

## 2011 PRESS RELEASES

Winners of nationwide annual POETRY ALOUD spoken poetry competition announced.

**17 January 2011:** The winners of the fifth annual all-island POETRY ALOUD spoken poetry competition for post-primary school pupils, organised by the National Library of Ireland in association with Poetry Ireland, were announced in Dublin this morning. The competition was devised in 2006 to celebrate the poetry of WB Yeats and to mark the Library's award-winning exhibition, Yeats: the Life and Works of William Butler Yeats.

More than 1,200 students from post-primary schools on the island of Ireland entered this latest competition, an increase of 300 on the number of entries received last year. The Overall Winner was Aoife Franklyn, a pupil in St Andrews's College, Booterstown, Co Dublin, who also won the Senior category (fifth and sixth year) of the competition. She was presented with a perpetual trophy, a cash prize of €500 and a shelf of poetry books for her school library.

The two other winners were Kiah Townsend, Presentation Secondary School, Tralee, Co Kerry) who won the Intermediate category (third and fourth year/transition year); and Shane McMahon, St Macartan's College in Monaghan, who won the Junior category (first and second year).

The competition judges were Director of Poetry Ireland, Joseph Woods; poet Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, and author and Laureate na nÓg, Siobhán Parkinson.

Speaking at the presentation, Fiona Ross, Director, National Library of Ireland said that the aim of the competition is to help students build self-confidence, master public speaking, and learn to interact with poetry in a way that is beyond mere words on a page. It is also about getting involved and being part of an all-island event that seeks to celebrate the joy of speaking and listening to poetry.

“To quote Sam McGovern, winner of the 2008 POETRY ALOUD competition: ‘It’s hard to realise the pleasure that can be had in simply listening to poetry, let alone articulating it yourself to an audience. It’s also a fantastic social event; students travel the length and breadth of the country to compete, all with some level of appreciation for the written and spoken word.’ ”

Ends

For further information, please contact Brid O’Sullivan, National Library of Ireland.  
Tel: 01-603 0259

Sixth annual lecture in memory of the late Professor John O’Meara of UCD

**24 January 2011:** Renaissance Humanists in the 15th and 16th centuries treated the art of reading as a deeply serious one “to be practised in conditions of strenuous attentiveness”, according to distinguished American scholar, Professor Anthony Grafton.

Reading in Renaissance Europe: the Humanists at Work is the title of the sixth annual lecture in memory of the late Professor John O’Meara of UCD. The lecture, which takes place this Wednesday evening, 26 January under the auspices of the National Library of Ireland Society, will be delivered by Professor Anthony Grafton, who is Henry Putnam Professor of History at Princeton University.

Professor Grafton’s special interests are in the cultural history of Renaissance Europe, the history of books and readers, the history of scholarship and education in the West (from Antiquity to the 19th century), and the history of science (from Antiquity to the Renaissance). He is the author of ten books, and co-author of nine others. His current project is a large-scale study on the science of chronology in 16th and 17th century Europe: how scholars attempted to assign dates to past events, reconstruct ancient calendars and reconcile the Bible with competing accounts from the past. He hopes to reconstruct the complex and dramatic process by which the biblical regime of historical time collapsed.

The annual John J O’Meara Memorial Lecture series is made possible by an endowment from Professor O’Meara’s family to the National Library of Ireland. Wednesday evening’s lecture takes place in the Library’s Seminar Room. It is open to the public and admission is free; however, the event has been fully booked for some time and there is currently a waiting list for tickets.

The five previous lecturers since the series began in 2005, were: Dr Diarmuid Martin, Archbishop of Dublin; Professor Mary Carruthers, New York University; Professor Eamon Duffy, Cambridge University; Professor Denis Donoghue, New York University; Professor Mary Beard, Cambridge University.

Note to editors:

John J O’Meara (1915-2003) was Professor of Latin at UCD from 1948 to 1984. Born in Co Galway, he joined the Society of Jesus, studied at UCD, from which he graduated with an MA in Classics and went on to Oxford University where he earned a Ph.D.

