2010 PRESS RELEASES

Exhibition of rare artefacts launched

20 January 2010: National Library of Ireland exhibition of extremely rare artefacts using innovative interactive Microsoft technology opened by Dr Martin Mansergh, TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for OPW and the Arts

Hundreds of rare items from the National Library of Ireland's collections – some of which are either too light sensitive, air sensitive or too valuable to be placed on public display in exhibition cases – can now be viewed in close-up detail by visitors thanks to the use of an innovative technology solution developed by Microsoft Ireland in partnership with Martello Media.

The Discover your National Library exhibition, which was opened today by Dr Martin Mansergh TD, Minister of State with special responsibility for OPW and the Arts, enables visitors to examine objects from the Library's collections in the kind of detail that has hitherto been possible for only a limited number of researchers, academics and other specialists. Over the lifespan of the exhibition, several thousand different objects will be featured and will be made available online.

Such is the rich visual experience created by the high-resolution technologies used to display the items that exhibition visitors will almost certainly be enticed to view these items – and stay engaged by them – for long periods of time.

Among the artefacts on view currently (artefacts on display will change three times a year) are rare manuscripts such as the Book of Maguaran, an early 14th century poem-book containing poetry composed in Irish for the McGovern family; a 1588 deed signed by Sir Walter Raleigh; a 1795 lottery ticket; a set of 1920s cigarette cards illustrated by the painter Jack B Yeats; several 18th century survey maps of Irish bogs (designed to assess whether it was feasible to grow crops such as corn or hemp on Ireland's bogs at a time when the English government was fighting the Napoleonic wars and suffering economic shortages); a letter from Éamonn Ceannt to his wife Áine O'Brennan, written a few hours before his execution on 8 May, 1916; and a notebook of stunning drawings by 19th century antiquary George Petrie of his archaeological finds, ranging from arrowheads to gold ornaments.

The exhibition opening was attended by Éamonn Ceannt's grand-nephew, also called Éamonn Ceannt.

Launching Discover your National Library, Dr Martin Mansergh said that the exhibition technology enables visitors to explore the Library's rich and varied collections and to examine details of beautiful visual materials which, in many cases, could previously have been appreciated only by using a magnifying glass.

"Additional innovative features of the exhibition include 'turn the page' technology, which will enable visitors to read all the pages in the various books featured, and not just the open pages on display. An unusual element of the exhibition is that a designated area has been provided for a series of temporary exhibitions including one

to mark the centenary of the Bogs Commission, and another dedicated to Alice Milligan, a prominent figure in early 20th century nationalist and literary revival circles. The year will close with an exhibition on the Irish Texts Society", Dr Mansergh noted.

Speaking at the launch of the exhibition, Paul Rellis, MD, Microsoft Ireland said: "We are delighted to have partnered with the National Library of Ireland to help improve the access to these rare treasures and documents. This project shows the true potential that technology has in helping to bring arts and culture to more and more people. We hope that by digitising this collection, and by helping to bring it online, we will encourage more people to explore and research the extensive range of treasures housed in the Library."

One of the most popular features of the exhibition is the interactive Microsoft Surface 'discovery table' using Silverlight technology which is at the heart of the exhibition. Every object in the exhibition (and many which are not currently in the exhibition but will be in the future) is held in the table which is the exhibition's central repository. Here visitors can view images of objects from the collections in amazing detail. The images are tagged in such a way that if the visitor finds an item they are particularly interested in, the technology automatically links them to other similar items likely to be of interest.

Throughout, the exhibition makes extensive use of digital media, with special features including a series of talks shown on large plasma screens and given by the Library's curators who use a highly accessible approach (rather than academic approach) to describe the significance of certain items on display.

Each display case is accompanied by a touchscreen which contains copies of the objects on display so visitors can scroll through multiple pages when the object is a volume, or see other similar objects from the Library's holdings – the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of Irish documentary material numbering almost eight million items including maps, prints, drawings, manuscripts, photographs, books, newspapers and periodicals.

The Discover exhibition is now open to the public at 2-3 Kildare Street, Dublin. The selection of items on view will be refreshed and updated every four months. Admission is free. The contents of the central Silverlight Discovery Table may be seen on www. nli.ie.

Ends

Note for editors:

The Microsoft Surface is a multi-touch computer technology. A specially developed programme was developed and tailored to meet the needs of the National Library of Ireland by a team in Microsoft Ireland in partnership with Martello Media. The computer responds to natural hand gestures and objects, enabling people to interact with digital content in a simple and intuitive way.

(1) The Discover exhibition was designed by the Dun Laoghaire-based company Martello Media. It also designed the Library's Yeats exhibition, which in 2006 won the British-based Association for Heritage Interpretation Awards Interpret Britain and Ireland Award for "the outstanding way in which it informed and involved the public".

(2) The Discover exhibition is just one strand of the National Library of Ireland's emerging digital library programme. Last year, in a move aimed at transforming access by the public to its collections, the Library introduced two free online services. The first involved the placing on line of 20,000 photographs from the Lawrence, Poole and Independent Newspapers collections to the Library's website www.nli.ie/digital-photographs.aspx The second involved the placing on line of 'Sources', a digital directory of Irish studies containing 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. The digital directory may be found on http://sources.nli.ie.

For further information, please contact Elizabeth Kirwan, Assistant Keeper – Outreach and Preservation Tel: 01-603 0316 or Joanna Finegan, Assistant Keeper Tel: 01-603 0207

BBC One Television host Graham Norton opens *Lifelines* exhibition of letters from famous people about their favorite poems at the National Library of Ireland

Thursday 4 February 2010: Discover Lifelines: letters from famous people about their favorite poems is the title of a new exhibition due to open in the Library in early 2010. The exhibition marks the 25th anniversary of the launch of the *Lifelines* project.

The project began as a fundraiser in 1985 when fifth year pupils in Wesley College, Dublin wrote to famous people and asked them to name a favorite poem and give a reason why. The replies were duplicated on the school's Gestetner machine, stapled together in a simple booklet and sold out in two days.

Lifelines began when English teacher Niall MacMonagle suggested to his Fifth Year class that they do something to help those suffering in Africa. 'All those terrible images were coming back from Ethiopia. Doing something like this project seemed to be the easiest idea – all we stood to lose was a bit of stamp money.'

