



OLLSCOIL NA
GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY

An Leabharlann
Library

University of Galway Library

Annual Report 2024-2025



University
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Introduction

This year was a time of looking back and looking forward. As the period of the Library Strategy 2020-25 drew to a close, we reviewed and celebrated progress against our strategic objectives. Following the launch of the new University strategy, we entered a period of consultation with various stakeholders to help us develop our next Library Strategy.

Having had a few years with a significant turnover in staffing, 2024-25 was also a period of embedding lots of new members into the Library team. We are delighted to see so many new recruits well settled into their roles and teams and contributing to the delivery of excellent services. Here we present an overview of our activities during the year.



Minister James Lawless turns the first sod on the new library May 2025

New Library Building

Work proceeded during 2024-25 on the project to deliver a new Library building for our campus. Our colleagues in Buildings and Estates led a procurement process for a construction company and appointed JJ Rhatigan as the Main Works contractor for this project. The sun shone on our new Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, James Lawless, as he turned the first sod on May 15th 2025. The sunshine that day was a good omen, as construction work commenced swiftly thereafter and has continued at pace and right on track since then.



Meanwhile, the Library team focussed on furniture and the selection of study desks, study chairs and soft seating to ensure the most comfortable experience for our students. This work involved learning from other libraries' experiences, researching the market, preparing for consultation with students and sitting on hundreds of chairs!

Work also continued throughout the year on reviewing and preparing our collections of nearly half a million books for the big move to the new building and the Bookbot (Automated Storage and Retrieval System). This huge undertaking has been a key staff priority for several years and is crucial to the success of the new Library.

Deirdre and Irial Finan Archives and Special Collections Reading Room



Deirdre and Irial Finan
September 2025

We were delighted to host an event on September 1st 2025 to celebrate the renaming of our Archives and Special Collections Reading Room as the Deirdre and Irial Finan Archives and Special Collections Reading Room. This was in recognition of the Finans' generosity in making a significant philanthropic gift towards the costs of the new Library building. Irial Finan graduated from the University in 1977, and together with his wife Deirdre, they have championed education and culture through their philanthropy and engagement with University of Galway, both in Ireland and the US. We are very grateful to them for supporting our Library and for their great interest in our heritage collections.

Archives and Special Collections

We are grateful and honoured to continue to be a destination of choice for archives and special collections. During 2024-25 we received the generous donation of President Michael D. Higgins' Presidential Archive, including personal papers, correspondence, annotated speeches, and part of his book collection.

Professor Françoise Hampson, a close colleague of former University of Galway Professor Kevin O'Boyle, donated an archive of significant material relating to Kurdish human rights litigation in April 2025. An Imirce Collection day was held in December 2024, during which members of the public were invited to bring historical family letters to the Library so that we could digitise those letters and add them to the Imirce database.

These are just a sample of the rich material we received during 2024-25 further strengthening our role in preserving political and cultural history and providing rich, primary source material that will inform decades of research to come.

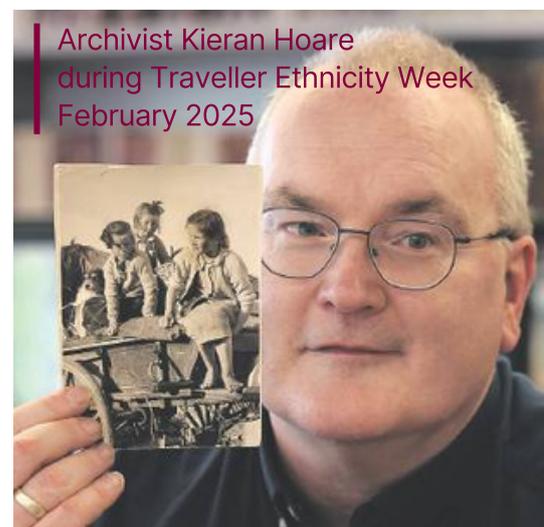
Receiving such generous donations is just the first step to making them available to students and researchers. Cataloguing and processing work concluded on many collections during 2024-25, including the book collections of Dr Heinrich Becker, Tim and Mairead Robinson and Ronnie O'Gorman.