He left the Jesuits in 1945, after doubts about his vocation had gradually taken hold. Joining UCD’s Classics Department in 1945, he was an immediate success as a teacher. Later, as Professor of Latin, his teaching prowess was complemented by his skill in administering a department which, until the late 1960s, attracted large numbers of students. Simultaneously, through a long series of scholarly publications, he established an international reputation as a classicist of the first rank.

As noted in his obituary in the Irish Times, John O’Meara ‘was no stranger to controversy’. In the 1950s and early ’60s, he challenged the old UCD establishment, led by its President and O’Meara’s former mentor, Michael Tierney, on the proper governance of the college and the proposed move from Earlsfort Terrace to Belfield.

He was an early advocate of merging UCD and Trinity College – thereby incurring a rebuke from the then Archbishop of Armagh, Cardinal D’Alton – and he was vocal in criticising Government policy on reviving the Irish language and the emphasis on teaching Irish in the schools.

Moreover, he campaigned – against his own professional interests – for dropping Latin as a compulsory requirement in UCD. He was ultimately successful in this. The erosion of the traditional position of classics in the education system meant that, during the latter part of his career, he had to ‘re-engineer’ his department and its teaching programme in response to a sharp decline in student numbers.

Professor O’Meara died, just before his 88th birthday, on 12 February 2003. A selection of his papers has been donated to the National Library (MS 39,269). He was an active member of the National Library of Ireland Society for many years, and it is, therefore, fitting that the Society should host the lecture series in his memory which his family has so generously facilitated.

For further information, please contact Felix M Larkin,  
Hon Secretary, National Library of Ireland Society  
Tel: 087 234 7044

### Government marks huge importance of genealogy-related tourism by ordering early release of 1926 Census

**Dublin 31 March 2011:** At a reception to mark the 75th anniversary of the Irish Genealogical Research Society held in the National Library of Ireland this evening, the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs, Mr Jimmy Deenihan TD, said there is enormous potential for Irish genealogy to contribute to roots tourism by attracting people from across the globe to visit the country of their ancestors. “So much information is now at people’s fingertips and it is opening up a world of relevant family history to new generations”, he added.

At this evening’s reception, Minister Deenihan was presented with a portfolio of documents which are indicative of typical family history research in Ireland, and which clearly illustrate his own family history. In thanking the Irish Genealogical Research Society for this gift, he said he was sure that the extensive material the Society has in its care will make people’s search for their ancestors even more interesting and rewarding.

Irish genealogy and the study of family history has become a very topical subject, particularly with the on-line launch of the National Archives’ 1901 and 1911 Census database. The new Coalition Government has recognised the huge importance of genealogy in Ireland, and included the early release of the 1926 Census in its Programme for Government.

It is estimated that 50 million+ people make up the Irish Diaspora today.

The Irish Genealogical Research Society (IGRS) – the oldest society devoted exclusively to the study of Irish genealogy – is celebrating its 75th anniversary this

year. Established in 1936 in response to the loss of so many records in 1922, it now holds the single largest and most important collection of Irish genealogical books and manuscripts in private hands.

The result of Irish emigration over many centuries has resulted in an Irish Diaspora settling in countries ranging from the United Kingdom and Continental Europe to the United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina, New Zealand, Mexico, South Africa and Brazil, as well as a number of countries in the Caribbean. The causes of emigration were manifold: beginning in 1607, the Flight of the Earls led numerous members of the Gaelic nobility to flee the country. After various wars during the 17th century, many others fled to Spain, France, Austria, and other Catholic lands. Subsequently, the Great Famine of 1845 to 1849 resulted in over one million people leaving Ireland. Since then, millions of Irish people have emigrated, and continue to emigrate, for economic reasons.

According to US Census figures for 2000, a total of 41 million Americans claim to be wholly or partly of Irish ancestry. This cohort represents more than one in five white Americans.

Speaking at tonight's reception, Steven Smyrl, Chairman of the IGRS noted that since its inception in 1936, the Society had recognised the appeal of Irish genealogy to exiled people who are anxious to establish and maintain links with the land of their ancestors. "The Irish Genealogical Research Society has consistently attracted members of the Irish Diaspora from around the globe. In more recent times, this has been balanced by genealogical research's huge popularity among ordinary people in Ireland also", he added.

