‘After rowing 12 hours a day for a month, in shifts of 2 hours on and 2 hours off, I thought my mettle had already been fully tested’

Aodhán Kelly (BA ’06 & MLitt ’09)
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Hello & Thanks

Graduations 2012
Snap shots of the happy day

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Prof Paul Moynagh and new treatment for immune mediated disease

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WELCOME TO THE BRIDGE

Welcome to The Bridge 2012, our annual magazine for Maynooth Alumni. It’s been a busy year during which many alumni returned to campus for a wide variety of events and occasions. We also launched our new Online Community (http://alumni-network.nuim.ie) which allows alumni to register for events on campus and ensure their contact details are kept up to date.

Alumni have contributed to the University and to the current student community in many ways during the last year - not least of which with their time and their expertise. Featuring Sean O’Riordan, BA Media Studies and many alumni returned to campus for a wide variety of events and occasions. We also launched our new Online Community (http://alumni-network.nuim.ie) which allows alumni to register for events on campus and ensure their contact details are kept up to date.

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Alumni are also now represented on the Postgraduate Feedback Council. For this and much more, I sincerely thank you. I’d also like to acknowledge the Maynooth Alumni Advisory Board (which now includes Faculty representation) for their commitment to and support of our alumni initiatives during 2012.

This magazine will be available online at the Alumni website: http://alumni-network.nuim.ie. If you need any copies for fellow alumni, please contact me on 017086492 or by email at alumni@nuim.ie. Happy reading!

Karen Kelly
Alumni Officer

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As my first year at Maynooth draws to a close, I continue to develop an even greater understanding of the magic that the Maynooth experience holds for graduates of this University. Many alumni have recounted the fantastic things they have had, the inspiration and guidance they have gained and friendships that have lasted for years. Indeed, I have the pleasure of joining over 200 of you on this year’s Campus Cycle and hearing your many stories, recollections. The collegiality and sociability of Maynooth is legendary and as the University grows, it is something that we will continue to nurture.

Alumni continue to contribute to the University in many ways, and for that we thank you. Some have been involved in the development of the University’s strategic plan, which will be launched early next year; some of you have given your time to student career seminars and clinics.

2013 will be an exciting year for the University as we open our new library on the North Campus and a number of exciting building projects begin on the South Campus. I invite you to stay connected to Maynooth and look forward to welcoming you back on campus throughout the year.

Warmest regards

Professor Philip Nolan
President, NUI Maynooth

GRADUATIONS 2012

Included this year for the first time were graduates from our new BSc programmes including BSc Multimedia and BSc Science Education and new Bachelor of Business Administration degree (Business and Management), new masters included an MA of Law, MA of International Business Law, MA of Engineering Renewable Energy Systems and MSc in IT Management.

Among the graduating classes were the first graduates of the Higher Diploma in Primary Education at NUI Maynooth. This is the first year that students from the Froebel College of Education have been conferred with the NUI Maynooth Higher Diploma in Primary Education and Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education. NUI Maynooth is the only University offering the full spectrum of teacher education – from primary and secondary, through to adult and community education.
From the Carol Service to the most recent alumni reunion in November 2012, alumni enjoyed many trips down memory lane and reconnected with the University, former lecturers and class mates at a wide variety of events during the past year.

Access Alumni Reunion
The Maynooth Alumni Office organised an event with the Access Office and invited Access Alumni who were supported by the Maynooth Access Programme under the directorship of Ann O’Brien, to a celebratory evening event in the mezzanine area of the Phoenix restaurant on 7th June. A great night was had by all as graduates from 2001 onwards mingled with University staff, associates of Ann from the wider education community and Ann’s family during which Ann’s formative role with the Access Office and her imminent retirement from the University was also acknowledged.

Snooper Club Alumni Celebrate Club’s Achievements
One of the main reasons behind the event on 7th September was to celebrate the success of the Snooker Club in Maynooth from both an academic and sporting perspective. Former scholarship winners, current and past intervarsity team members and now alumni joined Honorary President of the Club, Ciarán Mac an Bhaird (Mathematics Lecturer), and the directorship of Ann O’Brien, to a celebratory evening event in the Iontas Building, North Campus. Renowned Professor of Mathematics, Peris Diaconis of Stanford University, delivered a public lecture entitled ‘On Coincidence’, addressing the influence of chance on our daily lives. Established over a decade ago, the Hamilton Institute has become one of the world’s leading mathematical research centres, providing a bridge between mathematics and its applications in ICT, biology and other disciplines.