The first booklet, containing 51 contributions, received excellent media reviews, including one by then *Irish Times* columnist Kevin Myers, who described it as 'the finest publication of the year … I recommend *Lifelines* more than life itself.' Further booklets, also compiled by Wesley College pupils, were published in 1988, 1990 and 1992. Their success resulted in the book *Lifelines* published in 1992, with a foreword by Seamus Heaney. *Lifelines 2* appeared in 1994 and *Lifelines 3* in 1997. A selection from *Lifelines* was published by Penguin in 1993, and a further volume, *Lifelines new and collected* edition, published by Townhouse in 2006. Royalties earned on the

various editions had, by 2006, raised over €100,000 for Concern to fund the organisation's work in the developing world.

The *Lifelines* anthologies include contributions from five Nobel Laureates and the project was praised by many including Andrew Motion, Fleur Adcock, Maeve Binchy and Margaret Drabble. Iris Murdoch described it as 'such an excellent project and such good reading', and Graham Norton noted: 'Finally, a book that puts poetry in the "loved-it" pile, rather than the "must-get-around-to-reading" pile.'

Lifelines – most unusually for a poetry book – became a bestseller. It was number 1 for 14 weeks in 1992 and subsequent volumes all made the bestsellers' lists. Part of its appeal, as the poet Eavan Boland points out, lies in the fascination of seeing how a wide variety of people, from government ministers to priests, poets, activists and actors reveal themselves through their poetic choices. In the foreword to the third edition she wrote: 'I was almost taken aback by the charm, elegance and readability of the book. What's more, my own surprise surprised me.'

In 1992, Dr Pat Donlon, then Director of the National Library of Ireland, expressed an interest in buying the letters featured in the first collection. Subsequently Wesley College donated all correspondence, photographs and other related archive material to the Library. Today, replies from over 650 people who responded to the pupils' appeals are preserved in the Library.

The *Lifelines* anthologies have been reviewed in newspapers around the world. The success of the project has led to the development of related ventures in the US and New Zealand, and more recently in Germany, where a major publishing house has signalled its intention to produce a similar compilation there.

The *Discover Lifelines* exhibition, which goes on show in the Library's Main Hall, will display letters from writers, poets, actors, artists, media personalities and politicians, including Bertie Ahern, Margaret Atwood, John Banville, Sebastian Barry, Maeve Binchy, Eavan Boland, Dermot Bolger, Richard Dawkins, Judi Dench, Dermot Desmond, Roddy Doyle, Margaret Drabble, Garret FitzGerald, Roy Foster, Sir John Gielgud, Seamus Heaney, Jeremy Irons, John B Keane, Brendan Kennelly, Marian Keyes, Rosaleen Linehan, Iris Murdoch, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Graham Norton, Joseph O'Connor, Tom Stoppard, Mother Teresa, William Trevor and many others.

The exhibition continues until June 2010. Admission is free.

For further information, please contact Brenda O'Hanlon Tel 087 25 83 292

National Library of Ireland appoints new Director

11 February 2010: The Chairman and Board of the National Library of Ireland today announced that Fiona Ross has been appointed to serve as Director of the National Library of Ireland. Ms Ross will take up her position on 8 March 2010 on the basis of a three-year contract.

An expert in the field of leadership and governance, Ms Ross has lectured in University College Dublin and at the Irish Management Institute (IMI) and is a member of the Business Research Programme in UCD. Ms Ross also worked as a consultant in corporate governance, reputation and ethics. Prior to her recent lecturing position in UCD, Ms Ross spent several years in senior finance, marketing and communications roles including with the Bank of Ireland and Goodbody Stockbrokers.

Commenting on the appointment, the Chairman of the Board of the National Library of Ireland, Gerry Danaher, SC, said: "We are very excited to welcome Fiona Ross as the National Library of Ireland's new Director. Fiona has excellent leadership skills and has extensive experience in marketing and communications. I have no doubt that her experience, combined with her broadly based academic background, including her honours degree in History and English, will be a considerable asset to the Library in the challenges it faces in a demanding and ever-changing service environment ".
Ms Ross (44) received a BA with honours in History and English from Trinity College, Dublin in 1987. She was awarded an MA from TCD in 1988 and a Master in Business Studies from the Graduate School of Business at UCD in 1991. In 2008, she was awarded a Law Masters in Governance and Public Policy (First class honours with distinction) from Queen's University Belfast and has since continued her academic research in the area of governance and reputation.

Commenting on her appointment, Ms Ross said: "I am very honoured to have been selected to serve as the Director of the National Library of Ireland. This is a unique opportunity to apply my experience to help address the challenges the Library faces and to reinforce its core mission and commitment to the Irish people. I look forward to working with the dedicated staff and Board at the National Library of Ireland."

For further information, contact Colette Byrne, Acting Director, National Library of Ireland. Tel 01-603 0253

New National Library of Ireland Director welcomes enhanced online service, with 34,000 historic photographs now available on the Library's website

11 March 2010: Following the completion of the latest phase of a major digitisation project by staff at the National Library of Ireland, the public can now search and view up to 34,000 historic photographic images of Ireland online, Fiona Ross, the Library's newly appointed Director, announced today.

The initiative is part of a project designed to increase online access to the National Library of Ireland's important collection of glass plate negatives. These form part of the Library's 630,000-item photographic collection, which is housed in the National Photographic Archive in Temple Bar, Dublin.

Last year, the Library introduced an online service whereby 22,000 photographs from the Lawrence, Poole and Independent Newspapers collections were added to its website database. Since then, Library staff have digitised an additional 12,000 images from five other important National Photographic Archive collections: Eason, Stereo Pair, Clarke, Tempest and Keogh.

The 34,000 photographs of Ireland, all relating to the period 1860 to 1954, can now be viewed on www.nli.ie/digital-photographs.aspx.

Commenting on this latest development in enhanced National Library of Ireland online services, Ms Ross said the digitisation of many of the National Photographic Archive's glass plate negatives had transformed public access to these rare and fragile items.

"The Library holds the world's largest collection of photographs relating to Ireland. These photographs are a rich source of primary research material and, as a means of understanding and engaging with the past, they are invaluable because they provide us with evidence of places, events and people who shaped the nation, as well as providing insights into culture and social history, politics, art, landscape and natural history", Ms Ross added.

Family historians and the general research community are well catered for with the Lawrence, Stereo Pair and Eason collections. The main **Lawrence** images, taken between 1870 and 1914, show rural and urban Ireland during those years. The collection of **Stereo Pair** images were also produced by the Lawrence studios, between 1860 and 1890. The original glass plates have two almost identical images, usually of tourist spots, which produced a three-dimensional effect when viewed in a special device called a stereoscope. The **Eason** photographs, created for the postcard trade, comprise images of the island of Ireland from 1900 to 1940.

