What is the National Library of Ireland?

The National Library of Ireland is home to the largest collection of Irish-related resource materials in the world. It is the aim of the library to collect and make available to the public all printed books of Irish interest. This includes all books published in Ireland; all books by Irish authors; as well as books containing subject matter of Irish interest.

In addition to this, the library also contains items such as maps, newspapers, journals, government publications, and also holds a number of unique collections of photographs, prints & drawings, as well as a substantial collection of manuscripts.

The library also offers a number of resources which you can consult online, at home or in class. These include an online catalogue, virtual exhibitions and digitised documents.

How can the Library help you?

First, have you checked your public library? They may have what you want and can lend it to you. See www.library.ie for a list of public libraries and catalogues.

Students sitting the Ordinary Level Leaving Certificate History exam will need to use **a minimum of 2 sources** in their Research Study; students sitting the Higher Level exam will need to use **3 or more sources**. Because of its Irish focus, the NLI and its collections will be of particular use to you if you are doing your Research Study in the field of Irish history. Let us help you to find the right 2 or 3 sources for you!

What will this guide tell you?

This short guide will introduce the Library and its collections to you and help you to make the most of what the NLI has to offer. It will explain how you can find and use the sources within the Library's collections which are of most use to your Research Study, whether they are online or in our buildings on Kildare Street, Dublin.

At the end of the guide you will find all the information you need to visit the Library and consult the collections in person.

The NLI sources described in this guide are:

- Books and printed material
- Manuscripts
- Newspapers
- Photographs + visual collections
- Online exhibition resources

What to expect when you visit the NLI:

- The National Library of Ireland is not a lending library - its collections are for reference in its reading rooms.

- To use the Reading Room and consult NLI material you will need a reader's ticket. Getting a reader's ticket is very straightforward, and it's free of charge. You will find information about how to apply for a ticket at the end of this guide.

- Most of our material is kept behind the scenes. A pre-ordering system is in place whereby you can request up to five items at a time. These items are then delivered to you according to regular intervals throughout the day. You can also order items prior to your visit by emailing: mainrr@nli.ie.

- Pre-ordering of materials is also required when consulting the manuscripts collection. For more information about manuscripts, see page 6 of this guide.

- You can take notes using a pencil (to help us look after our collections, pens are not allowed in the reading room) or you can photocopy pages.

Library Reading Room

Why not familiarise yourself with the Library and its Reading Room before you visit by taking an **online tour** on our website, www.nli.ie?

