2007, another remarkable year for the National Library of Ireland

Friday 28 December 2007: In an end-of-year review of the National Library of Ireland's activities, the Chairperson of the Board, Gerard Danaher, SC described 2007 as another remarkable year for the National Library, with almost €13 million being spent on the delivery of its range of services including a significant programme of capital expenditure covering acquisitions, digitisation and other IT-related infrastructure initiatives.

"In particular, the Library's recent investment in a new digitisation programme, coupled with the major revamp of its IT infrastructure and the installation of a new electronic library system, will deliver major benefits to Library users and researchers – both within the reading rooms and online", Mr Danaher noted.

"Signal developments during 2007 included the Library's acquisition of several major literary archives; the launch of an extensive range of new services, with longer opening hours for exhibitions and 54 hours of service provided to the public each week in the Library's reading rooms, and the Library's active involvement in the new European Digital Library project which will shortly result in the National Library of Ireland's entire online catalogue and digital images being fully searchable from the European Library's website.

"Other highlights included a major publishing industry award win for a book written and produced by three of the Library's staff members; the highest visitor attendance numbers ever recorded at the National Photographic Archive Temple Bar; the granting of planning permission by Dublin City Council for the Library's proposed state-of-the-art storage facility to be constructed just off Kildare Street, and the hosting of a Yeats poetry evening by London-based writer Josephine Hart with readers Bono, Jeremy Irons and Sinead Cusack", Mr Danaher concluded.

This year, for the first time, the Library's two exhibitions ***Yeats: the life and works of William Butler Yeats*** and ***Strangers to Citizens: the Irish in Europe, 1600–1800*** – will remain open to the public over the Christmas holiday period. (The Yeats exhibition explores WB Yeats' literary and cultural legacy and features manuscripts from the Library's Yeats collection, the world's most important archive of such material. The 'Strangers to Citizens' exhibition commemorates the 400th anniversary of the Flight of the Earls and the founding of the Irish College at Louvain.)

During 2007, the Library's collections were particularly enriched by five signal acquisitions.

- The purchase of a collection of 800 printed and ephemeral items by and about Samuel Beckett, including more than 200 items personally inscribed by the writer. Such is the nature of the collection and the extensive number of items contained in it – some of which have been described by experts as very rare – that it now makes the National Library of Ireland an important centre for Beckett studies. As well as printed books and periodicals, the collection includes proof copies, galley proofs and production scripts for Beckett plays. These production scripts show another facet of his many achievements: Beckett as theatre director.

- The purchase of a range of modern Irish manuscript material which provides fascinating insights into prominent personalities in Irish and English politics from the late 17th century to the mid-20th century. Among the manuscripts which are likely to be of particular interest to historians and researchers are a number of items of correspondence between Charles Stewart Parnell and Cecil Rhodes (the British-born South African businessman, mining magnate, politician and coloniser of the state of Rhodesia, which was named after him).

One of the letters written by Rhodes deals with his reaction to Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill. In it, he states that he believes that Irish representation at Westminster should continue, as it has the potential to become the blueprint for a federation of African colonies and facilitate the granting of home rule to those of southern Africa. By way of demonstrating his support for Home Rule, Rhodes offered £10,000 to the Irish Parliamentary Party and sent Parnell a first instalment of £5,000.

- The purchase of a valuable corpus of literary papers relating to the distinguished contemporary poet, writer and broadcaster Paul Durcan, winner of the Patrick Kavanagh Award (1974), the Whitbread Prize for Poetry (1990) and current holder of the post of Ireland Professor of Poetry 2007–2007 (check). The archive acquired by the Library comprises manuscripts, typescripts and proofs for his poetry, prose writings and diary as well as correspondence with writers, editors and publishers, translators, broadcasters, politicians, friends, art dealers, scholars and fans. Also included are drafts of a play *Balthus,* which Brian Friel encouraged Paul Durcan to write, but which was never performed.

- The donation of materials relating to the late-Ria Mooney, the distinguished actress who became the first woman to hold the position of Producer at the Abbey Theatre in 1948. During her distinguished theatrical career, she toured America and she also acted and directed with the Eva La Gallienne Civic Repertory Company in New York. The materials acquired by the Library consist of a large body of correspondence, some photographs, and approximately 220 books from her library. Together, they form a unique archive of primary source material for research on her life and work, and the important role which she played in Irish cultural life.

- The donation of Senator David Norris' personal archive at an official handing-over ceremony on 17 December attended by Mrs Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former legal advisor to Senator Norris. The papers cover Senator Norris' life as a politician, Irish civil rights campaigner, human rights activist, gay rights activist and leading Joycean scholar. A selection of the donated papers will be on temporary display in the Library's Main Hall until early January 2008; they include Senator Norris' original Seanad Electoral Nomination Form in 1981; his recent address to the Joint Commission for Foreign Affairs in January 2007; the press release issued from the International Gay Rights Congress in Edinburgh, December 1974, and a typescript copy of David Norris' Gold Medal award-winning essay 'James Joyce – the Art of Chaos'.

