

PRESS RELEASE

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Irish research libraries to boost access to collections and increase international collaboration

New strategy to make national online catalogue available in line with international standards

The [Consortium of National and University Libraries](#) (CONUL) has today (22.11.16) launched its Strategy 2016-2019, entitled 'Ireland's Memory, Ireland's Discovery'. The Consortium's first strategy aims to make a significant impact in the education sector and includes a plan for a shared national online catalogue, which will make all collections held by research libraries across Ireland searchable by the public online. This step would bring Ireland in line with its European and US counterparts, where national catalogues are available to citizens.

The Consortium encompasses the whole island of Ireland and is open to all research institutions with significant print and digital collections. It has a user community of nearly a quarter of a million people throughout the country.

Speaking at the launch, Christopher Pressler, member of the board of CONUL and University Librarian, Dublin City University said: "Libraries are at the heart of research, education and public engagement. CONUL research libraries are fundamental in supporting researchers' needs and provide the critical role of preserving and curating data for continuous discovery and mining. This strategy, which is the first in CONUL's history, has a strong focus on granting greater public access to our shared memory and heritage, and fostering meaningful collaborations both nationally and internationally.

"There are 3.5 million items in the CONUL libraries digital collections with over 20 million searches on catalogues every year. Laid end-to-end, the books in our collections would reach from Dublin to Amsterdam. Our strategy aims to create a national catalogue in Ireland within the next 24 months whereby any member of the public will have access to the wealth of knowledge and collections in our libraries. The national catalogue will ensure the democratisation of knowledge, giving the public online access to Ireland's shared memory."

The strategy also outlines plans for increased collaboration between libraries and researchers in Ireland and internationally; the sharing of services and best practice to support learning and teaching through collaborative events and exhibitions and through staff exchanges; and the advocacy for open access to publicly funded research.

Pressler continued: "Through our extensive membership and more than 1,000 members of staff, we are in a unique position to deliver innovation and best practice across all of Ireland's research libraries. We actively explore opportunities for partnership across our membership to share resources and to work with other bodies across the cultural and heritage sectors.

"This strategy sets out a plan to make a difference in the education sector by growing the support we provide for web-based learning, managing access schemes for graduates and researchers to our libraries and by supporting teaching and learning. The outputs and collaborations of our libraries are truly remarkable, given the limited resources in which they operate in - with increased resources, I have no doubt we could achieve much more."

Siobhán Fitzpatrick, Chair of CONUL said: "Our libraries are holders of the heritage and knowledge content of Ireland – over 10 million items – and we aim to make these resources as visible and accessible as possible. Ireland has been falling behind in terms of international standards compared to the US and many European countries, who have union catalogues which collate all holdings of national and university libraries and have been available to citizens for some time. This strategy plans to address this challenge, particularly as the creative and innovative use of the information stored in our libraries could be of great benefit to SMEs, the Irish economy and research teams, and all of Ireland's citizens.

“Our strategy focuses on how we can improve the Irish research landscape over the coming years by training our staff to the highest standards so that they can respond to new trends and work with researchers to deliver the best outcomes. CONUL is a lead partner in the Open Research Ireland agenda which is examining ways to ensure that Ireland is equipped both materially and in terms of a highly trained personnel resource to meet EU agendas.

“We have been at the forefront of advocating for the Open Access and Open Science agendas on a European and international level. CONUL makes regular submissions to Government in relation to data and knowledge sharing, the streamlining of copyright law across the EU and the agenda to enable portability of data. We believe that all publicly funded publications should be free and available to members of the public and we are working with publishers to extend licences that determine access rights. I look forward to increased collaboration between our member libraries, and working with our 1,000 staff librarians to realise the strategic goals of CONUL over the coming years.”

Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton has welcomed the launch of ‘Ireland’s Memory, Ireland’s Discovery’, the CONUL strategy for Ireland’s major research libraries 2016-2019. The Minister said “The work of CONUL and our research libraries is invaluable to society and in preserving our shared knowledge and heritage. CONUL’s member libraries are a prime example of what can be achieved through effective collaboration, collective thinking and the sharing of resources. Our libraries are at the centre of Ireland’s growth on a global level as a place of research, learning and teaching.”

Earlier this year, CONUL held a two-day conference in Athlone which showcased the volume of collaborative work taking place in research libraries. CONUL’s 2017 conference which will focus on all aspects of research, will take place on the 30th and 31st of May, and will be open to international participation.

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Notes to Editors:

- Interviews available on request with CONUL board member, Christopher Pressler and Chair of CONUL, Siobhán Fitzpatrick.
- Photographer, Mark Stedman, will issue photographs after the event.
- CONUL is contributing to the Europe-wide Europeana.eu digital project which includes partnerships across Europe with a focus on archives, art exhibitions and special collections. CONUL is a corporate member of [CERL](http://CERL.org) (Consortium of European Research Libraries) which creates networks of expertise in relation to print and manuscript collections. and of [LIBER](http://LIBER.org) (Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche – Association of European Research Libraries), the main network for research libraries in Europe.
- The libraries in CONUL work without borders; one example of cross border collaboration includes the [Conflict Archive on the Internet \(CAIN\)](http://ConflictArchive.org) which explores the key issues of the Northern Ireland conflict. This is collaboration between University of Ulster, Queen’s University Belfast and Dublin City University. Another CONUL partnership, between DCU, Maynooth University and UCD is [Measuring your Research Impact](http://MeasuringYourResearchImpact.org), a free online bibliometrics tutorial with supporting learning resources available for re-use and adaptation under a creative commons licence.
- CONUL collaborates with analogous UK consortia, e.g. [SCONUL](http://SCONUL.org) (Society of College, National & University Libraries).
- The individual libraries participate in networks germane to their specific collections, institutional strategies and areas of expertise.

About CONUL

The Consortium of National and University Libraries (CONUL) is the representative body of research libraries in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Its members are Dublin City University, Dublin Institute of Technology, Maynooth University, National Library of Ireland, National University of Ireland, Galway, Queen’s University Belfast, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, Royal Irish Academy, University College Dublin, University of Limerick and Ulster University. For more information: www.conul.ie.