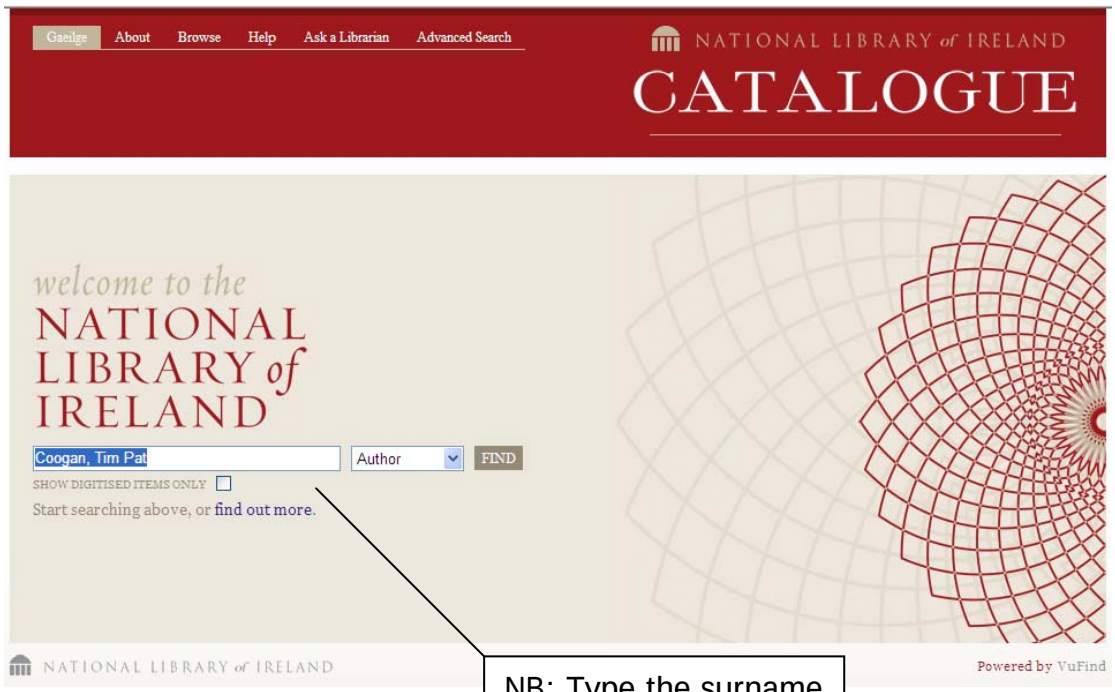
Books and printed material

Our printed collection covers a wide range of primary and secondary sources – from printed editions of speeches, letters and diaries to biographies and autobiographies to specialist secondary and journal articles.

The best place to begin your book search is at home using our online catalogue. This will tell you whether the NLI has the books you need before you visit. You will find a link to the catalogue on our homepage, www.nli.ie

Using the catalogue you can look for a book by searching for its author, title, subject or subject keyword.

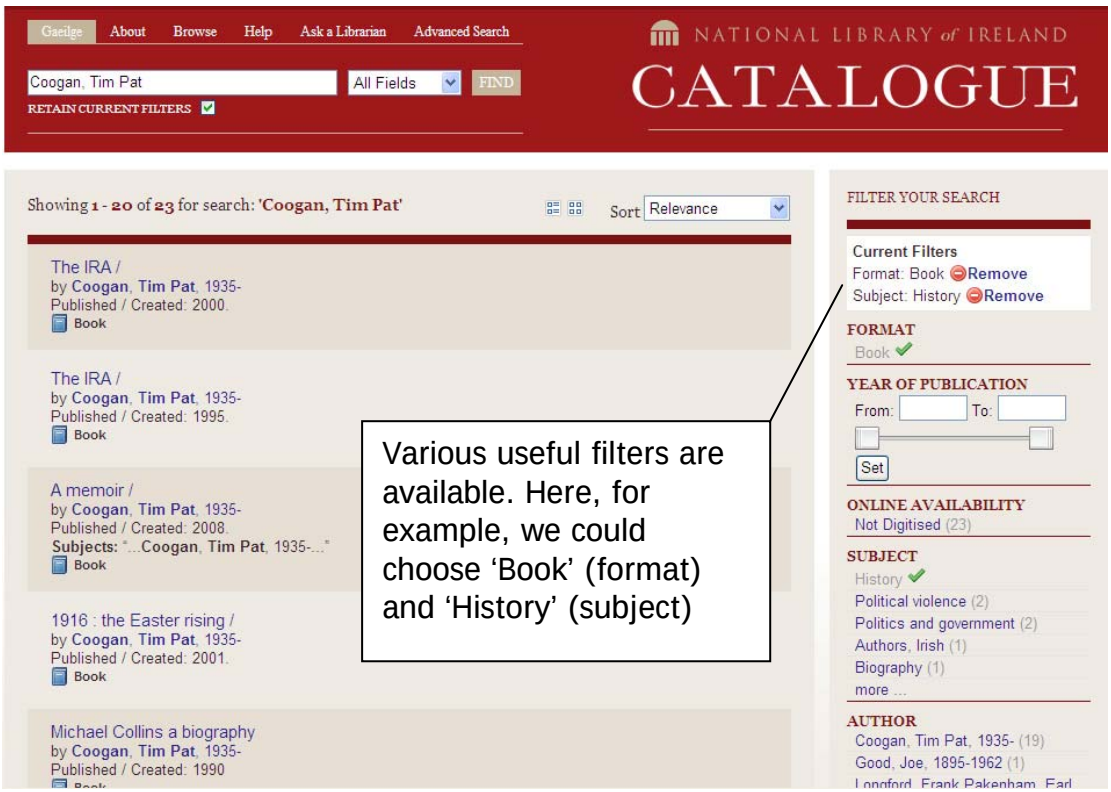
The screenshot below shows you an example search for the author, Tim Pat Coogan:

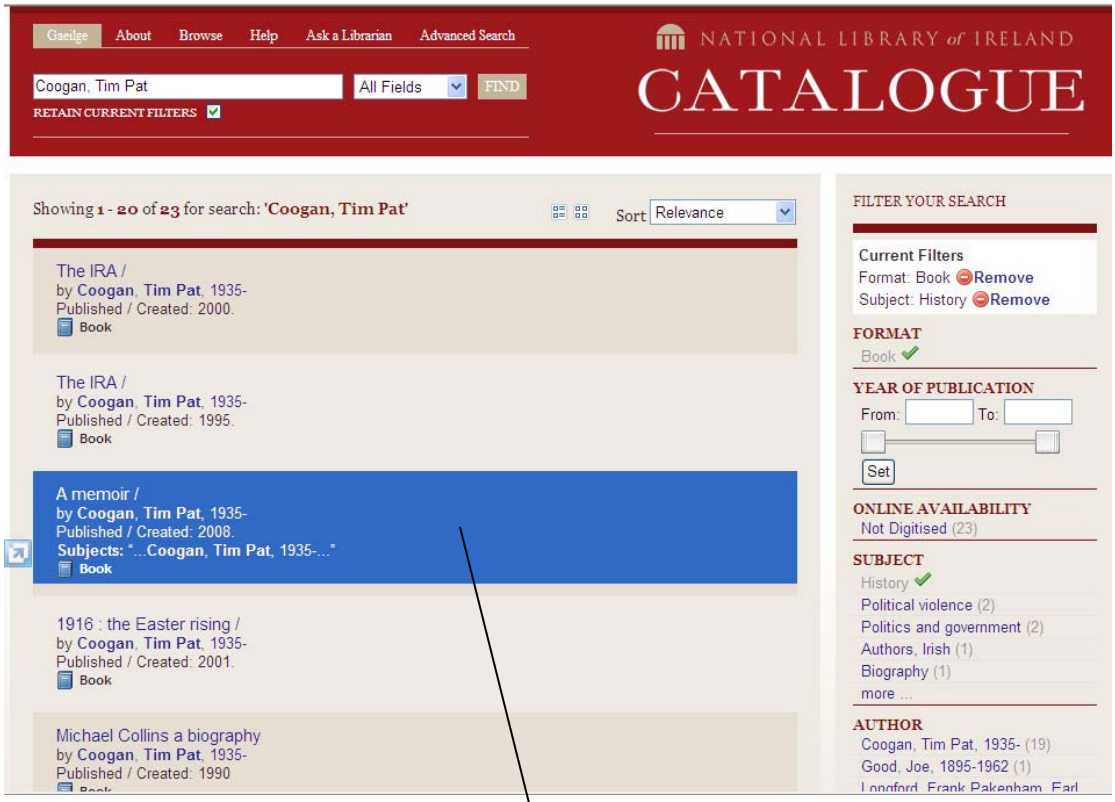


NB: Type the surname first, followed by the first name

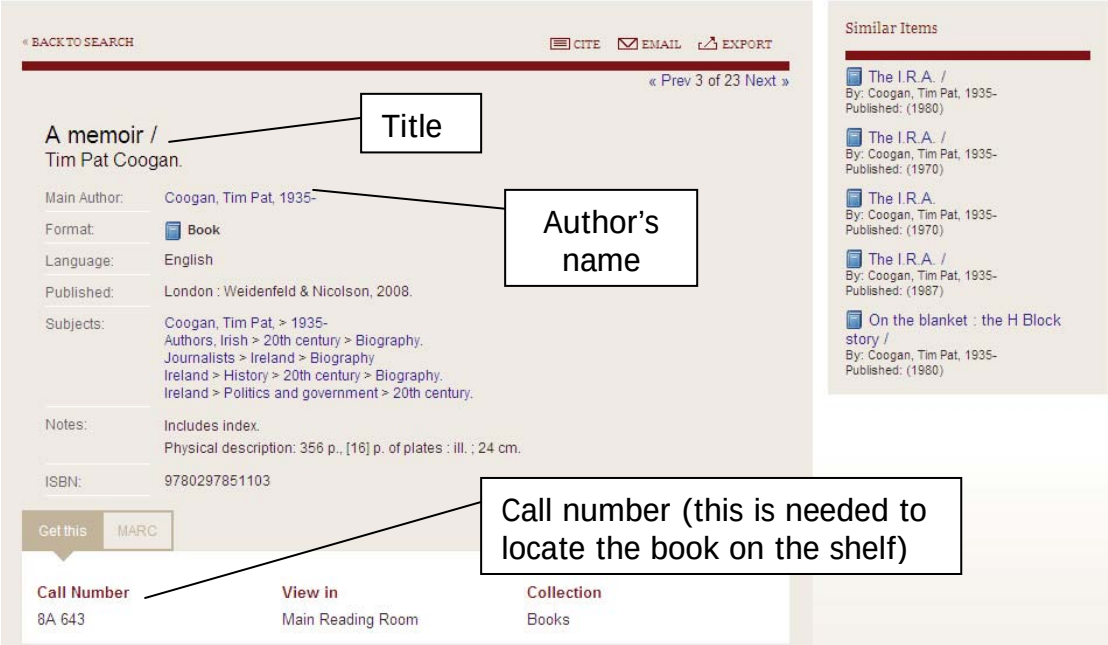
When you press ‘return’ the following screen will appear:

If necessary, the criteria can be narrowed down to create a more accurate search:





Once you have found the title you are interested in, you will need to find out its call number. Click on the title.



Remember: If you want to see the book when you visit the Library, the three pieces of information you need to record are the author's name, the title and the call number.

The best way to learn about the **book catalogue** is to spend some time exploring it by running some searches yourself. Try these questions to help you get started:

1) How many titles by author R.F. Foster does the NLI hold?

2) What is the call number for J.J. Lee's book, *Ireland 1912 – 1985, politics and society*?

3) Using the 'subject keyword' search, see if there are many titles relating to the history of your town. (Remember to enter just one word at a time!) Choose one and record the title, author's name and call number.

Manuscripts

Having a reader's ticket means you can also access our collection of manuscripts. The reading room for the Department of Manuscripts is situated on the second floor of 2-3 Kildare Street. If you wish to visit the manuscript reading room and to view materials, please avail of our advance ordering facility. To place an order for viewing of material, please log your request by 9.00am on the day in question. Advance orders for the delivery of manuscript material will be accepted by email to manuscriptsrr@nli.ie or by telephone to (01) 6030 386. When in the Manuscripts Reading Room, you can place advance orders for further delivery of materials throughout the day (5 items per order).

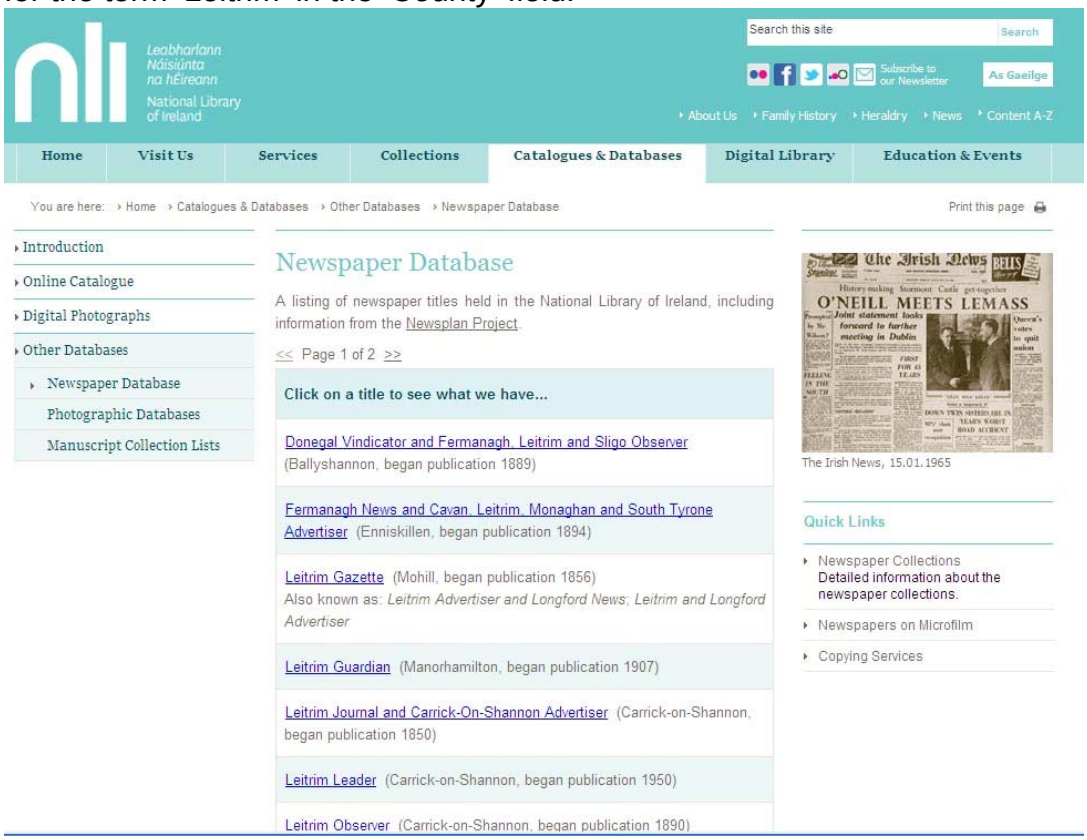
Newspapers

Newspapers are a valuable primary source as they provide contemporary commentary on the events you are researching. The NLI collects all newspaper titles published on the island of Ireland as well as many newspapers of Irish interest which are printed abroad.

