



National College of Art and Design
A Recognised College of University College Dublin

Quality Assurance Review

The Edward Murphy Library
and
The National Irish Visual Arts Library

Peer Review Report

July 2016

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**Quality Assurance
Peer Review Group Report**

**Library & NIVAL
July 2016**

A Self-assessment Report was undertaken by the Library in the academic year 2015/2016. The Peer Review site visit took place on 13th & 14th July 2016.

Location: The Meeting Room, NCAD

Peer Review Group: Darlene Maxwell, Head of Library Services, RCA, (Chair)
Orla Nic Aodha, Librarian, SPD, DCU
Dr. Roisin Kennedy, Lecturer, Researcher, UCD

1. Timetable of Site Visit:

DAY	TIME	ACTION
Wed 13 th July	1.00 p.m.	PRG convene with Quality Officer, Working lunch to confirm schedule and roles of each member of PRG
	2.00 – 3.00 p.m.	PRG meet with Senior Management (Director, HAA) and Librarian
	3.00 – 4.00 p.m.	PRG visit Library & NIVAL with Librarian
	4.00 – 4.45 p.m.	PRG meet Library Staff
	4.45 – 5.30 p.m.	PRG meet NIVAL Staff
	7.00 p.m.	PRG Dinner with Librarian & Head of Academic Affairs

DAY	TIME	ACTION
Thurs 14 th July	9.00 – 9.30 a.m.	PRG convene with the QA Officer to confirm review format for the day
	9.30 – 10.30 a.m.	PRG met cross-section of NIVAL users and liaisons: NCAD staff, postgraduate researchers and scholars
	10.30 – 11.00 a.m.	Coffee
	11.00 – 12.00 noon	PRG met cross-section of Library users and liaisons: NCAD Staff, undergraduate & postgraduate students, CEAD students and external researchers.
	12.00 – 12.30 p.m.	PRG meet IT support staff with Librarian
	12.30 – 1.30 p.m.	Working Lunch
	1.30 – 3.30 p.m.	PRG draw up draft report & recommendations
	3.45 p.m.	Presentation of draft report & recommendations to Senior Management and senior Library staff.

The programme for the visit was well planned in advance, with the relevant documentation sent out to the PRG well in advance of the visit itself.

There was a lot of information to absorb over the two days and in particular during the meetings with Library staff and the users. The timetable was rather tight on both days, with very little time between each of the sessions to either review or prepare for the next session. On the first day, we were rushing to complete the tour of the Library and NIVAL and have enough time to meet Library and NIVAL staff. In future, it would be advisable to allow for two full days for the review and allow a little more time in the flexibility of the schedule.

2. Peer Review Methodology

The PRG worked well together over the two days and were in agreement on the major issues facing both the EML and NIVAL Libraries. Darlene Maxwell as Chair contacted the two other members of the PRG: Orla Nic Aodha and Dr. Roisin Kennedy the week before the review itself to identify the main issues from the self-assessment report we had been sent as part of the review documentation. This established our areas of interest to explore during the review meetings with Library staff and users.

Darlene Maxwell, was able to add her expertise and knowledge on art and design libraries and the issues facing small specialist academic libraries. Many of the issues discussed as part of the review were similar to those at the Royal College of Art.

Orla Nic Aodha provided some of the context of working in a Higher Education library in Dublin and the issues facing Higher Education in Ireland. She has worked in a College that has been linked to a University for a number of years and brought that experience to the review, as well as experience of issues facing a library that has run out of space.

Dr. Roisin Kennedy, as lecturer and researcher in art history at University College Dublin, has a very extensive knowledge of NCAD, having previously taught in Visual Culture in NCAD throughout the 1990s and in 2014. She has been a regular user of the NIVAL since it opened, and therefore has a good knowledge of the wider contexts of the College and, importantly, the collections and services of the Edward Murphy Library and NIVAL.

There was a lot of information to absorb over the two days and in particular during the meetings with Library staff and the users. The latter were particularly useful as they highlighted to the PRG the value the users placed on the collections and services provided across the two libraries and reinforced some of the issues that had been highlighted in the self-assessment report. The users praised the efforts of both Library and NIVAL staff and were highly appreciative of the extensive and unique collections of both libraries.

The tour of the EML and NIVAL Library was extremely useful in giving the PRG an idea of the space and accommodation of both collections and how these issues dominated both the report and the review meetings from both staff and user perspectives. Time constraints curtailed visits to storage space and to the wider college.