A significant portion of the Mary Robinson Collection was released, including material relating to her Presidential term (1990-1997), which was released on the 8th of November 2024 on the 34th anniversary of her election as the first female President of Ireland.

Among the many collections made available to researchers this year were the [Paddy McMenamain](#) journals from political prisoners held at Long Kesh Prison Camp which were digitised and launched online. The collection of Muintir na Tíre founder John Martin Canon Hayes and the Markus Casey archive of archaeological research and over 20,000 photographs were released.

Traveller Ethnicity Week

During Traveller Ethnicity Week in February we welcomed over 200 primary and secondary students to view our Archives collections.



History of the Library in 100 Objects

As we worked hard to prepare for the future in our new Library, we also celebrated the Library's rich history by launching an exhibition - the History of the Library in 100 Objects on 24th October 2024. The exhibition, created to mark the 175th anniversary of the University, highlighted treasures from the archives and special collections while at the same time showcasing the evolution of the Library profession since the 19th century.



Current and former Library staff at the launch of History of the Library in 100 Objects October 2024

Changing Information Landscape

The shift from print to digital delivery of information resources, ongoing for many decades, increased rapidly during and since Covid. Digital access brings many benefits such as immediacy of access and concurrent use by many students of a prescribed reading. However, the autonomy of libraries to fulfill their role of making information available to all and preserving information for future generations is put at risk by the business models of publishers of digital content.

This came into sharp focus during 2024-25, when our contracted supplier of books and e-books decided to cease selling print books and to move from selling e-books with a perpetual access licence to offering e-book bundles for subscription or lease.

This move significantly reduces the market for print or e-book purchasing by libraries and makes perpetual ownership of books in print or electronic format increasingly challenging.

Through campaigns such as [e-book SOS](#), [Knowledge Rights 21](#) and [Our Future Memory](#), we join our colleagues across the world in advocating for copyright and legislative reform to protect the rights of libraries in the digital world to continue to provide access to knowledge to all.

We also continue to advocate for and support Open Publishing which provides a more sustainable, more equitable alternative to profit-driven commercial publishing. Funded by the National Open Research Forum, we led the development and launch of [Open Repositories Ireland](#), a network dedicated to advancing open research practices and repository services across Ireland.

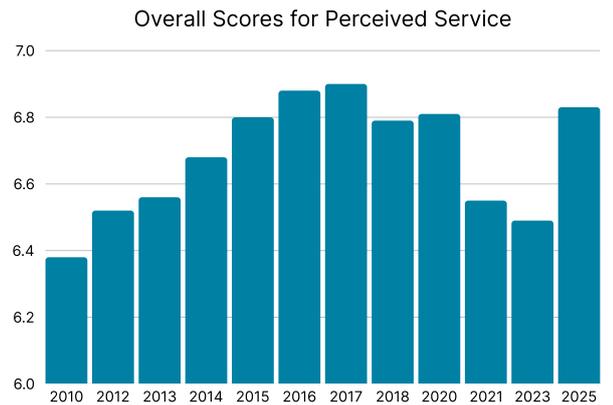
During 2024-25, 913 items (articles, theses, book chapters) were added to the University of Galway Research Repository (more than double the previous year), bringing the total number of items available to 15,549. Items in the Repository were viewed 64,000 times during 2024-25. We also facilitated open publishing of 490 articles directly on publisher websites, through IReL supported Read and Publish deals.

Artificial Intelligence

As information scientists, librarians are very conscious of the ethical and sustainability issues of AI. However, we are also keenly aware of the potential for productivity or service improvements. In many areas of library service, staff reviewed and tested how AI might improve their workflows or service and monitored AI related developments from our information resource and system providers. Recognising that AI poses challenges and opportunities for all of us involved in Higher Education, we also curated and publicised a list of books on [AI in Education](#), continued to include AI advice in our information skills workshops and produced a guide to [AI for Research](#).