Snooker Club Alumni Reunion Dinner – New York
We held our fourth Alumni Reunion Dinner in the States on 8th March. Hosted by Professor Philip Nolan, President NUI Maynooth, this event was held in Craftbar Restaurant in Manhattan. New York Alumni, some of whom had significant commute on the night, journeyed into mid-town Manhattan for what was to be a very sociable, informal evening of good food and equally good conversation. One of the talking points on the night was the 25th Anniversary celebrations this year of the Computer Science Department as attending alumni from the Class of 1988 reminiscence about their student days in Maynooth.

Alumni Return for Tour of the University
Celebrating 25 years since they first came to Maynooth as students, returning alumni took a stroll down memory lane as they toured the campus on Saturday 10th November. Memories of Ma Kelly, first year accommodation and Sunday night movies in the Aula Maxima among the humorous conversation topics. Seeing the significant number and size of the new buildings on the North Campus, brought home to the returning visitors the many differences between student life in the late 1980s as compared to today.

Celebrating 25 Years of Computer Science at Maynooth
Phoenix Mezzanine was the venue for alumni celebrations of 25 years of Computer Science at Maynooth. Over 100 alumni, staff, former staff and postgraduates attended the evening. Speakers on the night included former heads of the Department, Professors Anthony O’Farrell and Ronan Reilly and President of NUI-Maynooth, Professor Philip Nolan. Over the years the Department has seen significant growth and currently has 650 undergraduate and 150 postgraduate students.
The possibility of new treatments for debilitating diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis has been opened up with a breakthrough discovery by a research team at NUI Maynooth. Its findings have been accepted and published in the prestigious ‘Nature Immunology’ journal.

The research findings follow almost three years of intensive research by a team of ten scientists including alumni Ruaidhri Jackson (BSc 2009) and Bingwei Wang (PhD 2012). Led by Professor Paul Moynagh, the team has discovered the critical function of a gene, ‘Pellino3’, in regulating the amount of protective proteins called ‘interferons’ produced in response to a virus.

When infected by a virus, our immune system senses the threat and responds by producing protective proteins, interferons, which prevent the spread of the virus and ultimately facilitate the elimination of the virus. The body also produces Pellino3, a gene which the NUI Maynooth team has discovered acts as a braking system to prevent overproduction of interferons. The overproduction of interferons can lead to debilitating inflammatory diseases such as Lupus and deficient production of interferons can lead to diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis and hepatitis, so control over the amount of interferons produced by the body is critical in the treatment of viral disease.

While in some cases it is not yet known whether specific viruses cause specific diseases, regulating the production of interferons offers a means of controlling these outcomes. The NUI Maynooth team deleted the Pellino3 gene in an experimental model system to determine the physiological role of the gene in regulating interferons. The research team is now building on these findings with the objective to develop drug molecules that target Pellino3 and exploit its role in combating diseases that are affected by interferons such as Multiple Sclerosis and Lupus. The team will also investigate ways in which Pellino3 can impact the health of those who are particularly susceptible to viral infections.

Discussing the findings, Professor Moynagh said: ‘Our conclusion on the role of Pellino3 in controlling interferons is a very significant breakthrough in viral immunology. The research has much potential for the treatment of major autoimmune diseases and the next step is to determine how the exploitation of Pellino3 can physiologically impact on specific conditions. The ultimate objective of our project is the development, production and commercialisation of pharmaceuticals which can help to combat immune-mediated diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis. Our results demonstrate the importance of continued investment in basic research, which feeds the pipeline through which pharmaceutical development and disease treatment can occur.’

Commenting on the breakthrough, NUI Maynooth President, Professor Philip Nolan said: ‘Research such as this shows the talent and influence of Ireland’s scientists, particularly in the area of immunology, where we rank third in the world. Professor Moynagh and his team will no doubt push on and bring this research to the next level, where it has the potential to make a lasting impact in disease control. Our aim at NUI Maynooth is to foster research which influences and improves understanding within its field, and we look forward to further success from our immunology team in the coming years.’

The research project is funded by a Principal Investigator Award to Professor Moynagh from Science Foundation Ireland and the PhD Scholars Programme in Immunology funded by the Health Research Board. The findings have just been published in the scientific journal, Nature Immunology, which ranks first in the world in terms of publishing high impact and original immunology research and includes only the most influential, important or conceptually novel work in immunology.
Aodhán reminisces about his journey from Rhetoric House to rowing the Atlantic.

At the start of January 2012, when most people were recovering from New Year’s festivities, I pushed off from the western shore of Morocco with five other men in a small rowing boat. Our challenge was to break the world record for rowing across the Atlantic — Barbados was our intended destination.

The expedition, which we named Atlantic Odyssey, proved to be the adventure of a lifetime in more ways than one. But there was no Hollywood ending.

