The Folklore of Ireland Council
Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann
Annual Report 2013-2014
www.comhairlebheal.ie
PRESERVE DISSEMINATE AUGMENT
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Message from the Director

As custodian of Ireland’s vernacular memory Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann: The National Folklore Collection sets out to preserve, disseminate and augment its holdings. To this end, the Collection has made significant strides in each of the related areas.

www.duchas.ie is the initiative of greatest impact and has taken centre stage in the course of the last year. Building on the material from counties Donegal, Dublin, Mayo and Waterford, the digitisation programme of the Schools’ Manuscripts Collection from 1937-1938 has greatly increased in momentum. It is envisaged that material from eleven additional counties will be on stream by 2016. Due to the success of the pilot scheme in 2012-2013, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has increased its support for the scheme in no small measure. We are pleased to announce that UCD has also come on board and provided considerable financial support. The scheme is in partnership with Fiontar and Dublin City University. This is an exemplary scheme with far-reaching consequences. In terms of preservation it ensures that cultural content is protected. In disseminating these holdings of the National Folklore Collection worldwide accessibility to Ireland’s cultural heritage is secure. The impact of dissemination is evident and the Collection has already received extremely positive reports on how www.duchas.ie has affected teaching at both primary and secondary levels. This venture has also resulted in augmentation of the repository. Due to increased publicity relating to the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Schools’ scheme, the number of visitors in the past year has increased. Those that were school children in the 1930s have shared their memories and experiences and these are recent contributions which have greatly enhanced the holdings.

Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann is in the process of engaging with its first e-publication, a reissue of the 1942 classic A Handbook of Irish Folklore by Seán Ó Súilleabháin, archivist with the former Irish Folklore
Commission. This will be available at all ebook portals and on the Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann website https://comhairlebheal.myshopify.com.

In collaboration with An Cumann le Béaloideas Éireann and Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann a showcase of the National Folklore Collection took place at Halloween in Liberty Hall. The concert ‘Féile na Samhna’ featured archival items as well as aspects of the living tradition. Hosts, Doireann Ní Bhriain and Vincent Woods, were kind enough to present the programme. The force behind the concert was the direct result of the enthusiasm and invigoration of committee members of the Folklore of Ireland Society.

Fondúireacht Bhéaloideas Éireann: The National Folklore Foundation is in the final stages of incorporation and has already received an anonymous donation of 100,000 euro. Its first endeavour has been to engage Tom Sherlock, traditional music business professional, to conduct a sustainability report for the National Folklore Collection.

President Michael D. Higgins has graciously accepted the role of Patron of the National Folklore Collection. This is indicative of its value and role in Ireland’s vernacular culture and memory.

Following an approach from the St Teresa’s Gardens Regeneration Board a pilot scheme has been funded and established to begin a collecting scheme with residents and former residents within the Coombe area of Dublin. The scheme will involve residents being trained as collectors. Ethnographic fieldwork will be led by Jonny Dillon, a graduate of Irish Folklore, UCD. The scheme will take place from September 2014 until January 2015.

Professor Peter Clinch, Vice-President of Innovation, UCD and Dínny McGinley TD, Minister of State for the Gaeltacht, at the launch of www.duchas.ie

The relationship between the National Folklore Collection and Nova UCD has allowed the Collection to engage with wider perspectives in relation to its future sustainability.
Ongoing augmentation of the Collection is crucial. Due to lack of resources a limited amount of fieldwork can be facilitated. The use of the questionnaire system which has been a part of the collecting mechanism since the 1930s allows for such work to continue. Our emphasis at the moment is concentrated on the decade of commemoration and to this end a questionnaire based around 1916 is in circulation.

It is with great sadness that we mark the death of Professor Emeritus Bo Almqvist. Folklore studies in Ireland and beyond have lost a great scholar.

The past number of years have presented many challenges, not least in the financial sphere. In light of these challenges, I would like to give my sincere thanks to colleagues with whom I have worked for many years as well as those who spend a limited amount of time with the Collection as interns and voluntary workers. In relation to www.duchas.ie I would like thank Dr Caoilfhionn Nic Pháidín and Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, Fiontar, for facilitating the partnership and ensuring its success.

The ongoing support of the Higher Education Authority is gratefully acknowledged. I would like to thank An tOllamh Seán Ó Coileáin, Chairperson of Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann. I am also grateful to the members of Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann for assistance and support throughout the year.

Ríonach uí Ógáin

Director
National Folklore Collection

31 May 2014
Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann oversees the National Folklore Collection and ensures dissemination of the Collection. These objectives are facilitated by means of cataloguing, editing and publication. An Chomhairle also monitors matters of access to and use of the National Folklore Collection. In addition, An Chomhairle is required to administer the funds which the Department of Education, through the Higher Education Authority, has made and will make available towards the cost of cataloguing, editing and publishing Irish Folklore and studies relating thereto.

Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann meets quarterly.

Members of Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann 2012-2015

An tOllamh Seán Ó Coileáin (Chairman)
Professor Maeve Conrick
Francis Devine, Uasal
Michael Gibbons, Uasal
Dr Ciara Leonard
An tOllamh Liam Mac Mathnúna
An tOllamh Máire Ní Annracháin
Anraí ó Braonáin, Uasal
Ruairí Ó Cuív, Uasal
An tOllamh Diarmuid Ó Giolláin
Ed Penrose, Uasal
Michael Wallace and Críostóir Mac Cáirtheagh in attendance.

