bibliographic records and given the proximity of the National Library and the Stationery Office retail outlet in Molesworth Street, a LAN link might be possible. Early cooperation and planning could minimise duplication of effort and enhance the service provided by both organisations.

GLG and the National Library

During her research Virginia extensively contacted librarians and in particular the secretaries of each section of the Library Association of Ireland.

An area which presents particular difficulty for bibliographic control is government publications produced and published by Departments but not through the Stationery Office. These are not normally listed in commercial catalogues and often are not included in the SO catalogues. They have short print runs and are particularly difficult to trace. They do, however, constitute a sizeable body of 'grey literature' in Ireland.

During discussions with the GLG the latter agreed to cooperate with the National Library in monitoring these publications as the GLG is itself intending to produce a catalogue of such material. Mary Doyle of the Department of Agriculture and Food is the coordinator for information gathering from other government libraries and the production of the catalogue.

To further assist acquisition by the NLI of these items the Director of the National Library wrote to the Secretaries of each of the Government Departments explaining current developments and the problems of monitoring departmental publications published other than by the Stationery Office. The response from most Departments was positive.

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