The best place to begin your research is at home. You will find a list of all the newspapers held by the NLI on the newspaper online catalogue – log on to www.nli.ie and select 'newspaper database' from the online catalogue section on the homepage.

Using the newspaper database you can search for newspapers by title and by county.

The image below shows you the list of titles which appear when you search for the term 'Leitrim' in the 'County' field:



The search results indicate a start date of publication. Clicking on an individual title (e.g. 'Leitrim Gazette') will bring up more detailed information about the holding; including the format (either hardcopy or **microfilm**) it is available in. Select 'Newsplan Information' at the bottom of the screen, this will provide a list of other libraries that hold this title.

A Note about Microfilm:

Some newspapers are printed on thin, cheap paper that is not intended to last very long. Over time, even moderate handling of newspaper can cause it to tear and smudge. This poses preservation problems for libraries such as the NLI, whose many readers want to use primary, newspaper sources in their research. To prevent damage to the original copies, newspapers are photographed page by page, in miniature, on to reels of film in a process called microfilming. Reels of microfilm can be magnified and read in the NLI reading room using special microfilm machines.

Most of the newspapers you will consult at the NLI will be on microfilm. Library Assistants are always on hand to show you how to use the microfilm machines and the special microfilm printers – microfilm print-outs cost 50c per page.

Get searching!

Again, the best way to familiarise yourself with the catalogue is through trial and error. Log onto the Newspaper database and run a few searches yourself. Use the questions below to help you get started:

1) How many titles can you find for Mayo? (Remember that there may be more than one page of search results!)

2) For what period does the NLI hold the *Enniscorthy Guardian*?

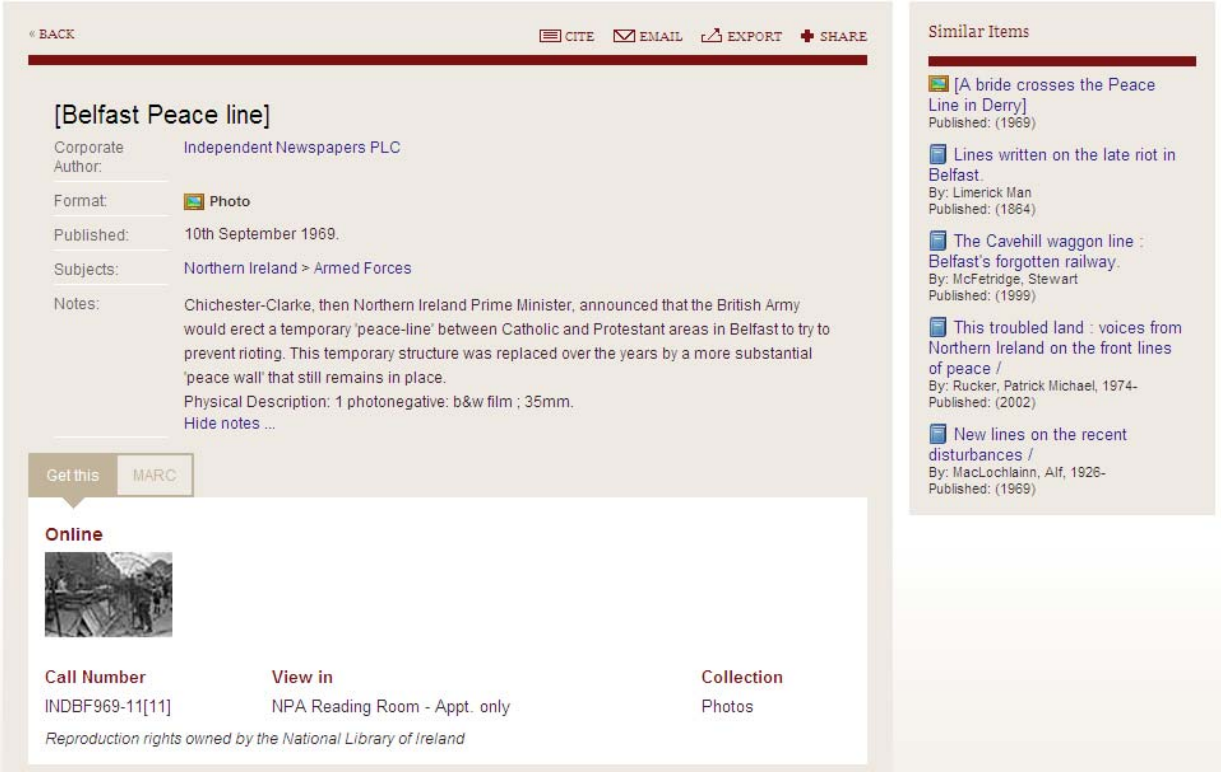
3) Does the Library hold a copy of the Irish Daily Independent for 17 March 1920?