Certain parts of Ireland are particularly well represented. The **Poole** collection is a particularly valuable resource for the South East of Ireland in general and Waterford city and county in particular. The photographs, ranging from studio portraits to social and political events, were taken by the Waterford-based commercial photographers AH Poole between 1884 and 1954. The **Tempest** collection shows Co Louth in the early years of the twentieth century, while the **Clarke** collection provides fascinating images of some of James Joyce's contemporaries.

The **Keogh** and **Independent Newspapers** collections feature photographs of a number of political figures and significant early twentieth century events. The selected Independent Newspapers (Ireland) material covers the period 1912 to 1936; most of the Keogh material dates from 1915 to1923.

The 34,000 images are displayed online at a low resolution through a digital photograph database, accompanied by basic information such as title, date and location (where available). The database makes it easy to search the information about all 34,000 images, including the option to search by keywords such as "evictions", "women", or "war".

Copies of high-resolution versions of the photographs can be ordered from the National Library of Ireland by telephoning 01-603 0214or by emailing copy-orders@nli.ie. The Library is working towards building a complete digital resource, with further work planned to maximise the full potential of its digitised images.

For further information, contact Joanna Finegan on 01-603 0207

For information on the collections of the National Photographic Archive, contact Curator Sara Smyth on 01-603 0371 or email: photoarchive@nli.ie

Free public screening of 'The Poetry Nonsense', a film on the Kinsale-based poet Derek Mahon to take place on Wednesday evening 10 May in National Library of Ireland

On Monday evening next, **10 May 2010,** the National Library of Ireland hosts a screening of 'The Poetry Nonsense', a 62-minute film on the Kinsale-based poet **Derek Mahon** who, for many years, has not courted publicity, allowing his poetry to speak for both itself and himself. Here, for the first time in a documentary format, Mahon discusses his work, his past and his present. The film also explores Mahon's poetry, with its themes of displacement, identity, loss and exile, coupled with irony and humor.

Next Monday evening's screening will be followed by a discussion with Derek Mahon and the documentary's producer/director, Roger Greene; it will be chaired by Joe Woods, Director of Poetry Ireland.

'The Poetry Nonsense' features contributions from poets Seamus Heaney, Michael Longley, Frank Ormsby and Gerald Dawe; literary critics Terence Brown, Eve Patten and Hugh Haughton; author Patricia Craig and publisher Peter Fallon.

Made by Caranna Productions, it was produced and directed by Roger Greene, lecturer in Media, IADT. The Executive Producer was Donald Taylor Black, who is Creative Director of the National Film School, IADT.

It was filmed over a three-month period in London, Belfast, Dublin, Kinsale and Portrush.

The screening will take place in the Library's Seminar Room in 7 Kildare Street at 7pm. Admission is free, and booking is not essential.

For further information, contact Sarah O'Connor on 01-603 0317 or email soconnor@nli.ie

Adults with intellectual disabilities complete National Library of Ireland course on 'communications'

7 July 2010: The Director of the National Library of Ireland, Fiona Ross, today presented certificates to a group of 11 adults with intellectual disabilities to mark their completion of a course on 'communications' which was specially devised for them by the Library.

The nine-week course, which began in April, used two current Library exhibitions as the medium for examining various aspects of communication ranging from writing 13th century manuscripts with quills to the development of printing techniques and modern forms of communications such as blogs. The group also took part in workshops on topics as varied as the principles of body language; the Irish postal

service – how it developed and how it now operates today; photography – how it has evolved over the past 100 years to become a powerful communications tool; postage stamp design and the tradition of letter writing.

The course was organised jointly by the National Library of Ireland and the Choices and Lakelands Programmes (Carmona Services), St John of God Brothers in Dun Laoghaire, Dublin. 2010 marks the fourth year that the Library has worked with service-users from the St John of God Brothers Carmona Services. The previous years' courses focused on the Library's exhibitions ***Yeats: the life and works of William Butler Yeats***; ***Strangers to Citizens: the Irish in Europe 1600 to 1800***; and the **1916 Rising**.

Speaking following today's certificate presentation reception, Imelda O'Connor, Community Networker, Choices Programme, St John of God Carmona Services, said that participation in the project had produced some unexpectedly positive outcomes:

"This year's course began with a visit to the ***Discover your National Library*** exhibition where the participants examined Book of Magauaran, a vellum manuscript containing the earliest surviving example of 'dunaire' or poem book. In the workshop that followed the visit, the participants used quills and ink to write and draw. All agreed that communicating in this way was both difficult and time-consuming.

"Over the past four years, participants have explored Irish history from many perspectives. The enthusiasm of the National Library staff has brought the past to life in an exciting and imaginative way for all involved. This project has proved to be a truly empowering experience. It has fused learning about the past with learning practical life skills in the present – skills such as getting public transport, navigating our capital city, and meeting friends for coffee. Working in the National Library of Ireland has proved to be the highlight of the week for the participants, and became a great topic of conversation with family and friends", Imelda O'Connor concluded.

For further information please contact Imelda O'Connor, Community Networker, Choices Programme, St John of God Carmona Services. Tel 087 9888 462 or Sarah Shiel, Education and Outreach Department, National Library of Ireland Tel: 6030 346 or 087 656 4819. Email: sshiel@nli.ie

National Library of Ireland wins a Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Award.

8 July 2010*:* Sources, the free online search service launched by the National Library of Ireland in October last year, has won a Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Award. The award was presented to the Library's Director Fiona Ross by the Taoiseach today (Thursday 8 July) at a conference held in Dublin Castle.

Between 2007 and 2009, National Library of Ireland staff working on the Sources project digitised, encoded and made 180,000 records for key Irish research materials freely searchable online at the dedicated website http://sources.nli.ie. These records, for Irish manuscripts and articles in Irish periodicals, were originally published in a series of 27 printed volumes in the 1960s and 70s, having been created during a visionary cataloguing and indexing project launched by then National Library Director Richard Hayes in the 1940s.

The user-friendly search interface was developed in the National Library using OpenSource software, and is based on simple, intuitive and familiar keyword-searching, making the resource easy to use for all potential customers, such as family history researchers. Over 46,000 unique customers in 140 countries have used the service since it first went live ten months ago. Prior to that, every one of them would have had to physically visit a research library to consult the printed volumes each time they wanted to carry out a search.

The Sources database records almost 100,000 manuscripts worldwide – from the remotest monastery to the vast collections of the National Library of Ireland, and indexes every article in over 150 key Irish periodicals published over the course of nearly 200 years

Sources was one of 20 projects selected for the 2010 Public Service Excellence Awards. The awards take place every two years and are designed to showcase and celebrate public service projects that promote innovation and excellence. The creative use of resources and the development of new efficiencies are typical hallmarks of successful entries.

