MEDIA RELEASE

NATIONAL LIBRARY of IRELAND

Mammoth project almost 70 years in the making goes online

11 November, 2009: Today sees the dawning of a new era, following the launch by the National Library of Ireland of a free on-line research service designed to save researchers having to plough through numerous bulky printed catalogues comprising 17,000 pages of records in order to find out where research materials of Irish interest are located.

By logging on to '**Sources'**, the National Library of Ireland's new digital directory of Irish studies (http://sources.nli.ie), people can now retrieve any one of up to 196,574 records of materials housed in the National Library of Ireland or in universities and research institutions around the world. Subjects covered in the materials range from art, architecture and archaeology through economics and genealogy to history, politics, literature, science and zoology.

As a result of being able to source this information on line, the initial research period is now reduced from at least several days to just a few minutes.

'Sources' will be launched later today (Wednesday 11 November, 2009) by Dr Martin Mansergh, TD, Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism at a reception held in the Library.

The '**Sources**' digital directory pinpoints exactly what Irish interest material is held where – information which previously could only be accessed by consulting the bulky printed catalogues in either the National Library of Ireland in Dublin or one of a limited number of university libraries or major research institutions holding the complete set of printed records. With the click of a mouse anyone can now access the Sources database via a PC and can start the process of researching what material exists on a particular topic, and in what library or institution around the world that material is held.

For the first time, it will be possible to search the manuscript and periodicals records together. As a result, someone doing research on their local area might find information about manuscript maps, estate papers and business records for local shopkeepers, as well as details for articles in local history journals. Once the records are found, the information can be easily emailed or shared to bookmarking and social networking sites such as Delicious and Twitter. Other features of 'Sources' include an interactive map showing the location of all the archives and libraries around the world where the Irish material listed is stored. Full contact details for each outlet are also provided.

The current process of digitising the original 'Hayes Sources' data represents an investment of several years' work by the National Library of Ireland. Commenting on the launch, Aongus Ó hAonghusa, Director, National Library of Ireland noted:

"For decades, the original *Manuscripts Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation*, or 'Hayes Sources' as it is more commonly known, proved to be a tried and trusted resource for researchers in any and all fields of study relating to Ireland and its people, at home and abroad.

"Now, it has been given a new life, and a slightly less unwieldy name, in an online arena. The unprecedented opportunity it will provide for current and future generations of researchers worldwide to find Irish source material from their desktops, wherever they may be, would surely have pleased Richard Hayes and his dedicated team who first embarked on this mammoth indexing task almost 70 years ago."

Note for editors

(1) The launch of the project comes almost 70 years after Dr Richard J Hayes, Director of the National Library of Ireland from 1940 to 1967, initiated a project and led a team of researchers who produced almost 200,000 indexed references to some of the most important manuscripts and journals of Irish interest. The project resulted in two major publications: *Manuscript Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation* and *Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation: Articles in Irish Periodicals*. The original hard copy of Manuscript Sources was contained in 11 volumes produced in 1965, with a further three volumes produced in a supplement in 1975. That project created a portal to a vast amount of manuscripts housed in repositories in Ireland and elsewhere. *Periodicals Sources* was published in nine volumes in 1970 and includes bibliographic references to articles appearing in some 157 publications, the earliest of these commencing in 1785.

(2) 'Sources' is just one strand of the National Library of Ireland's emerging digital library programme. Earlier this year, in a move aimed at transforming access by the public to its collections, it introduced another free online service whereby 20,000 photographs from the Lawrence, Poole and Independent Newspapers collections can be viewed on the Library's website www.nli.ie/digital-photographs.aspx.

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