The report outline and basic recommendations were put together on the afternoon of the second day, with the assistance of Nicky Saunders, the NCAD Quality Officer, as the PRG pulled together all their notes from the meetings with staff and users to come to a consensus on what we felt were the main issues and what recommendations we would propose. As Chair, Darlene Maxwell added to the document in the first instance with contributions from both Orla and Roisin to complete the document prior to submission to NCAD.

3. Description of the Edward Murphy Library (EML) and the National Visual Arts Library (NIVAL)

The Library is central to NCAD's present and future provision of programmes and is of significant national importance for the study and research of art and design, especially relating to the 20th century and contemporary periods. The library's mission and collecting policy originated with the appointment of the first college librarian in 1978 and the move of the campus to Thomas Street shortly thereafter. The importance of the main library collections is paralleled by those of the National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL). This resource was established by the Library to address an extreme scarcity of information on Irish art and design. NIVAL is now the recognised repository for relevant archival material and ephemera and has become the essential research collection for the study of Irish visual culture.

The College has consistently provided the institutional and financial support necessary to sustain the mission objectives of the library. The vision and dedication of Edward Murphy, the Librarian until his retirement in 2013, is responsible for the strategic development of a collection. In honour of his enduring contribution to life and learning at NCAD, staff proposed the renaming of the library upon his retirement. In 2013, with the unanimous support of An Bord, the name was changed to The Edward Murphy Library.

The NCAD collection is international in scope and coverage, informed by sustained bibliographic research. The strengths are evident in the book, exhibition catalogue and journal collections. The collection of hard copy material is supplemented by online scholarly resources including indexing databases, e-journals and digital image libraries, available on campus and remotely via OpenAthens.

There are other libraries in Ireland that collect art and design material but none comes anywhere close to replicating the subject strengths of the College's collection. Generally, such collections form only one part of multi-subject libraries in educational institutions catering for a wide variety of courses in the humanities, social sciences and technological sciences.

The Library is a member of the Library Association of Ireland and ARLIS/UK & Ireland.

3.1 EML Mission Statement

The Edward Murphy Library supports the College's academic mission through the provision of information, training, facilities and resources for students and staff of the College. To achieve this, the Library commits to

- Build collections in support of the teaching and learning objectives of the College
- Understand and respond to the research needs of library users

- Enrich the student learning experience through user education
- Develop and encourage expert knowledge and skills among library staff
- Provide a high quality and reliable service, promptly and efficiently
- Treat all users with fairness and courtesy
- Provide an hospitable physical environment for research and study
- Manage the care and accommodation of collections to ensure longevity and future access
- Secure adequate funding and resourcing

3.2 EML Statistics: Collections and Users

Collections 2015

Books and exhibition catalogues	95,070
Serials/Journals	167
Bibliographic databases	4
Electronic journals	590
DVDs	3,335

Members 2015

College staff F/T	198	
College staff P/T	244	
<i>Staff total</i>		<i>442</i>
Undergraduates	1,075	
Postgraduates	158	
CEAD (certificate and diploma)	158	
<i>Students total</i>		<i>1,391</i>
Graduate/Alumni members	34	
Other externals (inc. CEAD)	16	
<i>External total</i>		<i>50</i>
<i>Membership total</i>		<i>1,883</i>
Visitors 2015	330	
Reader spaces 2015	53	

3.3 NIVAL Mission Statement

NIVAL's core remit of collection, preservation and access is sustained by the following mission objectives:

- To promote the value of arts documentation as a key resource in the building of cultural memory
- To strengthen the collaborative relationship between the artist and the institution in building the public record of arts activity
- To encourage living artists to contribute to the national collection with material donations and advocacy
- To facilitate research and innovative scholarship in Irish art and design
- To safeguard the record of Ireland’s visual cultural history

3.4 NIVAL Statistics: Collections and Users – 2015

Collections

Books and exhibition catalogues	3,459
Serials/Journals (titles)	62
Ephemera	300 meters (estimate)
Audio-visual material	500 items (estimate)

Researchers (onsite and online)

NCAD	395
Other 3rd level	180
All others	115
<i>Readers total</i>	<i>690</i>

Inductions

Staff and students - NCAD	575
Staff and students - other 3rd level	110
<i>Inductions total</i>	<i>685</i>

Collaborative research projects (number of participants)

NCAD	129
Other 3rd level	25
<i>Collaborators total</i>	<i>154</i>

Total users **1,529**

Reader spaces 2015 8

4. Preliminary Comments of the Peer Review Group

The EML is pivotal to the educational and social experience of the students and staff of NCAD. While providing students with vital support in their learning experience it is equally essential to academics actively engaged in research and art and design practice. Furthermore both the EML and NIVAL are key resources in attracting postgraduate and international students and are therefore crucial to the future development of NCAD as a college of international standing. Well maintained libraries are central to an institute of learning. Both facilities, like all libraries, require ongoing investment as otherwise they will not operate effectively nor remain up to date.