Speaking after the ceremony, National Library of Ireland Director Fiona Ross said that the key challenge the Library had to meet when developing the Sources service was to exploit all the possibilities offered by new technologies in delivering Richard Hayes' original vision of bringing information to the widest possible audience:

"Sources, which is free to use and was developed on an OpenSource platform, also features new ways to explore the data. It features Google map functionality and faceted browsing; integration with social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook; feedback mechanisms to allow users submit suggestions and responses, as well as an OpenSearch browser search-box.

"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, with the imaginative use of information technology, the Sources initiative has given this trusted resource a new life online. The unprecedented opportunity it is providing for current and future generations of researchers worldwide to find Irish source material from their desktops wherever they may be would have pleased the Library's Director from 1940 to 1967, Dr Richard J Hayes, who oversaw the dedicated team that first embarked on the mammoth task of indexing 100,000 irreplaceable Irish manuscripts almost 70 years ago", Ms Ross concluded.

For further information please contact Katherine McSharry, Keeper of Education, Outreach and External Relations, National Library of Ireland
Tel: 6030 381 or 087 99 48 144 or see http://sources.nli.ie

17TH century ship's pass signed by King James II and Samuel Pepys presented to the National Library of Ireland by Enda Connellan, CEO, Dublin Port Company

Thursday 5 August 2010: A ship's pass dated 1687, signed by **King James II** and **Samuel Pepys**, which was acquired by the Dublin Port & Docks board in 1924, was presented to the National Library of Ireland today by Enda Connellan, CEO, Dublin Port Company who noted that "Dublin Port Company is delighted to present this interesting and rare historical document to the National Library of Ireland. This will ensure that it is appropriately conserved and displayed. In its new home it will also be more accessible to the public."

The pass is one of the few known examples of 17th century ships' passes in the world, with others held at the National Archives in Kew, London and at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich.

The example presented to the National Library of Ireland was designed to provide passage for the merchant vessel the *Mary of Cork*, free from interference by English warships or warships belonging to states maintaining diplomatic relations with England.

The vessel left Dublin port in late 1687, bound for the Canary Islands. At the time, the Canary Islands were major exporters of sugar and Malvasia, a fortified white wine which travelled well and was extremely popular in Britain. The *Mary of Cork* may have been trading in such foodstuffs, in return for products such as salted Irish beef.

The vessel was manned by a crew of five and captained by Zachary Peebuchet.

The *Mary of Cork* ship's pass was issued at the Court of Whitehall on 29 September 1687 and was signed by King James II (Lord High Admiral 1685-1688) and Samuel Pepys (in his capacity as Secretary to the Admiralty). On 18 April 1688, the ship's pass was returned to Ireland, where it was entered into the registry of the High Court of Admiralty of Ireland by Thomas Williamson. It was acquired by the Dublin Port & Docks Board in 1924, and will soon be on display in the National Library's Department of Manuscripts.

For further information, contact Katherine McSharry, National Library of Ireland Tel: 01 6030 281 or 087 994 8144. Email: kmcsharry@nli.ie

Major photographic exhibition provides unique insights into life in Ireland's 'Big Houses' between 1858 and 1922

Thursday 26 August, 2010: The public will have a rare opportunity to view photographs of how the other half lived in Ireland's 'Big Houses' during the mid 1800s and early 1900s following the opening of the ***Power and Privilege: photographs of the Big House in Ireland 1858-1922*** exhibition at the National Photographic Archive in Temple Bar, Dublin.

Earlier today, **Ms Mary Hanafin TD, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport** formally opened the exhibition which features a selection of photographs taken between 1858 and 1922. These are divided into six main themes: gardens and landscape; employees; transport; entertainment and recreation; the arts and sciences; and family life.

They are drawn from the National Photographic Archive's collection of 630,000 images, the world's largest collection of Irish photographs dating from 1840s to the present.

Many of these photographs have never previously been on view to the public.

Some of the images are of homes that remain famous landmarks: Ashford Castle in Co Mayo; Carton House in Co Kildare, and Curraghmore, Co Waterford. Others, such as Castleboro, Co Wexford and Moydrum Castle Co Westmeath have long since vanished, while Tollymore Forest Park, Co Down is now owned by the Department of Agriculture, Northern Ireland, and Woodstock gardens Co Kilkenny is run by Kilkenny County Council.

The oldest photographs in the ***Power and Privilege*** exhibition are drawn from the collections of wealthy amateur photographers such as Luke Dillon, 4th Baron Clonbrock and his wife Lady Augusta, and were taken between 1860 and 1930.

Of the 87 copies from the National Library of Ireland's late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century photographic collections on display in the exhibition, many were generated by commercial firms such as William Lawrence in Dublin, AH Poole in Waterford, and the Dublin-based professional photographers James Simonton and Frederick Holland Mares.

The **Clonbrock Collection** photographs were taken by members of the Dillon family between 1860 and 1930. As well as chronicling most aspects of daily life on the Clonbrock estate in Ahascragh, Co Galway, this collection includes images of estate staff, family members and neighbours, as well as images from the travels of friends and family in Ireland. The **William Lawrence Collection** (1865-1914) primarily features topographical scenes throughout Ireland, but also features people, activities and interiors. The **Stereo Pairs Collection** mainly comprises picturesque scenes from 26 Irish counties. It is so called because photographers used a camera with two lenses side by side, simultaneously taking two virtually identical images; the mounted print was viewed through a stereoscope, creating a three-dimensional effect. The **AH Poole Collection** mainly comprises work commissioned by clients from Waterford city and county, New Ross, Tipperary South Riding, and south Kilkenny between 1860 and 1883.

Among the wide selection of images contained in the eight original photographic albums from the 1860s to 1912 are:

- Images of commercial views of Killarney
- A ladies bicycle race thought to be at Moydrum Castle, Co Westmeath
- Women drivers in Co Galway, 1904
- Beekeeping at Fenagh house in Bagenalstown, Co Carlow

- Family parties in 'Big Houses' in Counties Roscommon, Louth, Carlow, Laois and Cork
- A weekend shooting party in Drumbanagher, Co Armagh
- Images of Powerscourt House, Co Wicklow taken by Lewis Strange Wingfield, youngest son of Viscount Powerscourt, owner of Powerscourt House
- People, activities and exteriors of Ross House at Moycullen, Co Galway, which was the home of suffragist Violet Martin who achieved fame for her literary collaborations with Edith Somerville
- The landscaped demesne at Carton House in Co Kildare, which was laid out in the eighteenth century by James FitzGerald, 1st Duke of Leinster and his wife Lady Emily
- A day's shoot in Ashford Castle, Co Mayo as well as images of Lord Ardilaun's Ashford Castle gatehouse built by Arthur Guinness
- Playing croquet on the lawn at the Clonbrock estate
- A group of gardeners being directed by the lady of the house at Monivea Castle, Athenry, Co Galway
- Women participating in an otter hunt in Curraghmore, Co Waterford.