Publications Committee

As a core element in the work of An Chomhairle is to ensure a programme of publications, the purpose of the publications committee is to make recommendations to An Chomhairle concerning future publications, to oversee the peer review process and address editorial concerns. Members of the committee comprise:

An tOllamh Ríonach uí Ógáin (Chair)
An Dochtúir Fiachra Mac Gabhann
An tOllamh Liam Mac Mathúna
An tOllamh Séamas Ó Catháin
Roibeard Ó Cathasaigh, Uasal
An tOllamh Seosamh Watson
Mission of the National Folklore Collection

A folklore archive is the manifestation of documented tradition. The National Folklore Collection represents the voices of over 100,000 contributors. The Collection offers the world of scholarship access to this national and international resource for study and research. An important part of the Collection’s mission is to promote new insights into, as well as a greater appreciation and deeper understanding of, Irish cultural heritage as found in the Collection. A major role of the National Folklore Collection is to preserve and disseminate its holdings and to augment the Collection by means of fieldwork, donations and purchases.

Creating a greater awareness of the Collection promotes pride in our oral and material cultural heritage. To ensure its greatest impact and potential, a National contribution to the future of the Collection is crucial. The Collection can contribute new value to the cultural life of Ireland at home and abroad.

Staffing comprises permanent staff members and a number of temporary and voluntary positions.

Permanent appointments

The following are the permanent positions within the National Folklore Collection:

Ríonach uí Ógáin
Críostóir Mac Cáithigh
Anna Bale
Simon O’Leary
Patricia Moloney
Intern Carly Boerrigter from California with researcher Natasha Somers from Harvard University. Over the years, both European and North American interns have invigorated the work of the Collection.

Liam McGrath, Director of Scratch Films with his team, John Downes, Katherine Drohan, John McMahon and also Ciarán Cooney, JobBridge intern with the National Folklore Collection.

In recent years a number of media companies, in particular Scratch Films, have drawn on the resources of the Collection. This has given additional depth to numerous documentaries.

Students from the Dunboyne College of Education looking at material from the Schools’ Manuscripts Collection. Group visits allow the National Folklore Collection to describe its holdings and give people an opportunity to see some of the potential of the original material.
Ethnographic fieldwork is the lifeblood of a tradition archive. Without it, a sense of capturing the living tradition will not be available and is in danger of being lost forever. The National Folklore Collection bears witness to this fact. Due to its direction and purpose, the Schools’ Manuscripts Collection offers insight into the riches of local tradition. It gives local expression to the universal.

The foresight of that initiative should not be lost and the actions taken in the 1930s should be mirrored and developed in all aspects of collecting the living, dynamic tradition. Already, the impact of www.duchas.ie is evident in the public gratitude received and this greatly encourages further digitisation of the Collection.

The National Folklore Collection’s gratitude extends to the foresight and commitment of the Irish Folklore Commission and those bodies, organisations and individuals that brought the scheme to fruition.

Events that have taken place in the last few years have reaffirmed the National Folklore Collection in the importance of its current and future endeavours. As a resource for the unofficial, otherwise undocumented, expression of the vernacular imagination, the Collection is unparalleled. A matching national resource does not exist and henceforth the National Folklore Collection merits ongoing fieldwork in order to develop its holdings for future understanding.
Caoimhe Nic Lochlainn, editor for www.duchas.ie and intern Carly Boerrigter. www.duchas.ie uses the operating platform Léacslann in order to create the database behind the searchable on-line resources. Caoimhe was appointed an editor to duchas.ie. Carly has also contributed to the project.

Promotion for Raidió na Gaeltachta programme series based on the commemoration of the Schools’ Scheme. Twenty-two programmes were produced by Micheál Holmes.

The support received from Micheál Holmes over the years culminated in this substantial series of programmes incorporating interviews with young and old alike.

Gathering in Leixlip, County Kildare celebrating the Schools’ Collection with a number of contributors to the original scheme. The seventy-fifth anniversary of the Schools’ Scheme brought many groups and individuals on board. Counties such as Kildare held a number of commemorative events.
# Financial Report

of the National Folklore Collection and Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann
for the period 1 June 2013 to 31 May 2014

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<td>Sub-Reporting</td>
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<td>Travel &amp; Hospitality</td>
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The Higher Education Authority allocation of €10,000 for 2014 will appear in the financial statements as of June 2014. Overheads incurred by University College Dublin include premises, facilities, human resources, IT, accounting and insurance. €110,000 income in cost centre 5346 is awaiting transfer of €100,000 to the National Folklore Foundation and €10,000 from the VP for Innovation to www.duchas.ie.
Members of the Kelly family playing at Féile na Samhna in Liberty Hall. Fiddle player, John Kelly senior is in the photograph projected on the screen. This image encapsulates the vibrancy of the living tradition illustrating the unbroken chain of material going from generation to generation.

Musician Soren Mulligan plays concertina at Féile na Samhna in Liberty Hall. The occasion brought together a great gathering of singers, musicians, storytellers and mummers that delighted the audience at Halloween. The event underlined the great public goodwill towards the National Folklore Collection.
Enquiries and requests for material