

Ensuring we deliver

Established in 1877, the mission of the National Library of Ireland (NLI) is to collect, protect and make available the recorded memory of Ireland, caring for more than ten million items including books, manuscripts, newspapers, photographs, prints, maps, drawings, ephemera, music and digital media.

The policy outlined in this document was developed in consultation with the National Library's Diversity and Inclusion Committee and adopted by the Board of the National Library in March 2018. The Library Director will report to the Library Board every six months on the progress made towards achieving the actions set out in this policy. The length of time this policy will remain in place, and its format and reporting, are aligned with the NLI Strategy 2016-21.



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National Library of Ireland Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2018-2021

“The national collections tell the story of Ireland. How we collect and how we share and interpret these collections tell a story also. The National Library of Ireland has been building the national collections for over 140 years and over that time Irish society has changed and evolved. Social norms and the diversity of Irish society look very different now from 50 years ago.

“The National Library has always been committed to equality. Our doors are open to all, and it is in this tradition that we now challenge ourselves to ensure that we reflect the change and diversity in what it means to be Irish. How we collect today will shape the story of Ireland in the future. How we engage with and present the national collections influences how people connect with their unique and living culture and heritage.

“The National Library has an important role to play in remembering our past and capturing our present. This policy will help us to create a more diverse and inclusive story of Ireland, so that new voices are collected and shared with the world, and ensuring that everyone will feel welcome in the National Library of Ireland.”

Dr Sandra Collins
Director, National Library of Ireland

The National Library of Ireland's 2016–2021 Strategy is central to everything we do. Our vision is to share the story of Ireland with the world through our unique collections. Our values are to be welcoming, helpful, open, equal and inclusive.

Since our foundation, the National Library has had a unique responsibility to Ireland and her people to preserve, promote and make accessible the documentary and intellectual record of the life of Ireland, while also contributing to the provision of access to the larger universe of recorded knowledge.

This is a responsibility to everyone, and one which means that we must strive to ensure that Ireland is represented in all its diversity, in all of our activities and that equal access to these is provided for everybody.

The National Library is fully committed to equality of opportunity and we foster equality of participation in the Library, regardless of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race, membership of the Traveller community or socio-economic status.

We have a responsibility to create a working environment in which differences are respected and in which all people – staff, partners, suppliers, users and visitors – are valued as individuals.

We are committed to and compliant with equality legislation for our employees and our visitors, including the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015, and Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014, otherwise known as the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

This Diversity and Inclusion Policy sets out our action plan under the National Library's strategic pillars. Under this plan, we will create a more diverse and inclusive story of Ireland, so that new voices are collected and shared with the world, and so that everyone will feel welcome in the National Library of Ireland.

1. Collect

We will review our collections policy through the lens of diversity and inclusion. We will consider how representative the collections we hold are to Ireland today.

This review of our collections policy will be completed during 2018. We expect that it will lead us to focus on one new collection area each year.

2. Protect

During the redevelopment of the NLI's main building, we will find ways to improve physical access and visibility. We will actively integrate solutions into the new building design. These will include providing lift access to all floors and applying best practice to our signage.

3. Connect

We will develop a structured checklist during 2018 to make sure that our programmes, exhibitions and engagement with the public reflect diversity in our own work and in our collaborations. We will ensure advertising and promotional materials are inclusive and non-discriminatory, and we will conduct a broad stakeholder survey in 2019 consulting minority and diverse communities.



4. Innovate

We will collect digital materials, including Irish and Irish-related websites and born-digital materials representing diverse aspects of Irish life.

We will develop and publish a digital collecting policy during 2019.

We will actively consider diversity and inclusion in developing plans for major cataloguing and digitisation projects.

5. Collaborate

We will seek collaborative opportunities to broaden our reach, in order to share the national collections as widely as possible and to introduce new audiences to their unique Irish culture and heritage. We will work with the library community to promote diverse role models for librarianship.

6. Delivery

We will continue our commitment to equality legislation for all employees and visitors, including the Employment Equality Acts 1998–2015, and Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014. We will continue to be vigilant in our recruitment and promotion processes to ensure discrimination is prevented and diversity is welcomed.

The NLI holds the Irish Queer Archive, the most comprehensive archive relating to LGBT history in Ireland.

During 2017, donations to the NLI related to men outnumbered donations related to women by more than 5 to 1.

For the first 100 years of the NLI's existence our senior management was entirely male – today it is 88% female.

The NLI collaborated with the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) and the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) to improve our signage and interpretation.