Power and Privilege: photographs of the Big House in Ireland 1858-1922 draws from two types of image originals – glass plates and period photographs in photographic albums. It continues at the National Photographic Archive in Temple Bar, Dublin until Spring 2011. Admission is free.

Irish Professional Conservators' and Restorers' Association conference presents findings from recent projects ranging from conservation of materials in the Kurdish Textile Museum Collection in Iraqi Kurdistan to laser cleaning an Irish ceramic Bronze Age food vessel to pest eradication in furniture collections

TIME: All day Thursday 21 October 2010

VENUE: National Library of Ireland Seminar Room, Kildare Street, Dublin 2

The public will have a rare opportunity to hear members of the Irish Professional Conservators' and Restorers' Association reveal details of the technology and skills involved in their work on restoring ancient artefacts such as Kurdish textiles and Irish Bronze Age food vessels, as well as presentations on topics such as how to eradicate pests in furniture collections and how to conserve paper and books.

The one-day conference takes place tomorrow Thursday 21 October 2010.

Admission is free, but participants must register online by emailing roisinmiles@gmail.com.

Among the papers to be presented at the conference are:

- "Kill them all", mass pest eradication in large collections; challenges and solutions

- "Preventive conservation for the Kurdish Textile Museum collection in Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan"
- "Drapery studies", conservation and discoveries
- "The laser cleaning of a ceramic Irish Bronze Age food vessel"
- "Paper conservation on part of the 1911 Census"
- "Preservation of 19th century signage – Finns Hotel, South Leinster Street" (where Nora Barnacle was working as a chambermaid when she met James Joyce).

For further information, contact: Zoe Reid, Irish Professional Conservators and Restorers Association Tel: 087 23 99 564 or Orla Sweeney, National Library of Ireland 6030 244; email: osweeney@nli.ie

Launch of Alice Milligan and the Irish Cultural Revival

18 November 2010: Actor Fiona Shaw opens exhibition celebrating the work of Alice Milligan: unjustly forgotten journalist, political activist, feminist, human rights campaigner, 'Cultural Ambassador', theatre pioneer and Ulster Protestant Unionist who became an Irish nationalist and tireless promoter of the Irish language and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by President de Valera

Politicians North and South, feminists, academics, historians, theatre producers and representatives from Irish language organisations and cultural institutions gathered at the National Library of Ireland today to join **actor Fiona Shaw** for the launch of ***Alice Milligan and the Irish Cultural Revival***, a ground-breaking exhibition celebrating the work of Alice Milligan, 'possibly the best kept secret in Irish history', an iconic and fascinating journalist, political activist, feminist, human rights campaigner and 'Cultural Ambassador' who hailed from a middle class Protestant Unionist family in Co Tyrone, went on to promote the Irish language through the Gaelic League, and became a pioneer in many other fields.

Alice Milligan was one of the most intriguing and politically engaged figures during the formation of modern Ireland. She was on first-name terms with James Connolly, WB Yeats, Roger Casement, Arthur Griffith and Maud Gonne. She wrote for 60 Irish newspapers for over 60 years; she was described as the most successful producer of theatre plays in Ireland in her day, and was hailed as 'the best living Irish writer' by the poet Thomas MacDonagh; she was a 19th and 20th century 'Cultural Ambassador' whose magazines, theatre plays, novels, short stories and poems achieved an extraordinary global reach; her newspaper articles were widely read in South Africa, America, Europe and South America, and she was hugely successful in connecting the Irish Diaspora to the national movement for the development of Irish arts and culture.

Although largely forgotten today, Alice Milligan's numerous achievements, including her success in connecting with the Irish Diaspora, were recognised by President Éamonn De Valera. He presented her with an Honorary Doctorate in 1941 to mark not only her long career as a prolific journalist but also as a theatre producer, playwright, Latin teacher and founder of the numerous cultural, literary and feminist organisations that played such an important part in social, cultural and political life in Ireland.

Alice Milligan was one of 13 children born into a middle class Protestant Unionist family near Omagh, Co Tyrone. After studying in King's College London, she qualified as a teacher. Later, she became a staunch Irish nationalist and supporter of the 1916 Rising, helped found the Anti-Partition Union in the 1930s, and promoted the Irish language through the Gaelic League, using popular visual forms such as magic lantern shows and theatre performances to regenerate Irish culture.

Today, one of Alice Milligan's greatest advocates is Cambridge scholar Dr Catherine Morris, who was recently appointed Trinity College Dublin/National Library of Ireland Cultural Coordinator.

When Dr Morris first began researching the work of Alice Milligan, she was astonished at how such a major cultural and historical figure could have been so shamefully ignored in Ireland. Fifteen years after her research began, Catherine Morris has written a book on the career of Alice Milligan and she has also curated this ground-breaking exhibition at the National Library of Ireland.

The exhibition, which is now open to the public at 2 Kildare Street, continues until February 2011. Admission is free. The material for ***Alice Milligan and the Irish Cultural Revival*** is drawn from the archives of the National Library. It is part of a broader multimedia exhibition, *Discover your National Library*, which features treasures from the Library's collections.

For further information, contact: Katherine McSharry, National Library of Ireland. Tel: 087 994 8144; email: kmcsharry@nli.ie

Additional biographical information: Alice Milligan

Alice Milligan was born in 1866 in a village near Omagh, Co Tyrone. Educated at Methodist College Belfast, she went on to study English literature and history at King's College London, and later trained as a Latin teacher in Belfast.

In the late 1880s, she regularly gave talks to archaeology groups during which she projected pictures onto walls using gas-powered magic lanterns. These were methods and technologies of communicating that she later radicalised in her theatre productions. As part of her work for the Irish Cultural Revival, Alice Milligan not only projected images representing Irish-Ireland into public spaces, she devised a theatre movement in which people themselves embodied the pictures that they projected back into their own communities.

Milligan played a central part in Irish cultural life. Amongst many innovations, she used the very popular form of *tableaux vivants* (in which actors on stage hold a still pose for some moments) to dramatise scenes from Irish history and culture. She was also one of the first *theatre* impresarios to use Irish actors rather than English actors in her plays. In addition, many of her theatre productions featured spoken Irish.