Signal organisational developments this year included:

- The Library's participation in the new European Digital Library project, which will result in the National Library of Ireland's entire online catalogue and digital images being fully searchable from the European Library website, thus making Ireland's collections easily accessible to an ever-increasing virtual audience, from schoolchildren to researchers and family historians. (The digital library project was initiated by the European Library – the Internet portal of the European national libraries – with EU funding and went live as an online service in March 2005. It currently delivers access to 150 million catalogue entries across Europe. When the European Digital Library project goes live in 2008 a further 60-100 new collections from eight national libraries including the National Library of Ireland will be brought into the European Library network.)

- The launch of a range of new library services for the public including longer opening hours and a revamped website which conforms to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Within the main building complex in Kildare Street, more space has been allocated to microfilm services; readers have better access to the collections, and direct

self-service copy facilities are now available for the first time. The redesigned website contains new sections including '***ask a librarian***'; 360º virtual tours of the main Library building and the Photographic Archive and library 'News' and 'Events' sections highlighting new developments and upcoming activities for readers.

- The launch of a wide range of formal and informal learning opportunities for people of all ages – from primary and post-primary school pupils to third level students and lifelong learners. The 2007 summer programme of children's events proved hugely popular with parents and children alike. As part of its programme for lifelong learners the Library has been running a series of eight-week courses entitled 'WB Yeats at the National Library' in conjunction with University College Dublin. (The series, which continues in Spring and Summer 2008, is part of UCD's adult education programme.)

Among the most significant programmes initiated by the Library in 2007 were:

- Summer's Wreath, a month-long programme of activities focused on William Butler Yeats' creativity and legacy. The programme, which was organised by the Library, was centred around Yeats' birthday (13 June) and was run in conjunction with the Library's current exhibition ***Yeats: the life and works of William Butler Yeats.*** The programme included a series of lunchtime readings of Yeats' poetry by leading figures including lawyer Ivana Bacik, composer Michéal Ó Suilleabháin, poet Theo Dorgan, writer Colm Tóibín, senator and academic David Norris and several others. On 13 June, the London-based writer Josephine Hart hosted a poetry evening entirely devoted to Yeats' poetry, setting the poems in the context of his life, and introducing each of the event's readers – Bono, Jeremy Irons and Sinead Cusack.

- The popular 'Library Late' series of monthly public interviews with critically acclaimed writers continued through 2007. The featured writers this year were **Roddy Doyle**, **Hugo Hamilton, MJ Hyland, Alistair MacLeod, Colm Tóibín, Jennifer Johnston, Carlo Gebler, Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill** and **Eoin Colfer**. Innovations to the 2007 programme included the first Irish language event and the first interview for younger readers.

Other significant events which took place this year included:

- The presentation of the 'Best Overall Production Award' and 'Book of the Year 2006' at the 2007 CLÉ – Irish Book Publishers' Association Book Industry Awards for the National Library of Ireland's book *WB Yeats: Works & Days.* The book was written by Library staff members Dr Éilis Ní Dhuibhne, Ciara McDonnell, and Dr James Quinn, co-curators of the Yeats exhibition. The Foreword was written by Dr Roy Foster, Carroll Professor of Irish History at Oxford and authorised biographer of WB Yeats.

- In April and May, 713 pupils from secondary schools in 24 counties throughout Ireland took part in 'POETRY ALOUD', a spoken poetry competition for post-primary school students organised by the Library in conjunction with Poetry Ireland. This year's competition was a celebration of Irish poetry, with entrants choosing poems from a given list of Irish poets. The judges were Professor Brendan Kennelly, poet and teacher; Thomas McCarthy, poet, critic and board member of Poetry Ireland, and Dr Pat Donlon, former Director of the Library and now Director of the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in County Monaghan.

Norris Archive Donated to the National Library of Ireland

December 17th, 2007: The personal archive of Senator David Norris, one of the most significant and colourful figures in Irish political and cultural life, was officially donated to the National Library of

Ireland today. The material, some of which will be on public display until the New Year, covers Senator Norris' life as politician, Irish Civil Rights campaigner, Human Rights Activist, Gay Rights Activist and leading Joycean scholar.

Senator David Norris has served as a member of the Upper House of the Oireachtas, Seanad Éireann since 1981 and as a bureau member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. He was the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in Ireland and has done much to promote and create awareness about Gay Rights around the world. He is well known as one of Ireland's leading Joycean scholars and was chief organiser of the 1982 Joyce Centenary Celebrations in Dublin and a co-founder of the James Joyce Centre. He has taken his love of Joyce to the stage with his one man show 'Do You Hear What I am Seeing' which he has performed in venues around the world since the 1970s.