The PRG were extremely impressed with the range of collections and material, in both the EML and NIVAL. These are art and design collections of national cultural and artistic importance and extremely valuable to both the domestic and international research community. They raise the profile and reputation of NCAD to a wider cultural and research audience. It is worth reiterating that the library and NIVAL are central to the educational and social experience of the students and staff. EML and NIVAL holds a wealth of material not held anywhere else.

The collaborative projects undertaken by NIVAL within the college academic community and with external institutions and bodies are impressive. The latter includes *Mobile Encounters: Documenting the Early Years of Performance Art in Ireland* with IMMA in 2014-15 and *Unfolding the Archive: Floating World* with the F.E. McWilliam Gallery, Banbridge in 2015. While these projects provide creative ways of making the facility known to a wider public, the poor quality of the physical space housing the NIVAL facility could be potentially damaging to the reputation of the collection for future sponsors, donors and collaborators both nationally and internationally.

Feedback has been received about extending the library opening hours, particularly at weekends, however the panel feel that under the present financial conditions this may not be feasible.

The amount of work that is achieved by the current low staffing levels in the EML and NIVAL is phenomenal and all staff are commended for their commitment to their roles, the libraries and to the institution. All the feedback the PRG received was extremely appreciative of staff in both the EML and NIVAL. This is a major asset of NCAD, both for visitors and the staff and students of the college. The flexibility of the EML library and NIVAL staff should be commended but the PRG has made recommendations regarding structures as the current flat structure in some areas could be detrimental to the future development of both libraries.

The PRG commend the willingness of the NIVAL staff in reconfiguring the space of NIVAL in order to facilitate the wider needs of NCAD with little perceived advantage to the library. The loss of storage space is of concern to staff in terms of their ability to maintain and preserve the collection according to recognised archival standards that the materials in this national collection warrants.

In terms of staff accommodation, it was noted by the PRG team that the dispersed nature of both the EML Library and NIVAL teams did not lend itself to a particularly conducive working environment for both teams and if more suitable accommodation could be found to house Library staff together, it could encourage greater information knowledge and exchange amongst staff.

The recent introduction of new printer and photocopier machines in the Library is a welcome development and should address many of the comments raised by users in the recent Library survey. We also learned that the College is undergoing an IT audit, which will help identify areas for IT investment in the College as a whole, which will hopefully provide benefits to the Library IT infrastructure, support and staffing in the longer term.

The PRG support all the recommendations within the excellent Library self-assessment report. The PRG would like to acknowledge the work currently being undertaken to produce a manual of procedures as mentioned in the recommendations in the SAR. This work should continue.

5. Report of the Peer Review Group (Commendations and Recommendations)

5.1. EML Library Space and Accommodation

- 5.1.1 The college needs to address the chronic shortage of space – this is by far the most significant issue for users and staff. The shortage of space is demoralising for staff to facilitate them to perform their roles and duties effectively and efficiently.
- 5.1.2 The poor storage conditions of collections in portacabins are affecting current and long-term conservation and preservation of this material. More appropriate storage facilities are urgently required.
- 5.1.3 Look at the reconfiguration of space to introduce new zones to facilitate different learning styles e.g. quiet areas, social areas, flexible areas, browsing areas.....
- 5.1.4 The ratio of seats to users needs to improve substantially. From statistical analysis within the HE sector the figures below overwhelmingly demonstrate the acute lack of study spaces in comparison to other academic institutions:
AT NCAD it is currently at approx. 1:20 (user to seats). This is approx. double the norm. Most third level libraries are working within a figure of 1:10 or below.
- 5.1.5 Lack of adequate space for the collections is a major drawback in the use of the collections, particularly for art and design students where access to visual material is central to inspiration, creativity and originality in their studio practice. Having a significant proportion of the collection in storage severely restricts browsing and the serendipitous approach to accessing library resources by art and design students. The College urgently needs to address the main issue of space in the EML to rectify this issue.

5.2. NIVAL Space and Accommodation

- 5.2.1 The PRG recommends that NIVAL is relocated to a more suitable and spacious facility. This would facilitate enhancing both internal and external engagement with the resources and a more suitable location could lead to a more active exhibition programme promoting the collection and the unique, rare and culturally valuable resources.
- 5.2.2 Improve the visibility of NIVAL on campus to both visitors to the campus and to students and staff of NCAD. Ensure proper and clear signage to the facility throughout the campus and at the front gate.
- 5.2.3 The poor storage conditions of collections are affecting current and long-term conservation and preservation of this material. More appropriate storage facilities are urgently required (with temperature/humidity controls and flood protection).