The guest of honour at tonight's reception, held at the National Library of Ireland, was the President of Ireland, Mrs Mary McAleese. She was honoured with a Fellowship from the Irish Genealogical Research Society in recognition of her contribution to Irish genealogy, both at home and abroad. Other guests included Government ministers and TDs, as well as representatives from the Embassies of Britain, the US and Portugal.

#### Background Information on Irish Genealogical Research Society:

The Irish Genealogical Research Society (IGRS) was established in 1936 in response to the loss of the Irish 'national memory' in 1922, when the Public Record Office was destroyed as a result of the shelling of Dublin's Four Courts during the Civil War. The Society's founding aim was to encourage and promote the study of Irish genealogy and to build up a library of books and manuscripts of value to the genealogical research process. The Society now has the largest and most important collection of Irish genealogical books and manuscripts in private hands. These hugely important manuscript collections contain innumerable copies of deeds, wills, court decrees, agreements and genealogies, which were destroyed in 1922.

For more information visit the website at [www.igrsoc.org](http://www.igrsoc.org)

Contact Details:

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## The Clean Sweep launched

**19 July 2011:** National Library of Ireland invites the public to take a peek behind the scenes at mammoth project involving the cleaning and preservation of 50,000 iconic and rare books dating from 1600s onwards

Earlier today (19 July, 2011) the National Library threw open its doors and invited the public to take a peek behind the scenes at ‘The Clean Sweep’ – a mammoth project involving the cleaning and preservation of more than 50,000 iconic and rare books dating from the early 1600s onwards.

Each weekday afternoon from now until end December, visitors will be able to view the work underway, ask highly technical questions, or simply talk to the preservation team about the project. Recently preserved and exquisitely beautiful literary and historical gems will be on display.

This is the first time in its 134-year history that the Library has offered visitors an opportunity to look behind the scenes at the work being carried out there on books that have shaped Irish history and culture.

For most visitors, this will be their first time to observe work being carried out on extremely rare treasures. They can view the range of technology and cleaning processes used to preserve exquisitely beautiful literary and historical gems, including some of the earliest printed books in the Irish language; leather-bound volumes richly decorated with gold tooling on topics ranging from history, law and religion to fairy tales, comedy and travel; collectors’ editions of works by world-renowned Irish writers such as Jonathan Swift, William Butler Yeats, Samuel Beckett and James Joyce.

The opportunity to observe ‘The Clean Sweep’ (the largest preservation and storage project to be carried out in the National Library in over one hundred years) will appeal to people of all ages, but most particularly to anyone who is curious about the technical work that goes on in the Library. The Clean Sweep project marries old and new by harnessing the best available technology, such as digital book measurers and computer aided design (CAD) software for the purpose of preserving the nation’s historic collections in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. The forthcoming introduction of WiFi in the National Library will further streamline the project.

From 2pm to 4.30pm each weekday, visitors will be able to get a close-up view of the work in progress. They will also have an opportunity to ask the Preservation team questions about the techniques used to preserve the Library’s rare volumes. If they

wish, they can get practical tips on how to go about preserving their own collections of books and precious paper-based materials which may be languishing at home and in danger of deterioration.

The project is led by Conservator Nikki Ralston who will be on hand to talk to visitors about some of the exquisitely beautiful literary gems that her team have worked on in recent weeks.

Members of the public who are unable to travel to the National Library can log on to the Library's website [www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie) to access further information on the project or get advice on how to preserve their own treasures. They can also follow progress on the project, see close-up shots of many of the fascinating items handled by the preservation team each day, and read regular blog posts about the Preservation team's fantastic finds at [www.nli.ie/blog](http://www.nli.ie/blog)

By end December of this year, more than 50,000 books will have been cleaned and sealed into individual tailor-made protective boxes ready for transfer to a purpose-built off-site storage facility – if this facility can be funded. The boxes, which are specially designed to protect each item from dust, humidity and other environmental-related damage for decades to come, are manufactured in the Library by an automated box-making machine using innovative digital technology and CAD software.