'' I am particularly pleased and honoured that Senator Norris has chosen the National Library of Ireland as the repository for this wonderful archive. The Library can now provide a secure home for these papers and make them accessible to future generations of scholars and researchers'', added Aongus Ó hAonghusa, Director of the National Library of Ireland speaking at the reception to mark the hand-over with guest of honour Mrs. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former legal advisor to Senator Norris.

A selection of the papers on temporary display at the Library include Senator Norris' original Seanad Electoral Nomination Form in 1981; his recent address to the Joint Commission for Foreign Affairs in January 2007; the press release issued from International Gay Rights Congress: Edinburgh, December 1974 and a typescript copy of David Norris' Gold Medal Award Winning Essay James Joyce – *The Art of Chaos*, 1970s.

New Exhibition on the Irish in Europe at the National Library of Ireland

December 11th, 2007: A new exhibition focused on Irish migration to continental Europe from 1600 -1800 and the considerable achievements of the Irish in Spain, France, Flanders and other countries was launched today (**Tuesday, December 11th, 2007)** at the National Library of Ireland by Séamus Brennan T.D., Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism. **Strangers to Citizens** presents, for the first time in a major public exhibition, the real story of the Irish in Europe tracing the journey of political, economic and religious refugees and their eventual integration into host societies.

The exhibition presents an account of the perilous sea journey faced by Irish migrants to Europe, documented in Tadhg Ó Cianáin's *Narrative of the Journey into Exile of the Ulster Earls, 1607-08*, a unique manuscript on loan from the Franciscan Order and University College Dublin. Using a selection of dazzling images assembled from libraries and galleries all over Europe, the exhibition looks at the Irish Colleges and their legacy; the Irish soldiers who served in the French and Spanish military; Irish merchant traders and the empires built by them, many of which survive to this day and Irish people who distinguished themselves in the professions. **Strangers to Citizens** shows that Irish migrants made their mark as soldiers, politicians, entrepreneurs and avant-garde thinkers. A most remarkable figure was Richard Wall (1694 – 1777), the French son of a Kilmallock Jacobite who served as Spanish prime minister from 1754 – 1763.

Included in the exhibition is a selection of early 17th century Irish books from the Library's rare book collection and some of the earliest books inl the Irish language ever printed, from the press at St Anthony's, the Irish College in Leuven including *An Teagascg Criosdaidhe (The Christian Doctrine)* by Bonaventura O'Hussey (1611). A number of beautiful manuscripts 'The Wild Geese Registers', containing genealogies and coats of arms relating to Irish families or people of Irish descent living in European cities, such as Bordeaux, Malaga, Cadiz, and Vienna are displayed. Almost two hundred of these genealogies have been reproduced in a digital *Turning the Pages* installation, for visitors to browse through. Visitors can also use digital installations to explore exhibition topics in more depth and to discover whether anyone of their name or from their own area served in the French and Spanish armies in the 18th century or studied at the Irish colleges in Paris, Leuven or Toulouse.

Strangers to Citizens, National Library of Ireland, 2 - 3 Kildare Street, Dublin 2 from December 12th. Open: Mon – Wed 9.30 - 8.30pm; Thurs - Fri : 9.30 - 4.30pm & Sat: 9.30 - 12.30 pm. Admission is Free.

European Commissioner welcomes the establishment of the European Digital Library Foundation and the commitment of Europe's cultural institutions to make their collections available and searchable to the public online

Wednesday, 5 December 2007: The work of the European Digital Library Foundation has been endorsed by high-level European Commission officials who met with Foundation members recently for the formal handover of their statutes.

'Europe's citizens should all be able to enjoy our rich cultural heritage. This Foundation represents a significant step towards making that ambition come true', commented Commissioner Viviane Reding whose portfolio includes responsibility for Information Society and Media. 'The Foundation demonstrates the commitment of Europe's cultural institutions to work together to make their collections available and searchable by the public through a common and multilingual access point online.'

Foundation members include representatives of the key European heritage and information associations. The Foundation's statutes commit members to work in partnership to provide access to Europe's cultural and scientific heritage through a cross-domain portal; to cooperate in the delivery and sustainability of the joint portal; to stimulate initiatives to bring together existing digital content; to support the digitisation of Europe's cultural and scientific heritage.

The European Library was initiated with European Union funding and went live as an online service in March 2005. It currently delivers access to 150 million catalogue entries across Europe. Now, however, following the launch of a new initiative – the EDLProject – a further 60-100 new collections from eight national libraries including the National Library of Ireland will be brought into the European Library network.