5.3. Staffing

- 5.3.1 Staffing needs to be addressed. Staff office space needs to be considered in the future. Staff are demoralised with the current issues related to the lack of space for the collections and poor storage conditions and this impacts on how they perform their roles effectively and efficiently. They are also acutely aware how the lack of space and good access to study facilities impacts on the users of both libraries.
- 5.3.2 The PRG strongly recommends the following urgent restructure and increased staffing levels:
1. Full-time assistant librarian
 2. Full-time senior library assistant
 3. Re-grading of the NIVAL administrator to Assistant Librarian grade
 4. Digital media expert to enable digitization of NIVAL materials
- 5.3.3 Explore the possibility of making links with SILS (School of Information and Library Studies) in UCD to offer work on the collection as possible student projects.

5.4. IT

- 5.4.1 Explore the possibility with IT staff of establishing a self-service kiosk for laptop loans.
- 5.4.2 Consider removing the PC's from library space to facilitate reconfiguration of space.
- 5.4.3 Increase collaboration between Library and IT staff in the delivery of services.
- 5.4.4 PRG recommends investment in a new platform/user interface to enable search optimisation and seamless access to online resources.
- 5.4.5 Explore future development and potential of the LMS to improve routine tasks. In addition investigate the option of looking at the acquisitions module and other benefits of the LMS to streamline and automate Library workflows and reduce the administrative burden for key tasks and processes.
- 5.4.6 Look at ways to improve EML library and NIVAL information on the website.
- 5.4.7 Provide A5 sheets with login passwords for the various online resources. Include this information in the student handbook.

5.5. NIVAL Resources

- 5.5.1 Consider renaming NIVAL to include the use of the word 'archive' in the title to distinguish it from the Library.

- 5.5.2 Increase awareness among academic staff of NIVAL resource through brief introductory sessions. Work collaboratively with academic staff on educational projects using the NIVAL collections.
- 5.5.3 Investigate opportunities to digitise the collection which will facilitate increased promotion and profile of the rare resources and improve access to the unique materials housed in the Library, both internally and to the wider international academic community.
- 5.5.4 Explore collaboration with the School of Information and Library Studies in UCD.
- 5.5.5 Explore outreach and external relationships with other educational and cultural institutions.
- 5.5.6 Actively increase awareness of NIVAL and its collections with other educational and cultural institutions nationally and internationally.

5.6. Services and Operations

- 5.6.1 Consider retrieving books and materials from storage at certain days and times rather than every day. This would be a more efficient use of staff time and be more effective for student collections.
- 5.6.2 Recommend a self-issue system, which would reduce staff time on the Library desk covering routine tasks and allow these staff to be deployed in other areas of the Library or take on new more value-added tasks and projects.
- 5.6.3 Recommend Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and the installation of a new security and access system in the EML.
- 5.6.4 Establish closer and more formal liaison between the Library and the Schools. The Library Board meets once a year; the PRG recommends it meets more frequently and that all Schools ensure that a nominee attends. There should be no requirement for all Library staff to attend though management attendance would be essential. Introduce a rota to ensure all staff have the opportunity to attend a meeting every 1-2 years, this will improve fairness and parity for all staff.
- 5.6.5 Information literacy should be expanded over the academic year with follow-up sessions during the year to ensure engagement from students with the academic programme. This should not be confused with orientation and induction sessions at the beginning of the academic year.
- 5.6.6 Explore the use of an online staff newsletter for library staff communication.
- 5.6.7 Explore collaborations with other institutions to enable access for NCAD students to a wider range of interdisciplinary resources, especially online materials such as journal articles through academic access schemes e.g. SCONUL, ALCID.

6. Conclusions of PRG

We would like to acknowledge the assistance of Donna Romano, Jenny Fitzgibbon and the staff of the EML and NIVAL in enabling our visit to run smoothly. We also acknowledge the Quality Officer, Nicky Saunders for being such an impressive and well organised facilitator for the review process. In addition the PRG commends Donna and the Library team for the all their hard work and diligence in the creation of the self-assessment report, it was a clear and well-written report enabling the PRG to easily identify the main issues prior to our visit.

Through this document it is our intention that the issues highlighted in the Library's self-assessment report are supported and considered carefully by the College and that College Management can find ways as part of the broader strategic development of the College to invest in the future development of EML and NIVAL libraries, particularly in terms of increasing library space and staffing.