Among the organisations that she helped set up were a Derry branch of the Irish Industries Association, the Henry Joy McCracken Literary Society, the Irish Women's Centenary Union and three branches of the Irish Women's Association.

Magazines that she established and co-edited included *The Northern Patriot* and *The Shan Van Vocht*, two ground-breaking journals in Belfast, both launched in 1895. In 1896 she opened an office in New York to help market the journals to the Irish Diaspora in America.

With her sisters, she collected and published Irish folk songs from Co Tyrone and actively promoted the Irish language as a 'lantern lecturer' for the Gaelic League. As a result of Milligan's hugely popular cultural initiatives, the number of Irish language speakers in Belfast rose from 900 to almost 4,000 within ten years.

In 1891, she moved to Dublin to learn Irish and became fascinated by nationalist politician Charles Stewart Parnell. His sudden death in October of that year confirmed the shift in her political sympathies, and she became increasingly involved in promoting almost every aspect of Irish culture.

Alongside her cultural interests, Milligan was also a political and community activist. She helped to organise the 1898 centenary commemorations of the 1798 rebellion, and in 1916, after the Easter Rising, she travelled to London to attend the trial of Roger Casement. She spent much of that year visiting political prisoners, and after Partition, when she was again living in Northern Ireland, she helped found the Anti-Partition Union.

Although much of the 1930s were spent by her in the role of caring for relatives, she remained engaged by contemporary issues. During the 1940s, when she was well into her seventies, she was remained active in international causes such as campaign for Indian famine relief.

National Library of Ireland Society launches its official history and announces joint funding for new research fellowship scheme

8 December 2010: Forty years of the National Library of Ireland Society are celebrated in a new book launched today by Dr Maurice Manning, Chancellor, National University of Ireland. The Society is the association of friends of the National Library of Ireland.

The author of the illustrated 64-page paperback entitled ***Friends of the National Library: Forty Years of the National Library of Ireland Society*** is Dónall Ó Luanaigh, the Library's former Keeper of Collections who retired from the staff of the Library in June 2006 after 43 years' service.

Speaking at today's launch, Fiona Ross, Director, National Library of Ireland, said that membership of the Society has included some of the most significant figures of Irish life, most notably Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh (Chief Justice, later President of Ireland), Senator Michael Yeats, Professor Patrick Lynch, Professor John J O'Meara, Dr Maurice Craig, Dr Margaret Mac Curtain, Dr Muriel McCarthy and Fr J Anthony Gaughan.

"Dónall Ó Luanaigh's meticulously researched history records how the Society played its part in reviving the fortunes of the National Library of Ireland, resulting in

it becoming one of the most vibrant and admired national cultural institutions", Ms Ross added.

Today's event also saw the announcement of a new initiative which will involve the Society and the Library in jointly funding and managing an annual research fellowship specifically focused on the manuscripts, books, and prints and drawings aspects of the Library's collections. The new fellowship will be named in honour of Dr Patrick Henchy, who was Director of the National Library of Ireland from 1965 to 1976 and founded the National Library of Ireland Society in 1969.

Commenting on the initiative, Felix Larkin, Vice-Chairman of the National Library of Ireland Society said that the new research fellowship scheme, which will be effective from 2011, will greatly strengthen the National Library's links to the academic community and will also have the effect of engaging younger people in the work of the Society.

Referring to the new book on the history of the Society, Mr Larkin said that Dr Patrick Henchy and those who joined him at the inaugural meeting in 1969 were clear about the Society's mission.

"It was to harness 'the tremendous amount of goodwill towards the National Library of Ireland'. The Library was then falling far short of its international equivalents in terms of adequate staffing and storage, purchasing funds and conservation, and there was an urgent need to alert public opinion to this unfortunate situation and to demonstrate the public's support for remedying it. The Society's primary aim was thus, quite simply, to promote the Library and its various activities. Since 1969, the Society's lectures and events have contributed greatly to the cultural and literary life of Ireland in general and Dublin in particular.

"Dónall Ó Luanaigh held the role of Honorary Secretary of the National Library Society from 1983 to 1991, and so is uniquely qualified to write about its history. His book will be the ideal Christmas present for many this year", Mr Larkin noted.

The book, ***Friends of the National Library: Forty years of the National Library of Ireland Society***, highlights the constructive proposals for improving the Library's facilities and administrative structures which the Society forwarded to the relevant authorities at various times; most of these proposals were eventually implemented. It also details the publications sponsored by the Society, and records the financial support it has provided for the Library and, on occasion, for the recreational activities of its staff.

During its 40-year history, the Society has been active in organising activities for its members such as lectures, literary readings, outings and film screenings - all of which are covered by the author. Details of the Richard Irvine Best Lectures and the annual John J O'Meara Memorial Lectures are outlined in separate appendices, information which will be a particularly important reference resource for scholars.

The front cover of the book features a black-and-white drawing of the Library's main reading room by Pat Liddy, the well-known artist and author. It is published by

Associated Editions, whose other recent publications include the re-issued *Mausolea Hibernica* by Maurice Craig and Michael Craig.

Friends of the National Library: Forty years of the National Library of Ireland Society is now available in bookstores nationwide and in the National Library of Ireland bookshop, where it retails at €14.95 (or for the special price of €12 for Society members).

Ends

For further information, contact Felix Larkin, Vice-Chairman, National Library of Ireland Society on 087 234 7044

'Go to the Devil and Shake Yourself...' online with music from the National Library of Ireland

13 December, 2010: Sheet music for '**Go *to the Devil and Shake Yourself...'*** and ***'Let me alone before the People'*** are among 53 largely forgotten 18th century Irish composers' works now available free online to music lovers around the world, following the launch of a collaborative website venture involving a number of national and Dublin-based organisations.

"Almost 213 years after '***Go to the Devil and Shake Yourself***' and '***Let me alone before the People'*** were composed by John Field and Thomas Augustine Geary, the music titles have an extraordinary resonance at this time in Ireland", noted National Library of Ireland Director Fiona Ross while announcing details of the National Archive of Irish Composers – a new website dedicated to Irish historical music www.naic.ie.

The website features a prototype digital collection of important historic piano sheet music – all of which is housed in the National Library of Ireland's collections.

The National Archive of Irish Composers is a collaborative venture involving the National Library of Ireland, DIT Conservatory of Music and Drama, DIT Digital Media Centre. and Heritage Music Productions Ltd. Between them, these groups have masterminded every aspect of the project from librarianship expertise to historical music research and performance – all partnered with cutting-edge digital technology provided by the Digital Media Centre at the Dublin Institute of Technology.