As a result of Ireland's participation in the EDLProject, the National Library of Ireland's entire online catalogue and digital images will be fully searchable from the European Library website, thus making Ireland's collections easily accessible to an ever-increasing virtual audience, from schoolchildren to researchers and family historians.

By early 2008, all the digital collections of the European Union 47 national libraries will be referenced in the European Library, thus helping it to fulfil its mission of "opening up the universe of knowledge, information and cultures of all Europe's national libraries."

The European Digital Library is currently developing its prototype website due to be launched in November 2008. Against this background, the European Digital Library Foundation recently announced details of 'the City' – the first of a series of broad themes to be featured on the site. This theme will enable the prototype website to depict the European urban experience from several perspectives. Emerging ideas include cities of the future/cities of the past; migration and diaspora; trade and industry; design, shopping and urban cool; pox, cholera and the plague – the route to urban health; archaeology and architecture; utopias and cities of the imagination; riot and disorder; palaces and politics. As part of its website development project, the European Digital Library is gathering digitised content from European archives, museums, audio-visual collections and libraries. The project team will use maps, artefacts, photos, sound, film material, books, archival records and artworks to explore two millennia of connectivity between Europe's cities.

Commenting on the valuable contribution made by the European Library website since it first went live as an online service in March 2005, Dr Wim van Drimmelen, foundation member and Director of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the Netherlands, which hosts the European Digital Library initiative, said:

‘Archives, museums, audio-visual collections and libraries are collaborating in order to guarantee that their resources can be brought together in a virtual world, regardless of where the original is held. It’s what users expect. However, the benefits are not just for the users. The development work is providing an excellent forum for knowledge transfer between the domains, which increases our collective ability to respond to changing user needs and remain relevant in the fast-moving digital environment.’

Notes to editors:
The European Digital Library will launch a prototype in November 2008. It will give direct access to at least two million digitised books, photos, maps, sounds, films and archival records from Europe's libraries, archives, museums and audio-visual collections.

The European Digital Library Foundation includes the following members: Martine de Boisdeffre, EURBICA: European Regional Branch of International Council on Archives; Edwin van Huis, FIAT – International Federation of Television Archives; Claudia Dillmann, ACE: Association Cinémathèques Européennes; Massimo Negri, EMF – European Museums Forum; Elisabeth Niggemann, CENL – Conference of European National Librarians; Hans Geleijnse, LIBER – Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche; Christophe Dessaux, MICHAEL – Multilingual Inventory of Cultural Heritage in Europe; Wim van Drimmelen, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, national library of the Netherlands; ICOM Europe – International Council of Museums, Europe; CERL – Consortium of European Research Libraries.

The European Digital Library is hosted by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the national library of the Netherlands, and led by the Conference of European National Librarians.

The initiative is one of the Commission's flagship i2010 initiatives to create a European Information Society for growth and jobs (see IP/05/643).

On 25 August 2006, the Commission adopted a Recommendation on digitisation and digital preservation (see IP/06/1124 and MEMO/06/311) which urged EU Member States to set up large-scale digitisation facilities in order to accelerate the process of getting Europe's cultural heritage online via the European Digital Library.

In November 2006 the idea of a European digital library was strongly endorsed by the Culture Ministers of all EU Member States and was recently backed by the European Parliament in its resolution of 27 September 2007.
More information about the European Digital Library can be found at
http://www.europeandigitallibrary.eu/edlnet/

His Excellency Monsieur Yvon Roe D’Albert, Ambassador of the Republic of France to Ireland to launch exhibition of photographs from one of France’s most celebrated museums, the Musée Albert Kahn in Paris

Wednesday 14 November 2007: Today sees the launch of ***In search of Ireland, 1913***, an exhibition of the first ever colour photographs taken in Ireland.

The 50 images featured in the exhibition have been loaned to the National Photographic Archive by the Musée Albert Kahn in Paris.

The exhibition will be launched by His Excellency Monsieur Yvon Roe D’Albert, Ambassador of the Republic of France to Ireland.

The photographs were taken in 1913 by two French women, Marguerite Mespoulet and Madeleine Mignon-Alba, who used newly available autochrome colour plates. The novice photographers recorded life and historic sites on their two month journey through Ireland from Connemara to the Boyne Valley. They arrived in Ireland to take part in a world-wide project entitled ‘the Archives of the Planet’. The project was the brainchild of the French banker and philanthropist Albert Kahn

whose ambition was to compile a "kind of photographic inventory of the surface of the earth as it was occupied and organised by Man at the beginning of the 20th century."