Unfortunately I never got a chance to lounge on the white sands of the Caribbean sipping cocktails while gazing out at the ocean I had just crossed. Rather, after 28 days of rowing, I found myself on the cold steel deck of a Taiwanese cargo ship after being plucked from a tiny inflatable life raft far below. We had completed 80 percent of our crossing and were on track for the world record when we were irreversibly capsized by a freak wave in the early morning hours.

After rowing 12 hours a day for a month, in shifts of 2 hours on and 2 hours off, I thought my mettle had already been fully tested by overcoming a distance of 2,000 nautical miles with huge ocean swells, difficult currents, squalls, sleep deprivation and an exponential numbers of cuts, bruises and muscle strains. Those challenges are now dwarfed in my mind by the enormity of what it took to get through the 14 hours that separated the capsize and our dangerous night time rescue. We spent 10 days together on the cargo ship bound for Gibraltar returning over the ocean we had just covered through our own physical exertions. This was enough time for us to debrief and clear our thoughts before the mobs of family and the press that awaited us on the dock. None of us had really known each other a year beforehand but we had all been brought together by a common aim and we now know each other on a level that can’t be described. Of course I didn’t just fall into an ocean rowing expedition (excuse the pun) — it had been years in the making.

I began rowing at the age of 10 in Neptune Rowing Club in Dublin and by the time I started the Atlantic at 26 I was a veteran of many national championships as well as earning places on a number of Irish national teams. But it was during my time at Maynooth that I first discovered the existence of ocean rowing and resolved to try that myself someday. I doubt anyone in Rhetoric House took me seriously at the time.

Maynooth had always appealed to me as a university and I decided not to let the lack of a rowing club become a deciding factor in my application. Rather, myself and a few fellow Neptune members decided to set up a club in the college ourselves during our first year. A club which now sadly seems to have vanished, but one which I would love to see revived. I managed to continue rowing throughout my time there and even picked up a few intervarsity titles for the college on the way — which was truly enjoyable.

The university was also a place in which I was fortunate enough to pursue my other major passion — history. After finishing my undergraduate degree in 2006 I spent two years completing an MLitt in History with Professor Comerford as my supervisor. Despite finishing my degree at a difficult economic time I eventually managed to find myself an interesting job in the UK as an editor in a publishing company creating digital learning resources in history for universities.

This in turn led to my recent appointment at the London School of Economics as web services where I’m also relishing the opportunity to pursue my interest in history through its various events and societies.

I met a lot of wonderful people during my five years at Maynooth. They now form an important part of the support network which has helped make my pursuits a reality be they on or off the water — and for that I am very grateful.

Those people always ask me the same question about the Atlantic, ‘would you do it again?’

Despite the terrifyingly close call I can honestly say I thoroughly enjoyed the experience — the spectacular things that I saw out on the ocean, the funds raised for my charity Plan International and the lessons I have learned about myself, about people and about life. The answer to the question is — maybe.

Maynooth Alumni Association | STAY CONNECTED, KEEP CONNECTED

WWW.ALUMNI.NUI.M.ie

Atlantic Odyssey

Aodhán Kelly

BA 2006, MLitt 2009
Understanding Racism in a Digital Age

Media Studies lecturer, Dr Gavan Titley and The Guardian join forces to explore racism in the world of digital media.

A major new series, launched earlier this year by The Guardian and devised by NUIM Maynooth Media Studies Lecturer Dr Gavan Titley and the editors of Guardian Comment is Free, explores how racism is understood in public debate, and how it is debated in the interactive spaces of digital media.

According to Dr Titley, the series was inspired by the fact that racism continues to dominate the headlines, from the rise of the far-right to the prevalence of racism in sport, to the status of racial abuse on social media. Nevertheless, not only is the nature and impact of racism disputed, the very idea of racism is contested. ‘Racism is at once everywhere and nowhere’, Dr Titley said. ‘On the one hand, the recent focus on the far-right to the status of racial abuse on social media. Nevertheless, not only is the nature and impact of racism disputed, the very idea of racism is contested. ‘Racism is at once everywhere and nowhere’, Dr Titley said. ‘On the one hand, the recent focus on the far-right to the status of racial abuse on social media. Nevertheless, not only is the nature and impact of racism disputed, the very idea of racism is contested. ‘Racism is at once everywhere and nowhere’, Dr Titley said.

‘Anonymity, the ability to network instantaneously in the global space of the internet, and the desire of mainstream media to provide as much ‘interaction’ as possible, has given rise to a situation where writers with minority backgrounds can suffer serious abuse and hate speech when they publish’, Dr Titley said.