The www.naic.ie website employs the latest technologies in the specification and design of the archive, and it functions through several media. In addition to digital images of the sheet music, it includes audio recordings.

The Director of the National Archive of Irish Composers project is Dr Una Hunt, who described the website initiative as "incredibly exciting". It is essential that the music of important Irish composers should now be heard after a silence of more than 200 years, she added.

Among the sheet music pieces now available on the website are 'Go to the Devil and Shake Yourself' (attributed to John Field, 1797), 'Let me alone before the People' (composed by Thomas Augustine Geary in 1798); 'Gramachree Molly, a Favourite

Irish Air' (dedicated to King George the Fourth and written by Charlotte Maria Despard around 1821), 'The Harp that Once through Tara's Halls and Fly Not Yet' (a fantasia on two Irish melodies composed by William Vincent Wallace in 1848).

Welcoming the website initiative, National Library of Ireland Director, Fiona Ross said that it represents a huge advance in providing access to music by Irish composers.

"As well as fostering an awareness and greater appreciation of historic music from Ireland, which up to now has been neglected, the website will help encourage performance and scholarship of little-known Irish cultural treasures. Most significantly, it will enhance access to the music resources of the National Library of Ireland and it will stimulate international interest in Ireland as a centre for music performance and research."

The project is supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport, An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir agus Spóirt.

For further information, contact Katherine McSharry, National Library of Ireland 087 994 8144 or Dr Una Hunt 087 221 5312

A 'hidey-hole', an 'enchanted tree' and a 'giant book' are among the treats awaiting children visiting the new Tall Tales and Deadly Drawings exhibition during this year's Christmas holidays and through 2011

Wednesday, 22 December 2010: A secret space with no grown-ups allowed; an enchanted tree filled with friendly woodland creatures; a giant book of favourites; an inspiration station where children can create their own stories…these are among the treats awaiting visitors to Tall Tales and Deadly Drawings, a free exhibition for children aged 8 to 88 which is open on 30 & 31 December 2010 at the National Library of Ireland on Kildare Street and throughout 2011.

Tall Tales and Deadly Drawings celebrates the National Library's collections of Irish children's literature, including books, poems, illustrations by Irish artists and manuscript material by Irish children's writers. Children are invited to share memories of a favourite story by hanging a magic leaf in the Open Book, to get creative at the Inspiration Station, and to explore the Library to find characters from Irish children's books appearing in the most unexpected places.

Announcing details of the exhibition, the Director of the National Library of Ireland, Fiona Ross said that in an age of in-car DVD players and eReaders, there is still nothing like the anticipation of a page-turn to a favourite story or poem, nothing quite like the scent of a brand new book, or the feel of an older but much-loved book. She noted that Tall Tales and Deadly Drawings is designed to encourage engagement with children's books and illustrations.

"It is also designed to encourage people to write as well as read children's literature. Most people have strong memories of their favourite childhood books and the new worlds they opened up for them. In mounting this exhibition of children's literature, the National Library is seeking to engage children of all ages – be they eight or 88.

We hope it will instil a love of, and excitement about, reading in our young visitors, and reawaken this joy in our older visitors", Ms Ross said.

With many people on holidays from work on 30 and 31 December, and given the nostalgic nature of the subject matter, the Library expects that much of the traffic to this special free children's exhibition will be led by parents sharing their own favourite books with their children.

The Tall Tales and Deadly Drawings exhibition takes place in the Main Hall, National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street. Admission is free.

Ends

For further information, contact Katherine McSharry, National Library of Ireland, 087 994 8144

National Library of Ireland, end of year release

Cache of previously unknown letters written by Sir William Orpen, 'one of the world's greatest war artists ever', discovered as National Library of Ireland marks 120th year of operation in its landmark Kildare Street building. National Library visitor numbers up 28% on 2009 figures.

28 December 2010: The National Library of Ireland is marking the closing days of its 120th year of operation in its landmark Kildare Street building with the release to the public of a number of previously unknown letters written by Sir William Orpen, one of Ireland's greatest ever painters

Orpen, who was born 132 years ago to a well-to-do family living in Stillorgan, Co Dublin, is described as one of the world's greatest war artists ever and was one of the most sought after society portraitists of late 19th century and early 20th century London. At the time of his death in 1930, it is said that he was the most famous painter in Britain.

The letters, ten in all, were found amongst papers in one of several hundred boxes of material acquired by the Library from Dublin solicitors firm, Orpen Sweeney. They were written in 1901 and 1917 to the artist's father, AH Orpen, who was a principal in the firm. With them was a series of press cuttings, dated from 1913, documenting the press response to Orpen's Royal Academy submissions of that year.

Three of the letters were written during the First World War, when William Orpen was an official war artist at the Western Front, an experience which he subsequently detailed in his book *An Onlooker in France*, a powerful record of the traumatic suffering he witnessed there. (**See extracts from Orpen's First World War letters appended to this media release**).

The other letters, written in 1901, deal with the artist's attempts to secure his father's approval for his impending wedding to Grace Knewstub, an image of whom can be seen on the website: http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/the-elliott-collection/7867/portrait-of-grace-1907

It is clear from the letters that AH Orpen was not easily persuaded that marriage was the correct course for his then 22-year old son. With our knowledge of how unhappily the marriage ended, it is particularly poignant to read Orpen's declaration to his father 'I suppose it is the lot of all men to fall in love… but not always with the right person'.

Explaining how the letters were discovered, Fiona Ross, Director, National Library of Ireland said:

"Prompted by the urgent need to reconfigure storage space in the 120-year-old Library building on Kildare Street, we recently undertook an extensive review of 3,500 boxes of unsorted collection material. Based on this review we established a listing project with the aim of bringing into public access the material acquired over many decades from solicitors firms, land agents and members of the public. It was on day two of the project, while listing some of the material in these boxes, that one of the project archivists discovered the correspondence between William Orpen and his father among miscellaneous title deeds, wills and other testamentary records.

"The Orpen letters will be of great interest to historians and others researching one of Ireland's greatest and, for a time, most successful painters. For example, in one of the letters written in June 1901, Orpen documents his income for his father by listing the paintings sold during the course of the year and his impressive earnings for 1900 - £586 pounds and 10 shillings. There is also an interesting comment on his use of models – clearly a practice of which his father did not approve – and, in a somewhat defensive response to his father in another letter, he declares: "…if you look around, you will find very few [artists] who can paint a picture which could be handed down to posterity without making posterity laugh", Ms Ross added.