An avowed pacifist, Kahn believed that he could employ this photographic collection to nurture greater understanding among people across the world.
Between 1909 and 1931 he spent a vast fortune hiring and dispatching photographers to more than 50 countries on every continent; their mission was to record the elements of a disappearing world in places where Kahn believed huge political and social changes were either already underway or were about to happen. Between 1909 and 1931 Kahn's photographers compiled some 72,000 colour photographs and 100 hours of film footage in locations ranging from China, Vietnam, India, Iran and Iraq to the Baltic States, Turkey and Ireland.

Office of the Chief Herald

24 October 2007: Following public questioning of the legal basis of the National Library of Ireland's heraldic functions, the Board of the National Library suspended the exercise of those functions pending receipt of the advice of the Attorney General on the matter.

That advice is to the effect that, on a proper construction of the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997, the Board can exercise the
heraldic powers provided for in the Act although, with minor amendment, the wording of the Act could be made more succinct.

The Board of the Library has formally brought this advice to the attention of the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism and understands that the matter is under his consideration.

However, in light of the advice it has received, the Board is satisfied that it can exercise the heraldic powers conferred on it by the 1997 Act and has, accordingly, lifted its temporary suspension on doing so.

The Board is aware that doubts exist regarding the legal basis of heraldic functions exercised in the State prior to the establishment of the
Board. Such issues that may exist or arise in that regard are matters to be addressed by the State, and not by the National Library of Ireland.

Eyewitness: Ireland through the lens of Colman Doyle exhibition representing almost 60 years of Colman Doyle's career as a photographer, National Photographic Archive 19 July to 5 November

19 July 2007: Colman Doyle, widely acknowledged as one of the most important Irish photographers of the 20th century, was also probably Ireland's first documentary style photographer – acclaimed for his iconic portraits of political leaders and literary figures, as well as for his photographs of islanders and ordinary folk in Kerry and throughout the island of Ireland. As a sports photographer, he acquired a huge reputation for his action shots of GAA matches and horse races. He was also acclaimed for his photographs of Olympic athletes, having attended every Olympic Games from 1984 to 2000 inclusive.

Today, Nickey Brennan, President of the GAA launched ***Eyewitness: Ireland through the lens of Colman Doyle***, an exhibition representing almost 60 years of Colman Doyle's career as a photographer with the *Irish Press* and also as a freelance photographer with *Paris Match*.

The photographs have been selected from his entire photographic collection comprising almost 25,000 images, which the National Library of Ireland acquired from Colman Doyle last year. The 90 photographs on display in the exhibition include numerous portraits of Charles J Haughey (to whom he had unprecedented access) as well as memorable images of President Eamon de Valera,

President Cearbahill Ó Dálaigh, Sean Lemass, Jack Lynch, and visiting dignitaries and heads of state including Pope John Paul II, John F Kennedy and Princess Grace of Monaco.

They also include fascinating vignettes of Irish life from the 1950s to the 1990s, covering topics ranging from emigration from Ireland to changes in daily life in Ireland and on the Blasket Islands. This latter aspect of the collection is in stark contrast to Doyle's photographs of daily life in Northern Ireland during the 1970s and 1980s – a period during which he recorded countless behind-the-scenes images of political meetings and street violence.

Yeats Set Free to Wander

9 July 2007: Over 200 anthologies of poetry by WB Yeats were distributed by the National Library of Ireland in various public places in Dublin today (Monday, July 9th, 2007). The books, which may have been left on a train, bus, café, counter, pub, hotel or park bench throughout the city, are distinctively labelled with an invitation to savour the work of the great poet and a request to leave the book in another public place for someone else to enjoy.

The idea, entitled *Yeats Book Crossing,* was inspired by the concept of Book Crossing in other countries. It is hoped that the books, which have been specially purchased by the Library for this book crossing initiative, will be enjoyed by people of all ages, will promote a greater engagement with the poetry of WB Yeats and will lead to further visits to the Library's award winning exhibition *Yeats: the life and works of William Butler Yeats*.

Each of the 250 books is marked with a unique code. Readers can log their discovery and comments on the National Library's website at www.nli.ie/yeats. This log will in turn become a record of the journey of each of the 250 books as they wander through public spaces in Ireland and abroad.

Book Crossing is an American phenomenon that began in April 2001 and has taken off throughout the world. Almost a half a million books have been 'released' and there are more than 146,000 members of Book Crossing worldwide. People are fascinated with the fate, karma or the chain of events that occur between two or more lives and one piece of literature. The founder of book crossing considers it as 'the karma of literature' designed to 'make the whole world a library'.

The continuing relevance and appeal of Yeats today to all kinds of people can be seen in the latest episode of the *Sopranos* in which Yeats' poem *The Second Coming* is read by Tony Soprano's son Anthony Junior in a moment of self reflection.

