



OLLSCOIL NA
GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY
OF GALWAY

An Leabharlann
Library

University of Galway Library

Preserving the Past, Enabling the Future

Annual Report 2023-2024

University
of Galway.ie



Introduction

The 2023/24 academic year marked a pivot point in the University of Galway Library's history as we celebrated 50 years since the James Hardiman Library building opened its doors, while at the same time working to design a building for the future in the new Library and Learning Commons.

At the same time the Library team continued to work hard to deliver our strategic vision of being a catalyst for the success of our students, academics and researchers as University of Galway's hub for scholarly information discovery, sharing and publication.

Library Team

This year was a time of significant change in the Library's leadership and overall team. In the [Library Strategy 2020-2025](#), we forecast that 25% of the library team would hit retirement age during the period of that strategy.

During 2023/24 alone we saw a 25% change in staffing due to retirements and promotions to other University departments. Twenty team members joined our team or took up a new promotional post within the library during 2023/24, therefore recruitment, induction and change was a significant feature of the year.

These staffing changes included major change in the Senior Management Team. University Librarian John Cox retired in November 2023 after 14 years at the helm. Monica Crump took on the role of Interim University Librarian and in March 2024 was appointed University Librarian. Cillian Joy was appointed Head of Open and Digital Research in September 2023 and Katherine McSharry was appointed Deputy University Librarian in early September 2024.



Staff outside the James Hardiman Library, 2024



Retired Library Staff join the 50th Anniversary Celebration

James Hardiman Library 50th Anniversary

On October 10th 2023, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the day the James Hardiman Library opened to students in 1973. We marked the day with an event to launch a 'History of the Library in 100 Objects' project, which has resulted in a fabulous exhibition of treasures from the Library's collections as well as artefacts indicating the changes to libraries and librarianship over the 175 years of the Library's history.

The anniversary of the James Hardiman Library was also marked by the University awarding an honorary doctorate to former University Librarian Marie Reddan in November 2023. This was a great honour for Marie, but also a welcome recognition of the importance of the library and library staff to the success and development of the University.

The Library and Learning Commons



Architect's rendering of the new Library and Learning Commons

While we celebrated the Library's past, our attention was very much focussed on the future. A significant focus for the library team was the detailed design of the new Library and Learning Commons.

High level design had been completed during 2022/23 with planning permission for the building granted in August 2023. The site for the new building was cleared of existing buildings during Autumn 2023. Throughout this year, thanks to the outstanding support of the Capital Projects Team in Buildings and Estates, the requirements and detailed design of every space in the new building were specified.

A procurement process was carried out for the design, delivery and supply of an Automated Storage, Retrieval and Return System, or Bookbot, which will hold the majority of the Library's collections in the new building.

The Development Office were also heavily focussed on the Library and Learning Commons during this year and secured a number of significant donations to the project.

We are very grateful to our colleagues in Buildings and Estates and the Development Office for their hard work on behalf of the Library and Learning Commons and to the President (current and former) and UMT for their support of this project.

Archives and Special Collections

The Library was fortunate to be the recipient of many donations of archival and special collections during the year. The most significant additions to our collections during this year were the archive of travel writer Dervla Murphy, the book collection of [Ronnie O'Gorman](#) including many first and special editions, the archive of the journalist Lorna Siggins, and Deeds relating to the Blake and allied families dating back to 1391, being now the oldest items in our collections.

We also celebrated the launch of a number of archive and digital collections, including the launch of the [Conradh na Gaeilge Digital Archive](#) at Oireachtas na Samhna in November 2023, the launch of the [Hugh Logue Archive](#) to coincide with his honorary conferring in November 2023, the launch of the [Visual History of the University of Galway](#) Retired Staff Association collection in April 2024. We closed out the academic year with the launch of the [Mincéirs Archive](#), celebrating Traveller history and heritage in August 2024.



Key Achievements across the Library

[IMIRCE](#), the digital repository of thousands of Irish emigrant letters, memoirs and other documents, collected and generously donated to the University of Galway Library by historian Kerby A. Miller was launched in March 2024 and received significant media attention.