Note to editors: Currently, none of the Library's collections which include books newspapers, manuscripts maps and photographs are stored safely. The 'Clean Sweep' is a critical project but it is however merely a stopgap arrangement. The National Library urgently needs proper storage facilities if it is to prevent further serious damage being caused to the National Collections due to decades of inappropriate storage conditions on the Kildare Street site and in other offsite storage locations.

For further information call Brenda O'Hanlon on 087 258 3292

### **Small Lives at the National Photographic Archive**

**26 July 2011:** Richly dressed 19th century children gaze out of studio portraits, while images of children making fishing nets in West Cork industrial schools, or learning lace-making in Donegal hang side by side with 20th century boys and girls praying, acting out war games or getting ready for a day at the beach. These are just some of the many photographs in the exhibition Small Lives where captivating views of Irish childhood between 1880 and 1970 juxtapose children's lives with the broad sweep of Irish social and political history.

From stiff 19th century studio portraits of wealthy children dressed in their best to more candid shots of cheeky 20th century city kids wearing hand-me-downs and glaring at the photographer; from themes of wealth, poverty, industrial schools, rural life, work and causing divilment to the serious issues of religious worship and major events in Irish history, Small Lives has it all.

This captivating new exhibition showcasing images of Irish childhood between 1880 and 1970 opens at the National Photographic Archive in Temple Bar on 25 August.

It features many photographs drawn from across the National Library of Ireland's (NLI) 630,000-strong photographic collections. The photographs show Irish children not just in the context of their own lives but also against the backdrop of Irish history, depicting the young witnesses to major events such as the Civil War; Michael Collins' funeral in 1922; the centenary celebrations for Catholic Emancipation in 1929; the Eucharistic Congress in 1932 – events which were an important part of 20th century Irish social and political life.

Happy seaside shots taken around 1890 showing impractically dressed little girls daring each other to go deeper into the waves or behaving in a most unladylike fashion on their tricycles. Images of enthusiastic dancers lining up for the 1924 St Patrick's Day Parade hang side by side with scenes of delighted youngsters skipping outside Ballymun flats in 1969 or taking part in a convent school dance exercise class in 1908.

Harsh social realities of Ireland are captured in images of very young boys learning net making in the Industrial Fishing School in Baltimore West Cork in 1944; schoolboys in poverty-stricken Donegal in 1892; shabbily dressed boys transporting creels of turf in Connemara in 1900; 'pampootie-clad' girls on the Aran Islands in 1939; young girls being taught to make crochet lace in Donegal in 1880; members of the Travelling Community standing in front of a traditional caravan in 1954.

The process of selecting images that would represent the spectrum of Irish childhood proved challenging. "We didn't want to focus exclusively on people who could afford to have their photographs taken" says the exhibition's curator Aoife O'Connor. "I trawled through at least 25,000 photographs before I managed to select the final 50. The breadth of the Library's photographic collection is staggering." Although it is impossible to pick a favourite from all the stories these photographs tell, Aoife does love one particular image from the Wiltshire collection – that of a young girl praying. "Most children love to challenge photographers, by making silly faces and so on, but this little girl just gives the photographer a piercing glare. And that's really the aim of photography – to capture the ordinary in an extraordinary way."

The Library team look forward to welcoming hordes of small people, big people, families, school tour groups and other visitors to Small Lives in the months ahead. As well as displays of fabulous photographs, the exhibition features a range of educational materials and a curator board where visitors can comment on their favourite images.

Small Lives runs at the National Photographic Archive in Temple Bar from August 2011 until June 2012.

For further information call Brenda O'Hanlon on 087 258 3292 or Aoife O'Connor on 6030 346 or 087 315 5500

'Creative Cities' symposium – photocall

**31 August 2011**

EVENT: President of National Library of France, Bruno Racine, to give presentation on how France, the world's leader in national archives digitisation technology, is managing the preservation of its national collections at one-day 'Creative Cities' symposium

TIME/ 4pm Thursday 1 September 2011

VENUE: Long Room HUB, Trinity College

The Long Room HUB, Trinity College Dublin will be the venue the one-day for 'Creative Cities Symposium' where Bruno Racine, President, Bibliotheque Nationale de France will give the keynote address on how France, the world leader in the area of digitising national collections, is addressing the challenges posed by digitisation.