Forthcoming National Library of Ireland exhibition celebrates the work of more than 200 artists, poets and calligraphers from Scotland and Ireland

3 May 2007: ***Leabhar Mòr na Gàidhlig*** *(**The Great Book of Gaelic***) celebrates the work of more than 200 visual artists, poets and calligraphers from Scotland and Ireland. The book, which has been attracting huge interest abroad, is the subject of a forthcoming exhibition and poetry reading to be hosted by the National Library of Ireland.

The exhibition opens on Thursday 17 May for a two-week run. As part of the exhibition programme, two leading Irish poets Louis De Paor and Áine Ní Ghlinn will give readings of their works in the Library's Seminar Room on Thursday 17 May. Children who participated in creative writing workshops run in association with the Leabhar Mòr project will also read their own poems and stories. The exhibition will be opened by Aongus Ó hAonghusa at 5.30 pm on Thursday 17 May.

Both the exhibition and the poetry readings are being organised by the National Library of Ireland in association with Éigse Eireann/Poetry Ireland.

Background information

The 100 visual artists – fifty each from Ireland and Scotland – were commissioned to create works related to the poetry featured in *Leabhar Mòr na Gàidhlig*. A variety of media was used by the artists who include **Rita Duffy**, **Brian McGuire**, **Shane Cullen**, **Noel Sheridan**, **Anna Macleod** and **Alasdair Maclennan**. A small team of calligraphers and typographers, led by Frances Breen, worked in collaboration with the artists to integrate key lines of the poetry into the artworks.

The 100 Gaelic poems have been nominated by leading poets and writers such as **Seamus Heaney**, **Hamish Henderson** and Canadian writer **Alastair Macleod**, and also by the contributing poets themselves. The selection features work from almost every century from the 6th century to the 21st century, and includes the earliest Gaelic poetry in existence. Comedy, tragedy, love, death, the spiritual and the bawdy are all represented.

'Ireland and Scotland share a mythology, a rich music tradition, three languages and some significant history. The Gaelic language remains the most profound of many links between both countries. The *Leabhar Mòr* renews and celebrates that ancient connection through a stunning range of 21st century artworks,' said Malcolm Maclean, Director of Proiseact nan Ealan and joint-editor of *An Leabhar Mòr.*

An Leabhar Mòr was originated by Scotland's Gaelic arts agency, Proiseact nan Ealan, and sponsored by Iomairt Cholm Cille, which aims to renew the links between Gaelic Scotland and Ireland. The exhibition, which is touring internationally for a five-year period, has already been seen by more than 100,000 visitors in Scotland and a million visitors to the Smithsonian Institution's Scottish festival in Washington DC. When the *Leabhar Mor* exhibition has concluded its extensive tour, the artworks will be bound together into one volume as a permanent exhibit.

National Library of Ireland this evening hosts first performance of little-known WB Yeats play – The King's Threshold

30 April 2007: The National Library of Ireland's Seminar Room this evening plays host to the first in a series of performances of two of WB Yeats's plays – *The King's Threshold* and *The Dreaming of the Bones.*

The King's Threshold is a little-known Yeats play. As far as its director Conor O'Malley is aware, this may be the first Dublin production of the play version written in 1922.

The forthcoming Dublin Lyric Players' series of performances coincides with the National Library's of Ireland's ***Yeats: the life and works of William Butler Yeats*** exhibition currently taking place in Kildare Street. Covering many aspects of the poet's life and his development as a writer, the exhibition also gives visitors insight into Irish social, cultural and political life from the late 1880s to the 1930s.

The Kings Threshold and *The Dreaming of the Bones* are described by Conor O'Malley as 'masterpieces of the English-speaking theatre, containing some of the most beautifully wrought poetic language'. The plays are likely to prove very popular with the general public and early booking is recommended.

Yeats wrote *The King's Threshold* in 1903. It explores themes which came to figure significantly in Yeat's poetry: loyalty and love; the nature of the State and society; the place of poetry and the arts; the effect of commitment to a cause; the heroic ideal in action. The short after-piece *The Dreaming of the Bones* is Yeat's response, in dramatic form, to the events of Easter 1916.

The first performance of *The King's Threshold* and *The Dreaming of the Bones* takes place this evening (Monday 30 May) at 6.30pm. Future performances take place at 6.30pm on Wednesday 2 May and Thursday 3 May.

Tickets cost €10. To make a booking call (01) 6030 277. Tickets may also be purchased at the door.

The Dublin Lyric Players derives its name from the Lyric Players Theatre in Belfast, whose foundation stone was laid by the poet Austin Clarke. During the first 30 years of its existence, the Belfast-based Lyric Players championed the cause of Yeats's play, putting on many of his works. Thus far, Dublin Lyric Players has presented eight of his plays including Yeats's *The Cuchulain Cycle*. The series of plays being performed at the National Library's Seminar Room are being directed by Conor O'Malley. Over the past 30 years, he has directed a number of plays by Yeats as well as other poetic drama.