Dr Titley’s contributions to the series are written with Dr Alana Lentin, a sociologist at the University of Western Sydney. Their recent book, The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age, has triggered widespread debate on the changing nature of racism, and has been featured in such publications as The Washington Times, The Guardian, The Nation, and The Washington Post.

The series pays particular attention to how online sites and social media platforms have intensified the opportunities for racial abuse, an issue that has received increasing attention in the aftermath of the July 22nd 2011 murders in Norway.

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The series features on the Comment is Free site on the online version of The Guardian newspaper www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/series/racism-in-a-digital-age.

I recently had cause to call into the University and as always I am immediately brought back to my years spent there. It is such a cliché but it really only feels like yesterday. And yet so much has changed... The Music Department alone was much smaller and some of the lectures were in what is now the Post Office. I have fond memories of “snogging” my present husband in that same room where we were supposed to be studying for exams!

My experience of my college years in Maynooth is full of lovely memories and lifelong friends I made there with whom I am still in contact and some I am still in contact and some. I walked around the campus now and realise how fast the years are passing, and knowing the people who made Maynooth my experience have all long gone. In my heart and mind I still feel as young as that young person all those years ago and yet so much has happened since then. So I remind myself. Everything is as it should be.
Dear Karen,

Many thanks for your email. I was on the student council for 3 years and was treasurer in 1974 to 1975. Unfortunately I was always too busy counting the ticket sales and certainly afterwards enjoyed far too many refreshments to remember much. However the council brought to Maynooth in my time – Horseslip-Wolf Tones and Several Other Bands. I have nothing but very happy days of my 3 years in Maynooth. I graduated B.A. Hons in Geography and History. I played basketball for the college and was a very proud captain of the extern soccer team (1973-1976). I am now about to retire from Head of Geography at St. Aloysius College in Glasgow after 36 years of teaching. I have yet to make my way back to Maynooth since 1976. I know the many changes and wish Maynooth and her students all the best.

Yours sincerely,
Jim Cassidy (1976)

A note from the Editor...

Maynooth Memories and Memorabilia will be a regular feature of The Bridge. If you have any items (photos, concert tickets, etc.) that you think alumni would appreciate, please send them to the Alumni Office. All items will be returned to sender. Thanks to the staff in An Foras Faisal for their technical assistance with this article.
Tracking Irish Sexual Revolution in Angela Macnamara Letters

Paul Ryan (BA 1994) charts the gradual emergence of a sexually aware nation through the columns of Angela Macnamara in the 1960s & 70s.

The letters give us an alternative story of Irishmen’s lives in the 1960s and 70s. Previously understood as cold, unemotional, patriarchal figures, I argue that men simultaneously showed a more romantic side in their relationships with often greater involvement in child rearing that has been recognized. Men at that time had an alternative understanding of romance – it was something done rather than spoken.

Homosexuality, which caused much controversy and argument in Catholic Ireland, emerged as one of the topics that Macnamara’s column helped to demystify. Although she received hundreds of letters on homosexuality in the early 1960s, it was not until 1966 that the first letter on this issue appeared. While her initial response was that gay men were ‘going through a phase’, over the years her tone changed and she became a much more compassionate voice for the homosexual community. Some letters featured in Macnamara’s column were from parents worried about their waning influence over their children while others dealt specifically to complaints about licentious behaviour from the more traditional readers, the columns gave voice to the people of Ireland who had no-one else to turn to for enlightened answers; he said, adding that the book also challenges a view of the Irish as being exceptionally emotionally and sexually repressed.

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Drawing on his own academic research and comparing and contrasting studies of sexuality in Britain and the United States, Dr Ryan has added that Irish attitudes were not so very different.

How a nation grappled with its emerging sexuality in the 1960s and 70s within the restrictive confines of a society still tethered to the rigid moral code of the Catholic Church, forms the background to NUI Maynooth sociology lecturer, Dr Ryan’s research on an ‘Agony aunt’ column written by Angela Macnamara from 1963 to 1980 in The Sunday Press. In his book, Angling Angela Macnamara: An Intimate History of Irish Lives, Dr Ryan found that the column played a key role in the transformation of Irish sexuality.

The letters played a role in challenging the conservative Catholic Church in Ireland. The letters, according to Dr Ryan, give an alternative story of Irish people’s lives in the 1960s and 70s. The letters are an incredible resource and paint an intimate picture of a people emerging from the cocoon of rigid moral fervour and examining their lives more closely. From the desire for more intimacy amongst couples to complaints about licentious behaviour from the more traditional readers, the columns gave voice to the people of Ireland who had no-one else to turn to for enlightened answers; he said, adding that the book also challenges a view of the Irish as being exceptionally emotionally and sexually repressed.