Photographs

Photographs are a valuable primary source as they provide an eye-witness, visual record of historic events in motion. The NLI has a huge collection of over half a million photographs which document life in Ireland from the late nineteenth century up to the present day.

Many of our photographs may be viewed on our website (www.nli.ie) using the online catalogue. You can search for photographs the same way as you would search for books. Images are catalogued according to photographer, title, subject keywords and call numbers.

For example, a title search for 'Belfast peace line' brings up the page below; it contains the thumbnail image and background information about the photograph. You can right-click on the thumbnail to see the photograph in greater detail, or to print it out.


« BACK

CITE EMAIL EXPORT SHARE

[Belfast Peace line]

Corporate Author: Independent Newspapers PLC

Format: Photo

Published: 10th September 1969.

Subjects: Northern Ireland > Armed Forces

Notes: Chichester-Clarke, then Northern Ireland Prime Minister, announced that the British Army would erect a temporary 'peace-line' between Catholic and Protestant areas in Belfast to try to prevent rioting. This temporary structure was replaced over the years by a more substantial 'peace wall' that still remains in place.
Physical Description: 1 photonegative: b&w film ; 35mm.
Hide notes ...

Get this MARC

Online

Call Number: INDBF969-11[11]

View in: NPA Reading Room - Appt. only

Collection: Photos

Reproduction rights owned by the National Library of Ireland

Similar Items

[A bride crosses the Peace Line in Derry]
Published: (1969)

Lines written on the late riot in Belfast.
By: Limerick Man
Published: (1864)

The Cavehill waggon line : Belfast's forgotten railway.
By: McFetridge, Stewart
Published: (1999)

This troubled land : voices from Northern Ireland on the front lines of peace /
By: Rucker, Patrick Michael, 1974-
Published: (2002)

New lines on the recent disturbances /
By: MacLochlainn, Alf, 1926-
Published: (1969)

Online Exhibition Resources

In addition to selected photographs, you can access many of the National Library's other resources online by visiting one of our two virtual exhibitions: *Yeats: the life and works of William Butler Yeats* and *1916: personalities and perspectives*.

www.nli.ie/yeats
Even if you are not studying any of Yeats' poetry, this online exhibition is a good place to get an overview of the Ireland Yeats lived in from the 1880s until the 1930s. This online exhibition brings to life not only the poet's literary manuscripts but also his letters and other contemporary documents which may prove to be valuable source documents in your research.

www.nli.ie/1916
This online exhibition contains over 500 primary documents from the Library's collections relating to the Easter Rising and the personalities involved as well as a comprehensive bibliography of specialist secondary sources.

So what next?

Once you have identified the NLI resources that you would like to consult you can start to plan your visit to the National Library. You will find information about where to find us and our opening hours on our website, www.nli.ie. Once you get to the Library, you will need to apply for a reader's ticket

Applying for a Reader's Ticket

Applying for a reader's ticket is easy, and only takes a few minutes. To apply for a reader's ticket, you will need the following:

1) Photographic ID

2) Readers under the age of 16 will require a reference from a history teacher.

Bring these with you to the reading room and your ticket will be issued by a member of staff. You may also feel free to request a basic orientation session from one of our staff on duty.

We hope you have found this guide useful* and that it will help you to identify and locate the right NLI resources for you. We hope you find your time at the National Library rewarding and enjoyable and wish you good luck with your research!

* We want this resource guide to be as useful as possible so please let us know if there was anything you felt should have been included here but was not. Please email learning@nli.ie with your comments.