The public will have an opportunity to view the material at close quarters from 16 March 2011, when the letters go on display in the Library's multimedia exhibition of treasures, *Discover your National Library* at 2/3 Kildare Street, and online at www.nli.ie/discover

National Library of Ireland visitor numbers

By end November 2010, the number of people visiting the National Library of Ireland had already risen to **177,925, up 28% on 2009 figures**. The increase in visitor numbers was largely driven by two factors: widespread interest in the ***Yeats***, ***Discover*** & ***Power & Privilege*** exhibitions, and large attendances at the annual series of 'Library Late' public interviews held throughout the winter months, and the annual programme of 'Summer's Wreath' performances, readings and lectures held in June.

The Library's genealogy service remained popular throughout 2010. Ms Ross said that she was particularly pleased to note that the number of Irish people using this service continues to grow each year.

2010 marked another busy year of acquisitions and other programme activity for the National Library of Ireland. Signal events included:

- The launch of a new online catalogue, at http://catalogue.nli.ie. This is the first deployment of an OpenSource catalogue in Ireland, has been shortlisted in the Open Source category of the 2011 Ireland's eGovernment Awards, and is also Ireland's first mobile-enabled catalogue, delivering all the Library's catalogue records and digital content straight to smartphones.

- The addition of an additional 12,000 photographic images of late 19th and early 20th century Ireland to the catalogue, thus bringing to **34,000** the total number of Library collection photographs which can now be viewed at http://catalogue.nli.ie

- The launch of the free multimedia exhibition of treasures, ***Discover your National Library:*** Over the lifespan of the exhibition, visitors will be able to explore several thousand items from the National Library's collections, and these will also be made available online. The exhibition uses innovative Microsoft technology to enable visitors to engage with the detail of Library treasures in a way that has previously not been possible.

- The launch by broadcaster and comedian Graham Norton of the **Discover *Lifelines*** exhibition to mark the 25th anniversary of the publication of the first *Lifelines* book featuring letters from famous people about their favourite poems. The project, run by students of Wesley College Dublin, has raised over €100,000 for Concern since 1985.

- The launch of the National Archive of Irish Composers website (http://www.naic.ie), which contains free sheet music from the National Library's collections, for a number of **largely forgotten 18th century Irish composers'** works. These works include 'Go to the Devil and shake yourself ...' and 'Let me alone before the People', composed by John Field and Thomas Augustine Geary almost 213 years ago.

- During October and November, over 1, 00 pupils from 92 secondary schools in 26 counties throughout Ireland took part in various heats of the **POETRY ALOUD poetry speaking event** developed in conjunction with Poetry Ireland. The final will take place on 14 January 2011.

- A month-long series of readings, lectures, public interviews and performances celebrating William Butler Yeats' creativity and legacy, and involving leading names such as **Angelica Huston, Professor Germaine Greer, Cerys Matthews, Gavin Friday, Nóirín Ní Ríain** and **Brian Keenan.**

- A private visit to the Library by **Rev Ian Paisley** and Baroness Eileen Paisley, accompanied by Ms Mary Hanafin, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport.

- The official handing over by Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, of the personal papers of the late **Professor FX Martin**, historian, leader of the 'Save Wood Quay' campaign and member of the Augustinian Order in Ireland.

- A visit by Ireland's favourite twins **Jedward** to launch the book *Write up my Street*, proceeds from which will go to children's charity Barnardos.

- The acquisition of a ship's pass dated 1687 signed by **King James II and Samuel Pepys** which was acquired by the Dublin Port and Docks Board in 1924 and presented to the Library by Enda Connellan, CEO, Dublin Port Company. It is one of the few known examples of 17th century ships' passes in the world.

- During 2010 the Library continued to host its popular 'Library Late' series of monthly public interviews with critically acclaimed writers. These events are designed to stimulate a greater interest in, and understanding of, contemporary Irish and international writing. Themes covered this year included the art of writing for stage and screen **featuring film and television writers John Carney, Mark O'Halloran, Paul Mercier and Mark O'Rowe**.

- The launch of the **Discover *Alice Milligan and the Irish Cultural Revival*** exhibition by actor Fiona Shaw.

- Continued development of the Library's engagement and interaction with users, with an active Twitter (@NLIreland) and Facebook presence (http://www.facebook.com/pages/National-Library-of-Ireland/240989225037), and selected highlights from the visual collections presented through Flickr (www.flickr.com/photos/nlireland**)**

Other important developments for the Library during the year included:

- Winning a Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Award for ***Sources***, the National Library of Ireland's free online search service, available at http://sources.nli.ie , for researchers looking for manuscripts and periodical records

- The appointment in March of a new Director, **Fiona Ross**

- The appointment by Mary Hanafin, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport of a **new board** for the National Library of Ireland. It is chaired by David Harvey, with members including Brian Halpin, Paul Rellis, Paul Shovlin, Professor Diarmaid Ferriter, Dr Marian Fitzgibbon, Des Marnane, Susan Phillips, Pat Quinn, Professor Robert Spoo, Patrick McMahon and Carol Maddock.

- The appointment of Cambridge scholar Dr Catherine Morris as **Trinity College Dublin/National Library of Ireland Cultural Coordinator**. This joint appointment is the first of its kind in Ireland and is part of Trinity's pioneering initiative in the Creative Arts, Technologies and Culture.

Ends

For further information, contact Katherine McSharry, National Library of Ireland, on 087 994 8144 or Brenda O'Hanlon, O'Hanlon Media, on 087 258 3292

Extracts from some of the letters written in 1917 at the Western Front by official war artist, William Orpen

…Up to the present, I have done about 60 drawings, seven paintings and three portraits...

I got rather a fright about myself the other day. I was working some distance away from the car among the trenches, painting the remains of a Boche and an Englishman – just skulls, bones, clothes, rifles, water bottles etc and after a couple of hours I began to feel sort of strange.

I did not know if I was lonely or afraid – so I put down my palette and went a few yards back and sat down – when suddenly a huge puff of wind came and blew over my heavy easel canvas and all, tearing the canvas to bits on the stump of a shelled tree. This did not make me feel any better and it was as much as I could do to sit down and start on a fresh canvas.

That evening I was talking to the French official artist and told him about these skeletons and he said he would like to draw them. So I brought him out the next morning and dumped him down beside them. I was working about ½ a mile further on. When I came back for lunch with him, I found him in a very bad state, and had to send back to a town for some brandy for him.

Your affectionate son
William NM Orpen