Images of daily life on the islands surrounding Ireland's coastline are the subject of a new exhibition at the National Photographic Archive (NPA) Temple Bar entitled *Island life – the islands of Ireland.*

2 April 2007: The exhibition, which will be opened this evening (Monday 2 April) by RTE Marine Correspondent Tom McSweeney, features a number of different locations, but concentrates predominantly on Achill Island, the Aran Islands, Valentia and the Blasket islands. A small number of inland lake islands such as Station Island on Lough Derg are also included.

The images are drawn from the Lawrence, Eason, Casement, Diggin and Morgan collections and from the Tómas Ó Muircheartaigh Collection and the Colman Doyle Collection.

The Tómas Ó Muircheartaigh Collection, acquired by the National Library of Ireland in 2005, comprises a large body of photographs taken by **Tómas Ó Muircheartaigh**, an amateur photographer and former President of Conradh na Gaeilge. Ó Muircheartaigh had an enormous affection for the south west of Ireland. The landscapes and the people of this area – all photographed between the 1930s and the 1950s – figure most prominently in the Library's collection of his work. While the collection (comprising approximately 2,000 negatives and two albums of prints) has not as yet been catalogued, a selection of photographs has been included in this exhibition to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his death.

In 2006, the Library acquired the entire photographic collection of **Colman Doyle**, widely acknowledged one of the most important Irish photographers of the 20th century. This exhibition will feature a small number of photographs from the Colman Doyle Collection, including photographs of Tory islanders amongst others.

Poetry Aloud Poetry Speaking Competition 2007 celebrates Irish poetry

21 February 2007: In *Voices and Poetry of Ireland*, published in 2003, Professor Brendan Kennelly noted:

'When a voice reads a poem it loves, something unique happens. The voice brings the heart and mind, indeed the very soul of the listener into the complete act and art of listening, and a certain illuminating intensity electrifies the words in such a way that the poem's rhythm and music, meaning and movement, come together in a passionate oneness that is truly mesmeric and memorable." [1]

Brendan Kennelly's comments have a particular resonance in the context of **POETRY ALOUD**, a poetry speaking competition for post-primary school pupils which was launched earlier today.

[1] *Voices and Poetry of Ireland*. Harper Collins, 2003. All proceeds go to Focus Ireland.

Organised by the National Library of Ireland in association with Poetry Ireland, it follows on the success of the 2006 YEATS ALOUD Poetry Speaking Competition which attracted over 700 entries from all over Ireland.

In this year's competition – a celebration of Irish poetry – entrants will choose poems from a given list of Irish poets.

The final competition judges are **Professor Brendan Kennelly** poet and teacher; **Thomas McCarthy**, poet, critic and Board member of Poetry Ireland, and **Dr Pat Donlon**, former Director of the National Library of Ireland and now Director of the Tyrone Guthrie Centre in County Monaghan.

The competition is open to any pupil attending a second-level school in Ireland. Participants must recite one prescribed poem and a chosen poem from a prescribed list.

In the first round entrants will speak by heart two poems, a named poem by Louis MacNeice and a chosen poem from a prescribed list. (Louis MacNeice was selected as the prescribed poet in the first round of the competition as 2007 marks the centenary of his birth.) The prescribed list includes poems by almost 50 Irish poets.

To coincide with the Library's major exhibition ***Yeats: the life and works of William Butler Yeats***, which continues through 2007, Yeats will feature as the prescribed poet in the semi-final and final.

Entry forms and competition details have been sent to all second-level schools in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Meanwhile entry forms may be downloaded from the National Library's website www.nli.ie; from the Poetry Ireland website www.poetryireland.ie; from the Department of Education and Science website www.scoilnet.ie. The closing date for receipt of entries is **Wednesday 28 February 2007**. The winner will be chosen at the final in Dublin on Friday 11 May.

There will be three winning categories – Junior (first and second year); Intermediate (third and fourth year/transition year); Senior (fifth and sixth year). There will also be an Overall Winner chosen from among the winners of the three categories.

The Junior Category prize will be €300 and a signed copy of Michael Longley's *Collected Poems* (published by Jonathan Cape, 2006) with a shelf of poetry books and €300 for the winner's school library; the Intermediate Category prize will be €300 and a signed copy of Michael Longley's *Collected Poems* with a shelf of poetry books and €300 for the winner's school library; the Senior Category prize will be €300 and a signed copy of Michael Longley's *Collected Poems* with a shelf of poetry books and €300 for the winner's school library.

The Overall Winner will receive a further €200 and a specially designed trophy.

National Library of Ireland receives award for its book WB Yeats: Works and Days

17 February 2007: The National Library of Ireland has won 'Best Overall Production Award' and 'Book of the Year 2006' at the 2007 CLÉ – Irish Book Publishers' Association Book Industry Awards for its book ***WB Yeats: Works and Days***.