The Creative Cities Symposium is being hosted jointly by Trinity College Dublin, the National Library of Ireland and the French Embassy in Dublin. It was created by Trinity College Dublin Cultural Coordinator, Dr Catherine Morris.

A photocall with Bruno Racine, Dr Jane Ohlmeyer, Professor of Modern History, Trinity College Dublin; Fiona Ross, Director, National Library of Ireland and Robin Adams, Librarian and College Archivist, Trinity College Dublin will take place at 4pm in the Long Room Hub, Trinity College Dublin on Thursday 1 September.

Ends

For further information call Brenda O'Hanlon on 087 258 3292  
or Dr Catherine Morris, Trinity College/National Library of Ireland Cultural Coordinator on 01 896 4226 or 087 954 2339

**Michael D Higgins to donate his archive to the National Library of Ireland.**

## **20 September 2011: PHOTOCALL/INVITATION**

Michael D Higgins to donate his archive to the National Library of Ireland. Reception to mark the formal handover of the archive to take place at 6pm on Tuesday 20 September in the Seminar Room, National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin.

The Director of the National Library of Ireland, Fiona Ross, requests the pleasure of your company at a reception to be held at 6pm on Tuesday 20 September 2011 to mark the official donation of the archive of Michael D Higgins to the National Library of Ireland.

The archive material covers Mr Higgins' life as a politician, human rights activist,



international statesman and campaigner for justice and peace, academic, writer and poet.

Selected items from the archive reflecting many facets of Mr Higgins' career will be on display at Tuesday evening's reception.

The guest speaker on the evening will be Diarmaid Ferriter, Professor of Modern Irish History, School of History and Archives at University College Dublin; Member of the Board of the National Library of Ireland.

Biographical note: Michael D Higgins has been nominated by the Labour Party as a candidate in the forthcoming Presidential election. He has been elected to Galway City and County Council, Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann. He has served as Mayor of Galway, President of the European Council of Culture Ministers and is a former Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht. For more information on Michael D Higgins, please visit his website [www.michaeldhiggins.ie](http://www.michaeldhiggins.ie)

Michael D Higgins has had a distinguished academic career, and, in 2006, was appointed Adjunct Professor affiliated to the Irish Centre for Human Rights at NUI Galway. He has published four collections of poetry, most recently *New and Selected Poems* (2011), and a collection of essays, *Causes for Concern* (2007).

The National Library of Ireland would be pleased to circulate images from the archive to the media.

For further information call Brenda O'Hanlon on 087 258 3292

### Culture Night at the NLI

**23 September 2011:** Brand new series of National Library 'Write in the City' creative writing workshops and writing classes for would-be writers of all ages launched on Culture Night.

Celebrations with free event programme comprising 'taster readings' from some of Dublin's most exciting new writers, interspersed with performances by up-and-coming Irish musicians and singers. Cups of stew, tagines, mini pizzas and plates of Irish cheese and charcuterie, plus wine at knockdown prices in the Library's Cafe Joly.

Culture Night (Friday 23 September) sees the launch of 'Write in the City', a new series of Saturday creative writing workshops and writing classes aimed at would-be authors, poets and members of the public, to be held in the National Library of Ireland's Cafe Joly this Autumn/Winter.

The first of the blend of creative writing workshops, writing classes and coaching sessions (ranging in duration from two to ten weeks) begins on Saturday 22 October, and will continue on Saturday mornings and afternoons throughout the winter.

To launch these classes (which will be given by well-known creative writing teacher Yvonne Cullen), and as part of the National Library of Ireland's range of Culture Night events, Yvonne Cullen has organised a free programme of entertainment including:

- 'taster readings' by some of Dublin's finest new writers ('graduates' of her Writing Train Writing Workshops)
- Music by up-and-coming musicians including 'The 9pm Project' (featuring fiddle and concertina); and performances of Irish and Italian opera as well as songs by Sinead Flynn (soprano)
- Performances of vintage songs by Shane McGrath and 'Ernie and Bert'.
- A gramophone DJ set from Yvonne Cullen and James Stafford (dressed 'vintage,')

Members of the public are encouraged to wear a little something vintage tonight, to help the party go.