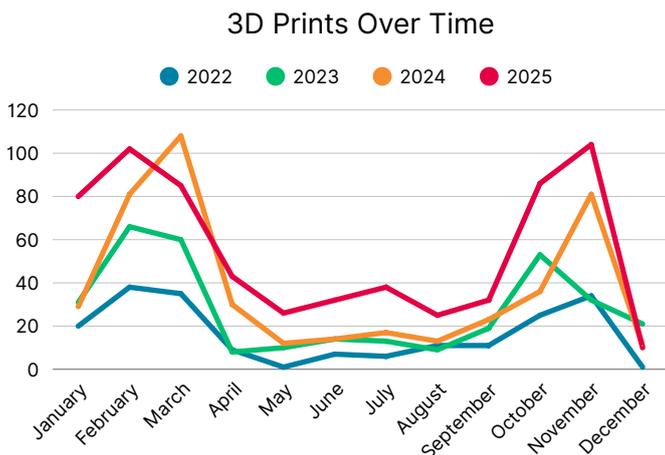
Bi-Annual User Survey

We carried out our biannual LibQual Survey, which gives us an insight into users' perceptions of library services in different areas of service and allows us to compare ourselves with other libraries around the world. After a dip in perceived level of service in the post-Covid years, we were delighted to find things improved this year. However, we are still quite a bit below the scores of other Irish University libraries in LibQual, largely due to a low score on 'Library as Place'. We are confident that our new Library will help us to turn this around.

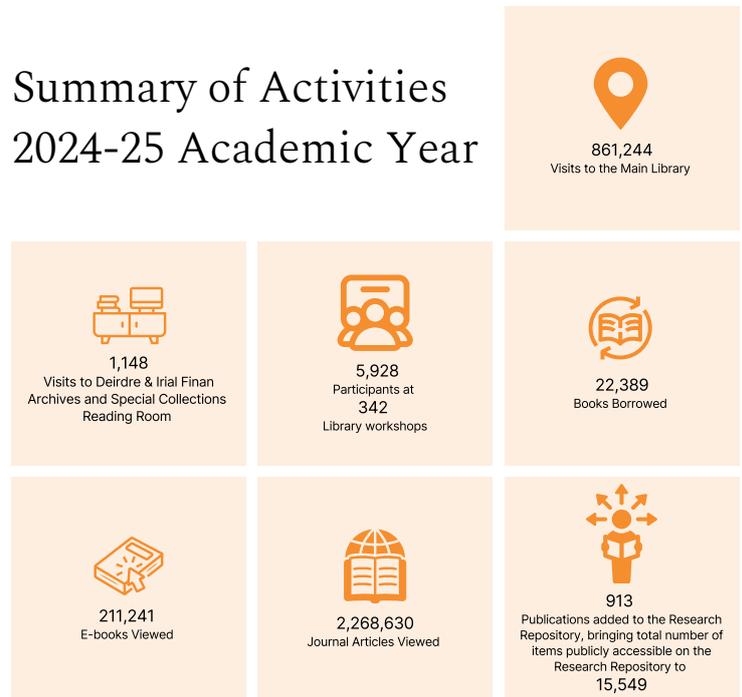


Snapshot of the Library Services in Figures

The MakerSpace provided 582 3D prints in 2024-25. The graph below shows the ever-increasing popularity of the service.

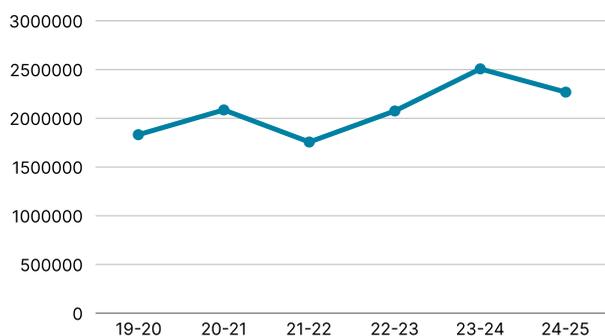


Summary of Activities 2024-25 Academic Year



Key Figures

Number of e-Journal Articles Viewed



Book Use Trends