This repository is the result of a partnership between members of the Library team and Profs. Dan Carey and Breandán MacSuihbne and work on the project continued during this year thanks to funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

Our Open and Digital Research team launched a new [Research Repository](#), a rebranded and updated replacement for ARAN, and implemented new text extraction pipelines for digitised heritage collections, enhancing search functionality and accessibility. The team is leading on a national project funded by the [National Open Research Forum](#) and during this year published [Advancing Ireland's Open Repository Landscape: A Strategic Roadmap](#) as a significant output.

Ongoing work is underway in the Collections team to review the Library's 500,000 books and prepare them for migration to the Bookbot in the new building.

An end of financial year supplementary budget allocation was gratefully received and enabled the purchase of significant online resources that have long been requested: additional sections of the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers; Music Online: Classical Scores Library; National Theatre Collection and British Periodicals Collections; The History of Disabilities, a database of primary source material documenting the history of disability in society; LGBTQ History and Culture Since 1940; and online reference works in multiple disciplines.

Generative AI was a hot topic campus-wide during the year and the Academic Skills team developed an [AI in Education Collection](#), and developed guidance on ethical use of AI for students and researchers which is now included in Information Skills workshops. A new [AI for Research](#) guide was also developed which provides best practices, ethical considerations, and practical insights for effectively and responsibly using generative AI tools in research.

The Academic Writing Centre (AWC) launched a mentorship program this year to support students registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS). Additionally, we experienced a 25% increase in AWC usage by students registered with the DSS, reflecting the growing demand for its services by this cohort of students.



IMIRCE project team with Kirby A. Miller and Patricia Miller, March 2024

Challenges

Multiple outbreaks of mould occurred in the James Hardiman Library basement, which required the discard of some books and careful cleaning of others. We thank our colleagues in Buildings and Estates, who assessed the causes of the issue and installed improved ventilation and heating in the area so as to mitigate the risk of further outbreaks. Meanwhile, issues with the roof of the Print Journals Offsite Store on Snipe Avenue resulted in two significant leaks and the loss of some material. While a temporary fix has been put in place, we await a more permanent solution.

The Information Resources budget remains under increasing pressure as inflation on journal and database costs far outstrips inflation in the general economy, meaning that the budget available for book purchasing or collection development once subscriptions have been paid is becoming unsustainably low.

A late financial year subvention assisted the situation in 2023/24, but the problem will continue in future years. The growth of open access publishing internationally is not happening quickly enough across all disciplines to impact the cost of paid subscriptions. This is something we continue to monitor and work on collaboratively at national level via [IReL](#) (Irish Research e-Library) and [NORF](#) (the National Open Research Forum).


Future Focus

We will continue to ensure the University community embraces, understands and is well poised to take advantage of the ongoing transition towards open practices in all areas of research, scholarly communication and publishing. We look with excitement towards the future when the new Library and Learning Commons will enable us to significantly improve our students' experience by providing them with spaces that enable 21st Century learning, collaboration, creation and innovation. Work will continue to plan and prepare for the new building, while our fantastic Library team continue to ensure excellent delivery of all library services in the interim.

Summary of Activities 2023/24 Academic Year


798,644
Visits to the Main Library


1,446
Visits to Archives and
Special Collections
Reading Room


6285
Participants at
410
Library workshops


24,279
Books Borrowed

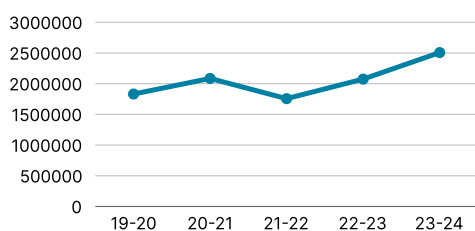

227,143
E-books Viewed


2,507,168
Journal Articles Viewed


394
Publications added to the Research
Repository, bringing total number of
items publicly accessible on the
Research Repository to
14,636

Key Figures

Number of e-Journal Articles Viewed



Book Use Trends