Booking for the creative writing classes is essential as class sizes will be limited to ten participants in order to enable best quality of interaction with Yvonne Cullen.

For bookings, contact [writingcity@gmail.com](mailto:writingcity@gmail.com) or call 086 170 1418. For general information on Writing Train, email [writingtrain@gmail.com](mailto:writingtrain@gmail.com) or visit [www.yvonnecullen.wordpress.com](http://www.yvonnecullen.wordpress.com). Phone 086 170 1418 and 01-280 6431 or visit the National Library of Ireland website [www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie)

For media-related queries, call Brenda O'Hanlon on 087 258 3292

### Author and playwright Roddy Doyle and the Rathdown School Choir join forces for 'Fighting Words'

**14 December 2011:** Author and playwright Roddy Doyle and the Rathdown School Choir will join forces for a special event in the Main Hall of the National Library of Ireland on Wednesday 14 December in aid of Roddy Doyle's charity 'Fighting Words'.

The programme for the event, which starts at 8pm, will feature readings by Roddy Doyle and a performance of Christmas carols by the Rathdown School Choir.

Children and adults are invited to bring along copies of their favourite Roddy Doyle books for the author to sign.

Admission to the event is free but donations to Fighting Words ([www.fightingwords.ie](http://www.fightingwords.ie)) will be welcomed.

A word about Fighting Words

Fighting Words provides free tutoring in all forms of creative writing for students of all ages. It was founded by Roddy Doyle and Sean Love. Inspired by 826 Valencia in San Francisco, Fighting Words is located on Behan Square, Russell Street, Dublin 1, close to Croke Park.

For further information call Brenda O'Hanlon on 087 258 3292

### Donation of the literary papers of Irish Nobel laureate Dr Seamus Heaney to the National Library of Ireland

**21 December, 2011:** Taoiseach Enda Kenny, accompanied by Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Jimmy Deenihan, officiates at donation of the literary papers of Irish Nobel laureate Dr Seamus Heaney to the National Library of Ireland

The Taoiseach, Mr Enda Kenny TD, accompanied by Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Mr Jimmy Deenihan TD, attended a reception this morning to mark the hand-over of the literary papers of Irish Nobel laureate Dr Seamus Heaney to the National Library of Ireland. Speaking in the National Library's reading room, the Taoiseach singled out the Archive's "mixture of the familiar and the unknown", describing it as "an invaluable resource which offers an extraordinary insight into how poetry is imagined and elaborated before it appears in print".

Minister Deenihan called the donation "a thread of continuity between writers and the National Library, where Dr Heaney himself, like many great Irish writers before him, has researched, worked and written."

The reception, which took place in the National Library of Ireland Reading Room, was attended by Dr Heaney, his wife Marie and members of their family.

At the heart of the Archive are the manuscripts of Seamus Heaney's poetry – a comprehensive and vast collection of loose-leaf, typescript and manuscript worksheets and bound notebooks that span Heaney's literary career from the publication of his first major collection *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), onto volumes such as *Wintering Out* (1972) and *North* (1975), right through to *Station Island* (1984), *Seeing Things* (1991) and his most recent publications *District and Circle* (2006) and *Human Chain* (2010).

The Archive also illuminates Dr Heaney's extensive career as a teacher, academic, broadcaster, literary critic and man of letters. Included are typescript and manuscript drafts of his prose works including *The Government of the Tongue* (1988) and the early drafts of lectures, delivered as Oxford Professor of Poetry, which were subsequently collected and published in *The Redress of Poetry* (1995).

Similarly represented in the Archive is Dr Heaney's work as a translator – notably his collaborations with Stanislaw Baranczak on an English language translation of the poems of Polish poet Jan Kochanowski, published in 1995, and his translations from the poetry of Brian Merriman published in 2000. His re-workings of the work of Sophocles also feature in drafts of his first play *The Cure at Troy* which was produced by the Field Day Theatre Company in 1990, of which Heaney has served as a Director, and his second dramatic work *The Burial at Thebes* which was commissioned by the Abbey Theatre for its centenary year.