Angela Macnamara was a young mother when she began writing the column in 1963. Born in Rathgar, Dublin to middle-class family she began her career with The Sunday Press in 1983 by writing a series of articles on teenage dating. Such was the response that the editor invited her to reply to some of the letters. Every week, she answered a selection of letters in her column and privately responded to hundreds more on a range of taboo topics that included homosexuality, marital relations and the sexual mores of the time. The advice dispensed was very much in line with the moral teaching of the Catholic Church in Ireland. However, as exposure to mass media increased and the influence of television grew, people began to question the official guardians of Irish chastity. The letters reflected this slowly evolving attitude to private matters and show a growing confidence on the part of the readers to make their own decisions about intimate matters. It was this exchange of views that gave the column an interactive quality with the discourse on the primary needs of a wife…A woman by her husbands lack of understanding

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A. In telling you that he has homosexual tendencies you will have been honest and has shared something that is very important in his life. For too long we have condemned out of hand the person who has a homosexual tendency regardless of the norm. However, the fact remains that there are many people who are this way that lead lives of great integrity, responsibility and love. I do hope now that you have had time to think about it you will contact your son and assure him that you have love for him is not conditional and you want him to know that home will always be home for him.

Marital Intimacy
13th April 1980

Q. How I would love if my husband made love to me. Now, I don’t mean sex – he’s always ready for sex … I mean to have sex it only takes a short time and I feel little or no response. I don’t think Irish men in this country know how to make love.

A. I understand the hurt that’s caused a lot of women by their husbands lack of understanding of the primary needs of a wife. A woman can best respond to a man if she has been tenderly loved, spoken to with loving words, gently carried her physical annual takes place under such living circumstances.
Galway Cycle
Making a difference

The 25th Year of the Galway cycle was always going to be special. The Galway Cycle was initiated in 1988, when a group of students from the University decided to cycle the return trip to Galway to fundraise for charity.

The tasks were many – some people hopped on the collectors’ bus, borrowed a friend’s bike, donned the colourful hoodie, drove a mini bus, initiated a sponsorship deal, cooked the breakfast or rode a motorbike for safe escort. Lifelong friendships – not to mention a couple of marriages – were made along the way.

From its origins in 1988, the organisation has grown and developed to become one of the largest independent fundraising events in Ireland with organisations annually pitching to be the chosen charity. The Galway Cycle family today includes students, staff, Alumni, friends and family of Alumni and those who have joined us through the various charities throughout the years and remain with us on our 400 km return peloton across the country on a cold March weekend. The charity selected for Galway Cycle 2012 (gC12) was Down Syndrome Ireland and the aim was to raise funds to provide early intervention centres nationwide.

As always the planning began in September 2011 with fundraisers including table quizzes, tag rugby leagues, book sales, bag packs, carol singing, and tractor races to name but a few, all starting to kick off the countdown.

Apart from the social events the well-established training cycles meeting on a Saturday morning at the College gates continued to build momentum.

On Friday March 23rd 211 cyclists, 35 support crew and 50 collectors departed Maynooth for the cycle to Galway, arriving that evening into celebrations in Eyre Square. This experience was replicated with the safe return back into Maynooth town square on Sunday evening to a warm welcome of family and friends. It was particularly meaningful to welcome back those previously involved with the Galway cycles over the previous 24 years. With pride G12 presented a cheque to Down Syndrome Ireland in August for €150,000. This year’s fundraising brings to almost €900,000 the amount raised since the Galway Cycle began 25 years ago. None of this would have happened without the incredible amount of hard work delivered by the committees and members of the Galway Cycle making it into a major fundraising event in the University’s calendar.

Plans for G13 are already well underway with The Jack and Jill Foundations the selected 2013 beneficiary. As 2013 is the year of The Gathering, all who come back annually are welcome to join G13.

For further information please visit www.galwaycycle.ie, www.facebook.com/galwaycycle, and Twitter @galwaycycle or email president@galwaycycle.ie

Postgraduate Leanne Hegarty captured the spirit of the event in a poem delivered to all on the Saturday night in Monroe’s which has become the Galway Cycle Mission –

Mission
Choose a president, choose a charity, choose bikes, choose training cycles, choose cleats, fall off, get back on, fall off again, choose more training cycles, feel the nerves, choose setting off at 6.30am with over 200 people, grit your teeth going uphill, reap the reward of going downhill, choose a new friend every few kilometers, choose Lucozade, Lucozade and more bloody Lucozade, choose arriving in Eyre Square to tears and hugs, choose dancing the night away on aching legs, choose shaking buckets, singing songs and painting faces, dress as wonder woman, a smurf, a monkey, raise €150,000, choose not to sleep, choose pushing your body past its limits, take a ride in an ambulance, recover and get back on, choose making yourself proud, choose making the best of friends and memories that will last a lifetime, choose a feeling that you’ll find nowhere else, choose Galway Cycle for the best time of your life!
An Arab Spring in My Step

As a journalist, David Lynch (BA 1999, MA 2000) has reported extensively from the Middle East. Here he describes for The Bridge a career highlight – his experience in Cairo.