The awards were presented earlier today (Saturday 17 February).

WB Yeats: Works & Days is an illustrated introduction to the poet's life, written to accompany the ***Yeats: the life and works of WB Yeats*** exhibition at the National Library. The exhibition, which focuses on treasures from the Library's extensive collection of Yeats material, opened in May 2006 and has since attracted some 35,000 visitors; it will continue until end 2008.

In November 2006, the exhibition won 'The Interpret Britain and Ireland Award' of the Association for Heritage Interpretation at a ceremony held in Bristol.

WB Yeats Works & Days was written by Library staff members Dr Eilis Ni Dhuibhne, Ciara McDonnell, and Dr James Quin, co-curators of the Yeats Exhibition. The Foreword was written by Dr Roy Foster, Carroll Professor of Irish History at Oxford and authorised biographer of WB Yeats.

Commenting on the award, Aongus Ó hAonghusa, Director of the National Library, said winning it provided wonderful recognition of the work of the Library's staff.

"This illustrated introduction to WB Yeats' life and works is a celebration of what is unquestionably one of the most important collections of Irish literary manuscripts in existence. Thanks to a series of gifts from the Yeats family, the Yeats collection at the National Library of Ireland is now the largest archive of Yeats manuscripts and books in the world; it is also one of Ireland's greatest cultural treasures.

"This richly illustrated book presents a selection of manuscripts, books, correspondence, articles, photographs, paintings and artefacts, designed to illustrate the journey of the 'pilgrim soul' of Yeats, the writer and the man, from his emergence as a poet in the 1880s to his death in 1939."

WB Yeats: Works & Days is published by the National Library of Ireland in association with Wordwell. Price €17.

Ceann Comhairle, Dr Rory O'Hanlon TD opens exhibition on the lives of Dr TJ Kiernan and Delia Murphy

11 January 2007

An exhibition celebrating the lives of the late Dr TJ Kiernan (Ireland's first Ambassador to Australia) and his wife Delia Murphy, the renowned singer, was opened this evening at the National Library of Ireland by the Ceann Comhairle, Dr Rory O'Hanlon TD.

The opening ceremony was attended by several members of the Kiernan family. They included Carol Kiernan, a grand-daughter of Dr TJ Kiernan and Delia Murphy, who spoke at the event, and Madeleine and Brendan Hawke, great-grandchildren of TJ Kiernan and Delia Murphy who performed some of the traditional songs made famous by Delia Murphy – *The Spinning Wheel, The Moonshiner* and *Thank You Ma'am Says Dan*.

The exhibition entitled *If I were a Blackbird* is on show in the Main Hall of the National Library, Kildare Street, Dublin; it continues until March.

It uses photographs, drawings, books and records to tell the story of the lives of the Kiernans who during their years in Canberra sought to encourage a sense of pride in the Irish-Australian community; they emphasised the Irish role in the development of Australia and, equally, the role of Irish-Australians in the Irish quest for independence. A selection of Delia Murphy's songs and a documentary film, *The Ballad of Delia Murphy*, accompanies the exhibition.

A version of the exhibition goes on display in the National Museum of Australia, Canberra next month.

Biographical note on Dr TJ Kiernan (1897-1967): born in Dublin, he graduated from UCD with a degree in economics, and later from the University of London with a doctorate in the same subject. In 1924, he was appointed Secretary to the Irish High Commissioner in London. From 1935 to 1941 he was Director of Broadcasting at Radio Éireann, on secondment from the Department of External Affairs. In 1941 he became Irish ambassador to the Vatican. In 1946 he was sent to Canberra by the then Taoiseach Eamon de Valera as Minister Plenipotentiary, in effect Irish Ambassador to Australia. He later became Irish Ambassador to the United States, a post which he held until his retirement in 1964.

Biographical note Delia Murphy (1902-1971): a native of Claremorris, Co Mayo, she graduated from UCG with a degree in Commerce in 1923. From the mid 1930s onwards, she was a regular contributor to Radio Éireann programmes and became a household name. Her arrangements of traditional songs such as the *Connemara Cradle Song, If I were a Blackbird, Thank You Ma'am Says Dan, The Spinning Wheel*, and many others, were published as sheet music by Waltons. She also made several records with HMV. During the 1950s, she toured extensively in Ireland and Great Britain. "As near to being a star as anyone in the Ireland of the 1940s could claim", she sang Irish songs at a time when they were not particularly popular in a vivacious, beguiling style that was unique to her. Her influence on subsequent generations of singers cannot be underestimated. She encouraged an independent spirit: "I think her main contribution was that she made us feel we could respectably sing our own songs", the singer Liam Clancy has said.