This fascinating literary archive, the working papers of one of Ireland's greatest living writer, is an extraordinary addition to the National Library's treasures. It complements collections which include the literary papers of several internationally acclaimed contemporary Irish writers, including Marina Carr, Roddy Doyle, Paul Durcan, Brian Friel, Hugo Hamilton, John Montague, Edna O'Brien and Colm Tóibín. It also holds the papers of Maria Edgeworth, George Moore, Kate O'Brien, Patrick Kavanagh, Brendan Behan, Benedict Kiely, Christy Brown, James Plunkett and James Joyce. Welcoming the donation, the Director of the National Library of Ireland, Fiona Ross said that Dr Heaney's extraordinary gift as a poet enriches us all and is a source of great honour and pride to Ireland.

“The archive is an extraordinary record of a lifetime's work by one of the leading Irish writers of his generation, the best-known poet in the English-speaking world. It is unique in its comprehensiveness, its range and multiplicity. Given the move to electronic records, it may be one of the last paper archives of a major writer to become available. It is likely to attract many researchers, cultural tourists and other visitors to Dublin for many years to come. The Library is proud to become a centre for Heaney scholarship and we look forward to making this collection available to scholars and researchers from all over the world”, Ms Ross concluded.

Ends

For further information please call Katherine McSharry, Head of Services, National Library of Ireland on 087 994 8144.

#### NOTE TO EDITORS

##### Biographical Note: Dr Seamus Heaney

Seamus Heaney was born in 1939 in Co Derry, educated in Northern Ireland, and has lived since 1972 in the Republic of Ireland. He is the author of 11 major collections of poetry including *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) and *District and Circle* (2006); two plays (adapted from Greek tragedies), and several collections of prose writings. He has held academic posts at Queen's University Belfast; the University of California, Berkeley; Harvard University (where he was Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory), and Oxford University (where he was elected Professor of Poetry). He has been the recipient of many international prizes, including the Whitbread Book of the Year (1996, 1999); the TS Eliot Prize for Poetry (2006); the David Cohen Prize for Literature (2009), and the Nobel Prize for Literature (1995). He is a Saoi of Aosdána, a member of the Royal Irish Academy, and has been awarded honorary degrees by many universities around the world.

Additional information on the literary archive donated to the National Library of Ireland

Among the enormous collection of manuscripts of poetry are extensive files of drafts and worksheets relating to Seamus Heaney's books *Wintering Out* (1972); *North* (1975), *Seeing Things* (1991) and *Electric Light* (2001). From these files it is possible to trace the imaginative development of individual poems from first manuscript versions through multiple typescript drafts to correct proofs and final text. A remarkable feature of the archive is the number of unpublished poems in manuscript: early poems from his students days; an entire volume offered to another publisher before *Death of a Naturalist* was accepted by Faber; discarded drafts of poems, some of which were later re-worked in other forms; poems which were not considered successful enough to be included in book collections. All of this material will be of great value to scholars in exploring the honing of Seamus Heaney's poetic skills, the range of his experimentation, and the exacting standards he sets himself for his work.

As well as individual files of loose leaf material associated with individual books of poems, the archive contains a very large series of bound notebooks, some from the very beginning of his writing career. The notebooks contain manuscripts of poems juxtaposed with personal notes, drafts of lectures and other materials. They provide a fascinating insight into his working methods and the way in which certain themes, preoccupations and ideas came together at a particular point in time.

Materials related to his other creative work include his first play *The Cure of Troy* (1990); *The Burial at Thebes*, which was commissioned by the Abbey Theatre in 2004, and an adaptation of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (produced by the Field Day Theatre Company, of which Seamus Heaney was a Director). This will complement the National Library of Ireland's already extensive Field Day archive which documents one of the most significant theatrical and cultural enterprises of the 1980s. Field Day sought to provide new images of Irish identity, north and south, at a time of serious political conflict on the island of Ireland.

Also included are scripts of RTE and BBC radio and television programmes in which Seamus Heaney was involved, as well as drafts of the lectures he delivered at Oxford, Harvard and other major universities.