"I don't know what is going to happen in the next few years."
"Maybe it will be good, maybe it will be bad. It's all up to me now to know."

Under Mubarak you could not imagine or dream, because the future was already decided. It was already known."I was interviewing a 23-year-old entrepreneur Ahmed, near my Cairo apartment. It was May and the initial high hopes of the Egyptian revolution were giving way to widespread anxiety and street battles. However Ahmed remained upbeat. 'After 60 years of a military regime it's normal to have problems. At least now... we can all imagine things different.' Ahmed's rugged idealism was echoed among the many revolutionaries I met in Tahrir Square in revolt, or in the markets and cafes of Egypt's capital.

It is two years since the so-called 'Arab Spring' toppled a dictator in Tunisia and rocked a regime in Cairo. Since then, the region-wide revolt has come to a horrific halt at the gates of Damascus and many now question the initial optimism that fuelled the uprising. However in the ten months I lived and reported from a Cairo in turmoil, I remained optimistic about the liberating promise of the 'Arab Spring'. From talking to revolutionaries over the sound of clashes around us or wading through thick tear gas in Tahrir or sipping thick coffee with dissidents around us or wading through thick tear gas in the streets of Khartoum, I remained optimistic about the possibility among the youth I met.

I had reported extensively from the region, in places like Palestine, Israel, Lebanon - but Cairo was different, the experience the highlight of my career. In the intense months prior to the recent Presidential election there was palpable sense that no one knew where the Egyptian revolution was going - revolution or counter revolution. While deadly street battles regularly broke out in Downtown Cairo between activists and military forces - normal life of a sort, continued in other parts of the city.

I often left my apartment on the west bank of the Nile, the ordinary rhythms of daily Cairo life around me - the call to prayer, the traffic, the hustle of the souqs, and the incessant (and clinically insane) traffic. But then I would make the 15-minute walk to Tahrir Square, and enter a land of dead calm, a haven of thousands of people united against military rule. My final report for RTE Radio was in the hours after Egyptians freely elected their new President. Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi came to power facing huge economic and political difficulties and the future is impossible to predict. But what is certain, is that anew rebellious and democratic spirit is strong among millions of Egyptians and that is a source of hope.

An Arab Spring in My Step: A career highlight – his experience in Cairo.
President Michael D. Higgins Celebrates 75th Anniversary

In March this year the University welcomed President Michael D. Higgins to celebrate the 75th anniversary of its foundation. The visit of President Higgins marked the historic role of sociology as a discipline in Ireland and showcased the ongoing contribution of sociology at NUI Maynooth to social change and civic engagement.

Speaking at the launch An Taoiseach, said that the partnership was vital to Ireland’s future educational success and a cornerstone of Government policy. This is a very significant collaboration between three of our finest institutions with very complementary and distinct fields of expertise. Through collaboration we can achieve scale that allows us to compete more effectively on the global stage. It is clear that this partnership will lead to increased competitiveness for major research awards, innovation at the intersection of disciplines, and also the intellectual, cultural and financial benefits of a greater internationalisation of our student base in Ireland, he said.

Among other initiatives, the 3U partnership will see the immediate establishment of 3U Biomedical Research harnessing a combined pool of over 750 researchers across the three institutions to develop leading-edge research in areas like cancer, diabetes and neurology as well as the introduction of new national and international study programmes, particularly at postgraduate level, which will bring together the strengths of each institution, including Masters Degrees in Healthcare Technology, Humanitarian Logistics & Emergency Management and Global Health. The project’s principal investigators are: Una M. O’Shea (NUI), Richard O’Farrell (DCU), and Siobhain N即便是 (Maynooth).

The objective of the pilot is to offer greater engagement and partnership between the University and the community, and to further open the door to lifelong learning opportunities. Feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive and it is anticipated that it will be rolled out to libraries across the country visiting locations such as Farmleigh, Derrynane, Kilkenny, Charlemont and Belfast. It is anticipated that the projects, based on the realities within the students’ communities, will have the opportunity to influence key domestic and local economic issues that are most addressable via science and the scientific method.

Pioneering Third-Level Education in Local Libraries Over 30 students from two library authorities, Dublin City Council and Kildare County Council, recently completed a 20-week course enabling them to experience university level learning in their local libraries. This pilot initiative, run by the Department of Adult Education at NUI Maynooth, led by Anambarie Leahbaranna, saw library users study modules in Local History, Community Development, Reading Enrichment and Sociology, delivered by academics from NUI Maynooth in their local libraries.

The project was implemented over a number of years with the support of a number of organisations including the National Library, NUI Maynooth and the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. The project is supported by the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Social Protection and the National Library of Ireland.

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald TD launched the Centre for Youth Research and Development at NUI Maynooth in March 2013 and will tour the country visiting locations such as Farmleigh, Derrynane, Kilkenny, Charlemont and Belfast before returning to NUI Maynooth where it will remain on public view.

This is a very significant collaboration between three of our finest institutions with very complementary and distinct fields of expertise...
Where Are Our Alumni Now?

Joe Costello
BA 1990

I enjoyed my time in Maynooth. It was an easy combination of study, sport and prayer. There was no heavy ideological preaching, rather an amount of silence for reflection. When the secular academic studies gave way to theology and related studies, I began to lose interest and realise that the priesthood was not for me. I informed the Bishop of my doubts. When he pointed me in the right direction, I embarked on my great adventure, with three friends from school, we quickly immersed ourselves in collegiate life. Fr. Breathnach (thanks for the Whisky), Michael McGeal (thanks for the lift in the Ford Escort), and Prof. Paddy Geary (for all the great ‘Thinking sessions!’)!

At the end of first year I had a chance to take up a work experience year in an international marketing department in the UK. It was there that I found my love for sales and marketing. On return to Maynooth I went straight into the two year honours degree in Economics and Sociology. Liam Ryan (thanks for the Whisky!), Michael McGeal (thanks for the lift in the Ford Escort), Joe Durkin led the way. English lectures in the Aula with the Drama Soc was well enjoyed by all – to this day I speak with a very thick Irish accent! The time spent with the students of 2012 is a memory that has never gone away. The time spent with the drama Soc was well enjoyed – with all my closest friends who enabled me to go on an Erasmus exchange to France in my second year. Lecturers were extremely generous with their time in advising me on my next step after Maynooth. I went to Cambridge for a Masters degree in environment and development and I had a fantastic experience there, though for me, the academically stronger experience was at Imperial College London, working as a post-doctoral position in Ireland and the USA. I now work as a research associate at Imperial College London, working as part of the technical team working on the European Space Agency astronomy satellite project, Herschel, since 2008. My years in Maynooth laid the groundwork for my career, something I will be eternally grateful for. It will always be a place I deeply love.

John Lawless
BA 1971

I was appointed Minister for Trade and Development in December 2011. As part of my trade portfolio, I am working to develop markets abroad for Irish goods and services so that extra jobs can be created in Ireland. I have worked for a range of community and youth organisations, and I am currently a senior manager in County Wicklow Partnership. I am responsible for a number of programmes aimed at combating disadvantage, and the work is difficult and rewarding, difficult because on a daily basis I and my staff meet with people experiencing all kinds of hardship and poverty, and rewarding because we can often help them find ways to improve their situation. I cannot imagine doing anything else and I believe it would not be possible without Maynooth. I will always be thankful for the education I received there and more importantly for the friendships and contacts I made, which continues to support me today.

Ronan O’Flynn
BA 1988

I studied science at NUIM Maynooth between 1989–98, ending up with an ERC Doctoral Fellowships in Experimental Physics and Mathematics. Maynooth was in a state of grand transition during that period, both the university itself (as new facilities and programmes were added and the split from the Pontifical University was completed!) and the town in general (as all the new estates went up, and the bypass was built)!

The courses were excellent, though we did look enviously at those who followed us on in our turn to the super new facilities being built that they’d come to enjoy, versus ours at the time. Still, it was all part of the charm of the place!Plus, the students today will never know the pleasure of sitting by the old radiators in the Arts Block on a cold winter’s day!

The five years I spent at NUIM Maynooth were my formative years, and I immensely enjoyed them, with all my closest friends meeting for the first time back then. The nights in the old Roost and the (then) new SU Bar live very long in the memory!

After Maynooth, I completed my PhD in Experimental Physics at UCD in 2003, working on studies of star forming galaxies. After post-doctoral positions in Ireland and the USA, I now work as a research associate at Imperial College London, working as part of the technical team working on the European Space Agency astronomy satellite project, Herschel, since 2008. My years in Maynooth laid the groundwork for my career, something I will be eternally grateful for. It will always be a place I deeply love.

Sally Ann Gunnan
BA 1990 & HDIP

I went to Maynooth in 1997 to study Economics and Geography after school in nearby Kilcock. I had been advised that my chosen departments were excellent and I was not disappointed! Many of my favourite courses were set in Geography, where new ideas overlapped the familiar ‘realised wisdom’ I had picked up at school, especially in introductory courses! (Prof. Derek Pringle), economic (Prof. Prionsias Breathnach) and historical geography (Prof. Paddy Duffy).!

In climate change classes, the lecturers (Prof John Sweeney) somehow made this science subject comprehensible and exciting, even to me! As you would expect, training in Economics was rigorous, but thankfully well taught. I was particularly inspired by Prof. Gerry Boyle and grateful to Prof. Paddy Geary who enabled me to go on an Erasmus exchange to France in my second year. Lecturers were extremely generous with their time in advising me on my next step after Maynooth.

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Ronan O’Flynn
A 21st Century Learning Space

From €100 allocated by the Trustees in 1800, the library at Maynooth has undergone a radical structural and cultural transformation.

£20 million has been spent on upgrading the original library, built in 1984, with a focus on space for print collections and traditional, uniform study catering for 2,000 students, to a state of the art learning experience offering eight different ways to study, ranging from social and collaborative to silent and individual which will cater for the 8,000 students currently enrolled at NUI Maynooth.

At more than 10,000 square metres, the new library will be two and a half times larger than the existing library building. 5 km of new shelving will hold the physical collection, while the virtual will be easily accessible via dozens of new computers, enhanced wifi, and touch screens. For really rare items there’s a new special collections area, with secure storage for more than 15,000 items. This offers the highest levels of environmental control for these rare and unique items, while creating an atmosphere that is conducive to the needs of researchers.

With more self-service machines and 'business hubs' for printing, copying and scanning on each floor (all fully integrated with the new campus-wide printing service), queuing should become a long and distant memory.

The new library will utilise a range of technology to maximise water retention and refuse and has inbuilt systems to minimise power consumption. While a coffee shop in a library would have been unheard of in 1984, visitors will be able to enjoy a large purpose-built café, with outdoor seating for those balmy summer days to come!

Undoubtedly, the Library is a key resource for the University community. Recent years have seen a greater involvement with the local community which will be further strengthened with the new exhibitions area and the library plaza which will serve as a venue for cultural events and performances, both from within the University and the wider community.

Susan Durack who works in Special Collections in the library remembers the original move to the new library in 1984:

'My recollection of the move project was the sheer size of the task. No professional movers were involved. The moves from the Russell Library and the Arts Block Library were planned and carried out by library staff with the assistance of students. We used boxes that we referred to as 'coffins' because they were large and black. They were filled with books and slid down the stairs of the Russell Library and brought out for transportation. Our transportation consisted of two library lorries and Professor Martin Pulbrook’s ’ambulance’ – a world war two ambulance which he drove to and from the Arts Block Library. The move was completed in an estimated three week period and was regularly inter spaced with lunches, laughs and liquid refreshments in the Roost Bar!'

Did you know?

• In 1984 - The library had seating for 520 readers
  - Undergraduate and Diploma students could borrow 2 books for two weeks
  - An electronic typewriter was available for student use
  - Books could not be taken out of Ireland without the permission of the Librarian
  - 5 library tickets were issued to students
  - The first mention of a library in Maynooth (which was subsequently located in Long Corridor) was in May 1802 when the Trustees resolved ‘that one of the large halls be fitted up as a library and a sum not exceeding one hundred pounds be expended thereon.’
  - The old library (designed by A.W. Pugin and fully furnished in 1861) was renamed the Russell Library in 1984.
  - In 1977 a library in the New Arts Block was opened.
  - Many valuable collections have been bequeathed to the University. Edmond Burke donated a collection of Classics books.

A note from the Editor...

We will be inviting alumni to an event in the library in the New Year. Keep an eye on alumni-network.ie for more details.

Did you know the new library will have...

• Seating capacity of almost 1,500
• More than 200 PCs
• Desks that are fully wired and the entire building will be wireless network enabled
• 6 Fully equipped state-of-the art Group Study Rooms and increased group study space
• Postgraduate and academic staff areas
• Exhibitions area
You get a unique credit card and we give a little back to the Maynooth Alumni Fund every time you spend on your Maynooth Affinity Credit Card.

You must be over 18 to apply for a credit card and there are terms and conditions.

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